



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 20 JUNE 2019

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 15 of 2019

Sitting of 20 June 2019

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**NATIONAL CSR FOUNDATION – CSR CONTRIBUTIONS**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the National Corporate Social Responsibility Foundation, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to –

- (a) for the 18 months ended 30 June 2018 and for period 01 July 2018 to date, the amount of CSR contributions received and receivable from the Accountant General;
- (b) the amount of cash balances and amounts receivable from the Accountant General as at today's date;
- (c) the amount paid to Non-Governmental Organisations in respect of approved projects for period 01 July 2018 to date, and
- (d) the arrangements that will now be made to financially assist organisations other than those engaged in the support of vulnerable children and for the provisions of Crèches/Nurseries by the proposed National Social Inclusion Foundation.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, first of all, one thing I want to tell is that, yesterday, I was in a clinic and I received messages that I would not come today to answer the question because I would chicken out, I would run away, I am afraid. But here I am, Madam Speaker. I am going to answer to all the questions. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, with a view to encouraging an enabling environment for public-private and civil society partnership for supporting the poor and vulnerable groups, Government made provision in the 2016/2017 Budget Speech, for a new CSR framework to ensure greater social outcomes with the setting up of a National CSR Foundation.

Madam Speaker, the advent of the National CSR Foundation has provided a breathing space for NGOs involved in delivering services targeting the poor and vulnerable segments of the population in complementarity with public services.

Madam Speaker, during the 2016/2017 pre-budget consultations, numerous representations were received from civil society organisations concerning the operation of the CSR system. The main criticisms levelled were as follows –

- (i) Absence of a coordinated approach on poverty alleviation;
- (ii) Arbitrariness and lack of transparency in the allocation of CSR funds by companies;
- (iii) Difficulty in accessing funds by some deserving NGOs and other civil society organisations;
- (iv) In the absence of guidelines, there has been a proliferation of all types of organisations just to benefit from the CSR funds, and
- (v) Absence of adequate monitoring and evaluation of CSR programmes and activities.

There was a strong perception that CSR funds were not directed to the support of vulnerable groups as originally intended.

Madam Speaker, since its setting up, the Foundation has developed a Funding Framework that promotes –

- (a) better accountability and transparency in the use of CSR Funds;
- (b) effective monitoring and smooth implementation of programmes and projects funded;
- (c) mentoring support to organisations for better compliance with the reporting requirements of the Foundation;
- (d) a coordinated approach in the financing of NGOs;
- (e) collaborative partnership with public-private and civil society, and
- (f) more impactful interventions for better contribution to national priorities and Sustainable Development Goals.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed by the National CSR Foundation that for the 18 months' period ended 30 June 2018, the receivable amount was Rs675,914,348, of which the Foundation received an amount of Rs503,506,644

and the outstanding amount of Rs172,407,704 was received in July 2018 from the Accountant General being contributions of CSR funds from the private sector.

For the period 01 July 2018 to date, the Foundation has received an amount of Rs421,343,605.

Madam Speaker, the quantum of the receivable amount for the period 01 July 2018 to date will depend on the profit to be made by companies.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, the amount of cash balances as at date is Rs748.2 m.

Madam Speaker, concerning part (c) of the question, for period 01 July 2018 to date, an amount of Rs276,505,166 has been disbursed to 206 NGOs for 280 approved projects. The remaining amount of Rs471.7 m. is already committed.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (d) of the question, organisations registered with the Foundation will continue to receive financial support. The Foundation will finance programmes and projects of NGOs engaged in the 10 priority areas of the Foundation for the benefits of the beneficiaries as defined in its Charter.

Madam Speaker, I am tabling the categories of beneficiaries and list of the 10 priority areas.

Madam Speaker, as announced at paragraph 276 of the 2019/2020 Budget Speech, the National CSR Foundation will be transformed in a National Social Inclusion Foundation.

The new entity will identify National Programmes for better impact on poverty alleviation. Education being a key factor in the fight against poverty, the Foundation will, in the first instance, focus on *crèche* and nursery facilities and on additional educational support to vulnerable children.

Additionally, the National Social Inclusion Foundation will develop other National Programmes in consultation with all stakeholders in the other areas of intervention of the Foundation with a view to promoting social inclusions and to improve the welfare of vulnerable groups.

Madam Speaker, it is a matter of justified pride to inform the House that since 2016, the National CSR Foundation has been ensuring that the allocation of public funds to NGOs is governed by the principles and practices of good governance, which include financial

prudence and accountability as well as transparency. All information pertaining to programmes and projects funded by the Foundation is made available on its website.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I assure you that I sent no message to the hon. Minister - regrettably. Madam Speaker, there were originally some 800 NGOs registered at the NEF, at the CSR Foundation - I think it was Committee at the time - and now we see that only 200 have received funding from the National CSR Foundation. There are 600 less NGOs. So, the obvious question is: Firstly, does the hon. Minister know why they have ceased their activities and, secondly, if he knows why, what attempt has been made by the NCSR to encourage these persons, who are volunteers after all, doing a good job for society, to encourage them to restart?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, there are criteria that have been set down so that the NGOs should apply, and they should have two years, at least, so that they can register activities before they can register to the CSR Foundation. So far, there are 389 that have been registered at our Ministry. We did not receive any other NGOs that have come to register, as stipulated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, this is not my question.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, ask one question at a time, please.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, okay. I will try to ask one question. There were 800 already registered at the NEF. Now, there are 200 who have got money, 600 have disappeared. It is a simple question. So, really, I think the hon. Minister ought to be concerned with the fact that 600 NGOs have ceased their activities all around the island and in Rodrigues. So, obviously, the question is: Have you tried to find out why they have stopped? We should not treat all the NGOs as thieves. Have you tried to encourage them to restart?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I replied to the question and I said that there are criteria that have been set down, because there was a strong perception, people perceived that it was not being made as it is. That is why we set down these criteria. All NGOs were invited to come and register themselves and, as I said now, there are 389 that have been so far registered. So, for the others, if the hon. Leader of the Opposition has the information that these NGOs come to him, he should ask them to come and register themselves and, if they are eligible, they would be registered and they would receive funds from the CSR Foundation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, Rs5 m. is spent as fees for Board members. Surely, I do not have to do their job; that is not correct. Now, Madam Speaker, I am going to ask the hon. Minister this. Apparently, all the projects that are sent - and it is easy to see also - the NCSR systematically gives you only 40/50% of what you ask. You have to beg, you have to come and see the hon. Minister. Why is that? Why are we treating all these NGOs like that, that they have to come and beg for the rest of the money? Sometimes it is given; sometimes it is refused.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I think I have mentioned that, now, all the funds are not being disbursed straightaway. Because it has happened in a few cases - when I'll get the information, I can table it - that NGOs have not used the funds properly and they have come to give back the money themselves, because they don't correspond to the criteria set down by the NCSR Foundation. If ever other NGOs - I'll say it again - are missing information, we have a desk that is working very nicely, giving them instructions about how to come and register themselves to the Foundation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, we are not talking about part-payment or 50%. I am talking about the actual amount approved; it is 50%, in most cases, of what has been asked. Obviously then, the 50% is again split so that it is paid during the year. I am talking about the problem, and it is a real problem. I assure the hon. Minister that people are complaining that they only get a meagre amount of what they ask for.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: They receive about 50% when they are approved. Once they receive that fund, there is a monitoring that goes behind. It is like at the bank, when you ask for a loan, all the money is not given to you; it is being disbursed into different instalments. That's what we are doing. Once the monitoring is done - I want to say something, but I am not going to mention it at this time, what happened in that case. So, this is what we are doing. We cannot give all the money right at the beginning. If they are doing the thing right as they have set it down, they will receive the funds. That's why all the money that is left has already been earmarked for these NGOs. We cannot give all the money at once.

Mr X. L. Duval: I think my question has been misunderstood. It is not a question of part-payments. Not a question of part-payments! It is a question of only 50% of the money asked for is approved. Anyway, I don't want to go - I think I am getting lost into all this. It doesn't matter. Don't worry about it. Now, I am going to ask this. The hon. Minister

is saying that part of the problem is that people are not honest with the money and they are not good at keeping accounts or whatever. God knows they waste of money. There are some very great, respectable, most respectable household names that are bitterly complaining nowadays about lack of funds. They have had to close down many of their activities. Do I need to mention Caritas to the hon. Minister? Do I need to mention *Kinoueté*, Blood Donors Association? All this has been in the Press, be it ANFEN, Chrysalide, Autisme Maurice. Are you going to put them all in the same basket, because I presume they are not honest with their money, that you have cut down so much their money? This is what I am asking.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, so far, we did not receive these complaints at the NCSR Foundation.

Mr X. L. Duval: The hon. Minister should read the papers, he will see it there. I have not taken the names myself. I have taken these from the papers. Madam Speaker, all this is my point. It is not a nasty point, whatever you may think. The point is this: the NCSR is sitting on Rs750 m. that belongs to the NGOs. There is another Rs150/Rs200 m. that will come from the Accountant General. We are talking of nearly a billion rupees that the NCSR is sitting on this money, whereas, Madam Speaker, so many NGOs have closed down, especially in the drug fighting sphere; so many are complaining, so many have cut down their activities. Do you find it normal that there has been so much red tape, so much bureaucracy put into this sector, which was never meant to be a bureaucratic sector, that you end up sitting with nearly a billion rupees, soon at the end of the financial year, of cash in the bank, whereas so many NGOs are dying for lack of funds?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition keeps on repeating the same question to me and I am going to reply the same answer. We did not receive any complaint. Madame la présidente, je viens d'avoir une certaine information que Caritas a reçu jusqu'à présent R 17 millions pour ses œuvres. Ce n'est peut-être pas assez, parce que Caritas fait énormément dans le pays. Mais le reste sera déboursé en temps et lieu quand ils vont se servir de l'argent, et c'est cela que nous faisons. Et ça, ce sont les principes de la bonne gouvernance et se servir des fonds publics efficacement.

Mr X.L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the Minister is getting mixed up between approved amounts and part-payment. I don't know what to do. Can you advise me? He is getting mixed up between approved payments and part-payment. But never mind!

Madam Speaker: Most probably, you should ask your question one by one. If you ask for part-payment, you ask for part-payment; and when you ask for approved payments, you ask another question.

Mr X.L. Duval: Okay. I am afraid I do not know if it was confusing.

Madam Speaker, believe me, these questions are in good faith. Believe me! I would like to ask the hon. Minister, there is a limit of Rs3 m. per project. The hon. Minister is aware of that. Now, we know that housing is a terrible issue and a horrible Government performance in addition. Why then, instead of encouraging housing associations, which is a wonderful way of providing social housing, whether it is for rent or for purchase, limit your contribution per NGO to Rs3 m. even for housing, when it could be increased, since you are sitting on Rs1 billion worth of money? It could be increased. Therefore, housing associations, like the rest of the world, could get involved in housing in Mauritius. It is a serious question. Can the limit for housing associations, for example, be increased?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madame la présidente, j'ai bien écouté le leader de l'opposition qui a fait plusieurs propositions au fait, plus que des questions. Et donc, nous pourrions éventuellement nous asseoir et discuter de ces propositions. S'il a de meilleures idées, qu'il vienne de l'avant et qu'il le fasse avec nous. Et je dois dire j'ai aussi entendu un milliard de roupies...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please!

(Interruptions)

No, but he has the right to a fair reply. He has the floor. So, allow him to reply!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Il a mentionné, à un moment, un milliard de roupies. Nous sommes loin d'un milliard de roupies. Il ne faut pas oublier que nous ne prenons pas les 100% de l'argent qui est supposé être donné du *CSR Funds* des compagnies. Il existe encore 75% et 25%. Donc, les 25% restent toujours avec les sociétés privées. And funds are disbursed – I don't want to repeat it again – in two instalments for approved budget. So, I don't want to repeat that again. Thank you.

Mr X. L. Duval: I'll come to that graphically in a moment perhaps. Did not the hon. Minister state that he has Rs748 m. in the bank and also that the amount receivable from

the Accountant General has not yet come, and that would be about Rs200 m.? I know. Did he not say that? Is that a straight question?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: No, again the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentions Rs750 m. It is far from Rs1 billion. Then, to answer the other question, I just had the information that the NCSR Foundation is not mandated to build houses. But these are propositions and I heard it. There is a proposition and we will take it on board.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I am going to ask another question to the hon. Minister. NGOs are financed by calls - he is aware of that - once a year, but at no particular time. Sometimes, the call is in April and then it is in September of the next year. So, what are the NGOs meant to? They are meant to sit there and read the papers, look at the website to know when they are going to do a call? Isn't it time, firstly - it is one question - to have the calls at a precise time during the year and, secondly, to have many more calls so that people who have viable projects during the year do not have to wait another 12 months to apply?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Encore une fois, ce sont des propositions que le leader de l'opposition vient faire. Ne serait-ce pas des propositions? Parce qu'il dit que nous le faisons périodiquement, à notre bon vouloir. Ce n'est pas cela. Les *NGOs* peuvent venir à n'importe quel moment déposer pour se faire enregistrer. À n'importe quel moment ils peuvent le faire. Mais, bien sûr, quand les appels sont faits à une date précise, nous les étudions à cette date.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, what is the point of having calls, which are transparent, if at any point in time you are making an application. I cannot see anywhere in the records of the NCSR that you are taking applications during the year. It is when calls are made. I am saying to you that you are not doing your job well, the NCSR is not doing - call it a proposition if you like, that is also my role to see when work is not being done well - that the fact is - if I want to put it more crudely for you - you are making...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I don't think you can pass a judgment on the hon. Minister. It is not ethical here to pass a judgment on whether the hon. Minister is doing his job well or not. Ask your questions. If he can reply, he will reply; if he cannot reply, he will not reply.

Mr X. L. Duval: Ok, fair enough, Madam Speaker, I don't want to go overboard. I am saying again, so that the hon. Minister understands, that it is important, firstly, not to have

a limit, and to encourage, if he can, housing associations all around the island. It will help. And also that he would have calls much more often during the year and at specific times, say once every three months, so that people can actually know when to send their projects and do so more often. Would he look into this, please?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, again, I will look into the proposition of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. But I believe it is like Budget measures. It is like when the money is given; this is a specific time. That's why there is a specific date to ask for the call - proposition. That's it.

Mr X. L. Duval I will remind the hon. Minister that he is sitting on nearly a billion rupees of money at the moment.

Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the hon. Minister this question. There is no money, as far as I can see, that has been spent on capacity building. I know you have little courses and you went yourself. But with all this money - and you are complaining that NGOs are not good enough, etc., and doing their work well - why hasn't the NCSR Foundation found it proper to appoint people, etc., to do strong - you see, people behind you are nodding their heads? Why don't you do that and do capacity building, as you should, so that you can ensure that the money is not only well spent but that you have many more NGOs that pass the test and can work in Mauritius?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, provision has been made in this Budget to review the NCSR into the NSIF, and all the propositions of the hon. Leader of the Opposition will be taken onboard. I will table whenever I get the information. There are so many new NGOs that were not even being able to receive funds, and they were doing so well. I go around myself. When I visited these NGOs, I asked them to come to the NCSR Foundation and make their proposition to us, and they have received funds. These people are so happy today. There will be some NGOs. I am going to lay it on the Table.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the original point of the CSR, which I regret very much is not happening anymore, was to marry three things. One, money; second, passion of the enterprise and, thirdly, management help by the enterprise. What has happened now, except for the 25%, which nobody really cares about any more? It is too little. So, what has happened now with *l'étatisation du volontariat à Maurice*? What has happened was the money is still around, but it goes round and takes years to come. Passion has been destroyed and also any help that the companies would give to the management of these NGOs has also

disappeared. So, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has any plan, any thought, any action that he will take to try and restore these three elements in the CSR which was the original raison-d'être du CSR.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I draw your attention to the fact that you have four more minutes to go.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Listening very well, Madam Speaker, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, there are lots of opinions. He is expressing his opinions. This is also not the opinion that we receive at the NCSR Foundation. But listening to more propositions today, I will take it onboard whenever it is possible.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Quirin!

Mr Quirin: Merci, Madame la présidente. Dans le programme électoral de *l'Alliance Lepep* en 2014, sous le thème 'La Jeunesse et les Sports', au huitième point, mention est faite du financement du sport par le biais du CSR, le *Corporate Social Responsibility*, et cela afin de développer une politique favorable pour le sport d'élite. De ce fait, peut-on savoir pourquoi cette mesure préconisée, promise par *l'Alliance Lepep*, par le gouvernement actuel, n'a jamais été implémentée jusqu'à présent ?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madame la présidente, je n'ai pas cette information dans les dix priorités qui sont faites par ce gouvernement actuellement.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, with regard to money that has been earmarked up till December, the end of the mandate for distribution, may we know from the hon. Minister how much has been pledged already or earmarked for distribution out of that Rs1 billion that he is sitting on nearly?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Can somebody give me the information? I don't have it with me now. These are figures.

Madam Speaker: In the meantime, we can take another question.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I just received information on the 7th priority area - leisure and sports. There have been 10 projects funded and there is an amount of Rs7,801,531, that is, 3.85% of the project. There were 18 that were being asked and 10 have been given. Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: Can the hon. Minister lay on the Table of the Assembly the set criteria for eligibility to have recourse to the fund of the CSR?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: There are 10 priority areas and it has already been tabled.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, you have just tabled the criteria for eligibility list.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Yes.

Madam Speaker: Okay, that will be circulated.

Mr A. Duval: The hon. Minister has not replied to my question. He has not even acknowledged it. If he can please do so...

Madam Speaker: Please, hon. Adrien Duval. It is up to the hon. Minister to see whether he will reply or not.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, I said I do not have the information. As soon as I get the information, I will table it.

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

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay. Leader of propositions, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Sorry, I did not hear what you said.

Mr X. L. Duval: Leader of propositions as I do now.

Madam Speaker: I said Leader of Opposition.

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes, I know. I am just maybe suggesting to change my title, because it is actually both.

Madam Speaker, we have witnessed over the last three/four years - everybody knows it - massive downsizing of work by the NGOs which were, I maintain, in the great majority, doing a fantastic work. People at Caritas, *kinouete*, Blood Donors Association, etc., - lots of them. And the main reason for that is, firstly, the drastic reduction in what they claim as expenses; secondly, the massive and excessive bureaucracy at the National CSR Foundation. So, I would ask the hon. Minister if he could see to it that the massive and excessive bureaucracy at the National CSR Foundation, treating all NGOs as if they were thieves, even huge and respectable ones, should cease, and we should go back to a voluntary sector which is full of enthusiasm, patriotism and wishing to work for the country.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madam Speaker, once again, it is the opinion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, because from information I received, I don't have this complaint coming to me. Of course, I heard it is being written in newspapers. But do I have to take in account what is written in newspaper? Because I have an office and CSR Foundation has officers also there at the NEF building. So, they can all come. If they are eligible, they will receive their money. They will receive it, as we said, not the whole fund at the same time. We have earmarked the first instalment. Then, the monitoring is done. Now, after the monitoring that we did, we found out that there are NGOs that are not using their money as they should. One of the NGOs is Faith exactly. I have been given the information. There is more information about this. You know, last time, hon. Rutnah asked a question and I did not have the exact information. When I received the information, I was very shocked. You see, the hon. Member did not give the right information to the House. He said that he was not with Faith. It has broadly been on the website. He claimed himself as being the Chairman of Faith, distributing different things.

Madam Speaker: Do not mention names.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: One of the things I discovered, he travelled to Rodrigues Island and Faith paid the money for him.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Armance! Hon. Armance! Hon. Armance!

(Interruptions)

You can't. Stand up and say this! Stand up and say this!

Mr Armance: He is a liar.

Madam Speaker: He is a liar? I'll ask you to withdraw this.

Mr Armance: Okay. I withdraw it, but he is a liar.

Madam Speaker: No, you withdraw unconditionally. I will not accept it.

Mr Armance: Okay, I withdraw.

Madam Speaker: Okay. Time is over!

(Interruptions)

No, hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Yes, Madam!

Madam Speaker: Don't obstruct the work of this House.

Dr. Boolell: On a point of order. Is the hon. Minister allowed to impute motive? Can he substantiate that? It is not fair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell, if you think that the hon. Minister has made allegations, then he takes his responsibility and he will come to the House and explain later. In a statement, he can come and explain. Okay!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move that all the business on today's Order Paper be exempted from the provisions of paragraph (2) of Standing Order 10.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

CEDAW COMMITTEE - OBSERVATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, with your permission...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan I am really sorry. Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Dawreeawoo, please resume your seat. I heard mentioning the name of Mr Chaumière. Yesterday, I had already made a statement to the House and I think the matter is closed. Yes, hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

Mr Bhagwan: Can I make a point of order?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, I have already given my ruling on this issue. What I would ask you is just to refrain from making comments on this matter for the time being. Yes!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the dissemination and implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee following its 71st session held on 30 October 2018 in Geneva. The delegation comprised Mr A. Appadoo, Head of the Planning and Research Unit of the Ministry of Gender Quality, Child Development and Family Welfare, Mrs P. Goordyal-Chitto, Assistant Solicitor General as well as the Ambassador and officers from our Mission in Geneva.

On 22 December 2017, Cabinet decided that a full-fledged secretariat and a national mechanism for reporting and follow-up is set up at the level of the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms under the chairpersonship of the Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms to coordinate, prepare reports and engage with international, regional and human rights bodies and to monitor national follow-up and implement treaty obligations and recommendations. It is a unique platform on which Government and civil society organisations are represented.

The NGOs present at the level of the national mechanism for reporting and follow-up include, amongst others, the Mauritius Council of Social Service; Prevention, Information et Lutte contre le Sida (PILS); Centre d'Éducation et de Développement pour les Enfants Mauriciens (CEDEM), Dis-Moi (DroItS HuMains Océan Indien), Young Queer Alliance, Collectif Arc-en-Ciel and Chrysalide.

In regard to the dissemination and implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee, the Ministry has taken the following actions –

- (a) internal meetings were immediately conducted to analyse the issues highlighted in the said document and an Action Plan was elaborated;
- (b) Cabinet was apprised of the concluding observations and recommendations at its meeting of 23 November 2018 and the document was posted on the website of the Ministry;
- (c) the concluding observations and recommendations have been circulated to all Ministries in January 2019 to request them to look into issues falling under their purview and to take necessary measures to address same and to report accordingly;

- (d) concurrently, the gender focal points of all ministries have been apprised of the concluding observations and recommendations of CEDAW Committee on 20.02.2019 to ensure that sectoral interventions are aligned to address same, and
- (e) a Monitoring Committee has been set up at the level of the Ministry. A first meeting was chaired by the Permanent Secretary on 02 May, 2019 with representatives of Ministries, Departments to monitor progress. A second meeting of the Committee will be held in August 2019.

In addition, Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that the State report submitted to the CEDAW Committee is posted on the website of the office of the UN High Commissioner for human rights. The statement I made before the Committee as well as the shadow reports which had been submitted by Gender Links, Young Queer Alliance, Media Watch Organisation, SOS femme, Musawah for equality in the family and global initiative to end all corporal punishment of children prior to the State delegation being heard can also be viewed on the said website. The Ministry has taken all necessary steps to ensure the dissemination and implementation of the concluding observations and recommendations of the CEDAW Committee as far as possible prior to the submission of our next Country Report which is due in November 2022.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL 2019

(NO. X OF 2019)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill 2019 (No. X of 2019).

Question again proposed.

(12.12 a.m)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madame la présidente, je voudrais premièrement vous remercier pour l'opportunité qui m'est accordée pour intervenir sur le discours du Budget 2019-2020 prononcé par notre Premier ministre et ministre des Finances,

l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Beaucoup de commentaires ont été émis depuis, que ce soit des medias, les observateurs économiques et politiques de la classe syndicale, de la société civile entre autres. Ici même, au sein de cette auguste Assemblée, j'ai eu l'occasion d'écouter attentivement aux différents propos tenus par mes collègues parlementaires.

Madame la présidente, je tiendrai, au tout début de mon intervention, à m'attarder sur la philosophie même des budgets successifs du Premier ministre et ministre des Finances. Il serait bien de rappeler à la Chambre qu'on est en train de débattre sur le septième budget de l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Aujourd'hui, c'est un fait indéniable que le *focus* de l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, en tant que grand argentier, a toujours été l'amélioration de la qualité de vie des mauriciens. Son expérience et surtout sa détermination à répondre aux attentes des mauriciens rend chacun de ses budgets un exercice réconfortant surtout pour ceux au bas de l'échelle, les plus vulnérables, Madame la présidente.

La philosophie étant de grossir le gâteau national afin que chacun retrouve sa part. Ce budget, Madame la présidente, permet à chaque Mauricien de se retrouver, homme, femme, jeune, aîné, tous sont pris en considération. Il est clair, Madame la présidente, que notre Premier ministre et ministre des Finances tient à cœur l'intérêt de ce peuple et surtout les plus vulnérables. Chaque mesure a comme objectif une amélioration de la qualité de vie et le bien-être des mauriciens. Les faits sont bien là, réels, je prendrai que quelques-uns, Madame la présidente. Les autres l'ont fait avant moi, mais je pense que c'est important de repasser là-dessus. Le prix du gaz ménager est passé de R 330 à R 210, une baisse de R 120, Madame la présidente. La pension est à R 6,710 à partir de janvier. Certains nous disaient que la somme de R 5,000 relevait du domaine de l'impossible et que cela ne serait possible qu'à condition d'augmenter la TVA. Ils proposaient R 4,000, arguant que *l'Alliance Lepep* était en train de 'bluffer', Madame la présidente. Pourtant, c'était bien l'un des premiers engagements que nous avons honorés après les élections 2014, et cela avec le 13ème mois !

Madame la présidente, le salaire minimal qui a vraiment changé la vie des milliers de mauriciens. Hier, quelqu'un faisait mention de ces dames qui travaillaient dans les écoles comme *cleaner*, qui ne touchaient que R 1,500 par mois. C'est un changement drastique dans leur vie et ça a été possible grâce au salaire minimal. Je ne parlerai pas du *Negative Income Tax*, et maintenant, le *Wage Guarantee Fund* qui va assurer, Madame la présidente, a *remuneration of up Rs50,000 for workers who lose their job in case of insolvency of the company*. Le plan d'assurance médicale aux fonctionnaires, avec 100% de premium payé pour ceux touchant moins de R 10,000.

Madame la présidente, nous avons le *duty free* pour les *double labs* pour les apiculteurs de sorte à ce qu'eux aussi reçoivent les mêmes facilités, les mêmes opportunités que d'autres qui travaillent dans le secteur de l'agro-industrie.

Madam Speaker, the exemption of the road tax as well! Et au chapitre du logement social, on encourage ceux au bas de l'échelle et l'on retiendra que dans le présent budget, l'introduction de deux nouvelles catégories de bénéficiaires pour les appartements de la *National Housing Development Company* qui bénéficieront d'une subvention de l'état de l'ordre de 25% et de 15% respectivement.

Les Universités gratuites à partir de janvier, 2019. Je reviendrai là-dessus plus tard, Madame la présidente. 37,500 familles ciblées par le *Water Tank Project*. L'internet gratuit a 11,000 familles sous le registre social. Hausse du *carer's allowance* de R 3,000 à R 3,500 pour 23,000 retraités alités. La visite à domicile des médecins pour ceux qui sont alités, et cela à partir de 60 ans. La mise en opération d'un hôpital pour le cancer, le nouveau *ENT Hospital*, le *teaching hospital de flacq*, le recrutement du personnel médical, le développement, Madame la présidente, les infrastructures à Rodrigues, Agalega et les autres îles. Je ne pourrais ne pas mentionner l'exonération des frais d'enregistrement pour les premiers acheteurs des maisons ou d'un appartement pour un montant maximal de R 5 millions. Ces mesures prennent en compte tous ceux qui veulent réussir. Les jeunes et les moins jeunes qui peuvent maintenant aspirer à devenir propriétaires.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the education sector. Our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has shown his commitment to ensure the delivery of quality education to our children. Il faut bien souligner que de 2015 à 2018, le gouvernement a déboursé près d'un milliard et demi de roupies pour financer les frais des examens de la SC et de la HSC et on s'en félicite car nous croyons en une société plus juste où chacun ait la chance égale à réussir dans la vie.

Madame la présidente, nous avons bouclé la boucle. L'éducation à Maurice est gratuite et ce du pré-primaire jusqu'au tertiaire dans le secteur public. L'honorable Madame Perraud nous demandait il y a quelques temps de cela si l'éducation tertiaire était vraiment gratuite. Madame la présidente, il suffit de le demander aux parents, ils vous le diront. Peut-être qu'on ne se rend pas compte de l'impact de cette mesure. Combien de jeunes mauriciens terminant leur parcours scolaire aspirent à faire des études supérieures. Combien de ces jeunes ne pouvaient pas les faire parce que les parents n'en avaient pas les moyens, parce

c'était dur, il fallait attendre. Hier, quelqu'un avait dit qu'il fallait attendre qu'un des frères ou des sœurs terminent les études pour qu'eux puissent aller vers l'enseignement supérieur. Les parents devaient prendre des *loans*, et on a vu que ça se chiffrait en milliards, les *loans* que les parents prenaient pour les études supérieures de leurs enfants. Et après avoir pris les *loans*, l'*overtime* qu'ils devaient faire pour pouvoir repayer ces *loans*. Aujourd'hui, c'est chose du passé. Avec cette mesure, les élèves pourront continuer leur études, les parents n'auront plus besoin d'aller prendre des *loans*, les parents n'auront plus besoin de se tuer avec les *overtime* pour pouvoir payer ces *loans* et les intérêts. Ils auront plus de temps pour leur famille, pour leur enfant. L'impact de cette mesure, on l'a verra plus tard. Il faut se dire, si nous voulons que le pays passe *the high income status*, cela se fera en préparant le *manpower* de demain, cela se fait qu'à travers l'éducation et la formation, et cela a été possible par cette mesure annoncée par notre Premier ministre le 1^{er} janvier de cette année-ci et on n'a pas tardé s'y mettre.

Madame la présidente, si on a réussi notre réforme de l'éducation, c'est parce qu'on a toujours eu le soutien du Premier ministre et de mes collègues ministres, parce que nous avons réussi là où d'autres n'ont pu. Nous avons promis de retourner leur enfance à nos enfants, de rendre l'école plus attrayante, de leur redonner le goût d'apprendre et nous avons été soutenus dans cette démarche par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth qui nous a donné tous les moyens possibles pour y arriver.

Au fil de ces quatre dernières années, nous avons eu des dotations budgétaires très importantes qui nous ont permis de faire un recrutement massif d'éducateurs et du personnel non enseignants, dont 1,336 éducateurs au primaire, 343 *Support Teachers*, 430 *Educators for Holistic Education Programme*, 67 *ICT Support Officers*. Au secondaire, 570 éducateurs – nouveaux. On notera aussi, l'emploi des *General Workers*, 736 during ces quatre dernières années. Dans le secteur de l'enseignement supérieur, on compte 110 nouveaux chargés de cours dans nos institutions publiques depuis le début de 2015. Et là, j'aurais aimé souligner que je ne parle que de mon secteur ! Certains disaient, il y a quelque temps, qu'il n'y a pas eu de baisse dans le taux de chômage. On a atteint un taux de chômage de 6.9%, et me dit-on le plus faible depuis des décennies !

Madame la présidente, il faudrait qu'on soit plus lucide - et qu'on voit ce qui se fait – et qu'on ait le courage de faire face à la réalité. Il y a beaucoup que nous avons déjà fait. On a aussi mis beaucoup d'emphase sur la formation continue de nos éducateurs. C'est une priorité chez nous, je reviendrai là-dessus plus tard.

Nous vivons, Madame la présidente, dans l'ère numérique. Le temps où l'outil informatique n'est plus perçu comme une commodité de luxe. Ce temps est révolu, Madame la présidente. On est de plein pied dans l'ère numérique, et nos jeunes sont ce qu'on appelle les '*digital natives*'. Il est de notre devoir de s'assurer que tous nos jeunes ont les mêmes chances, qu'ils ont accès aux connaissances à travers l'outil informatique, qui est devenu un *must*, pour qu'ils puissent continuer à évoluer dans ce monde technologique, dans l'ère de la technologie et de l'information.

It is in that spirit of equity that we came up with an Early Digital Learning Programme which started in January 2017, and it has extended from Grades I and II to Grade III this year and to Grade IV next year, Madam Speaker. We want all our children to have access to technology and modernity. We are doing away with the digital divide. This, Madam Speaker, has been made possible due to the support we had both financially and as technical support from the Government of India.

A ce jour, Madame la présidente, 39,680 tablettes sont en utilisation dans nos établissements scolaires et plus de 1,500 éducateurs, *Headmasters, Deputy Headmasters, ICT Support Officers, Primary School Inspectors* ont été formés. La formation *is ongoing*.

Madame la présidente, j'ai eu l'occasion personnellement de me rendre dans ces écoles pour faire un constat de l'utilisation des tablettes tactiles en Grades I, II, et III. Je peux vous dire que les élèves, enseignants, comme chefs d'établissement, démontrent tous un enthousiasme prononcé pour l'apprentissage à travers l'utilisation de ces tablettes. Cette initiative est venue, plus que jamais, révolutionner l'enseignement, et nos enfants sont bien plus intéressés à leurs études, ils sont plus sereins et confiants en classe. Et je me réjouis que le projet *EDLP* soit étendu en Grade IV l'an prochain. L'*ICT Skills* comme *non core subject* a été introduit depuis 2018.

Madame la présidente, avec la connectivité dans nos écoles primaires maintenant, les possibilités, les opportunités sont illimitées. Et là, j'aimerais ajouter que nous avons eu le soutien de tous les éducateurs, la *Government Teachers Union, the Government Hindi Teachers Union* et d'autres sont en train de se joindre pour faire des *workshops* pour permettre à ce que l'utilisation de la tablette se fait dans toutes les classes, dans les classes de langue orientale, arabe et autres. Alors, *we are living in a new era, Madam Speaker*, c'est très important.

Et là, nous avons voulu que notre projet le *EDLP* soit suivi par la *World Bank*. La Banque Mondiale est en train de faire une évaluation du progrès accompli. Au secondaire, Madame la présidente, le *Student Support Programme*, les leçons gratuites en ligne sont offertes aux élèves de Grades VII et VIII et l'an prochain ce sera pour ceux de Grade IX. Le *Student Support Programme* vient désormais donner la chance aux élèves d'apprendre à leur propre rythme, *any time, anywhere, at your own pace*. Et cela, Madame la présidente, vous conviendrez dans le présent budget, le grand argentier est venu boucler encore une fois la boucle, en donnant l'accès gratuit à l'Internet aux familles inscrites sur le registre social, 11,000 familles, Madame la présidente.

Avec une telle mesure, personne n'est laissée sur la touche. Peu importe ses moyens, tout le monde à accès équitable à l'informatique. Encore une fois, Madame la présidente, c'est clair, ce gouvernement est un gouvernement avant-gardiste, qui a tout fait pour réussir, et les mesures adoptées le démontrent clairement.

This Government does not live in the past. Today, nobody contests the changes and transformations that we have brought into the system. We have set things right in a number of areas. Let me now give an insight of the novelty we have introduced in our education system to make it more responsive to our needs.

Aujourd'hui, on peut le dire fièrement, l'école permet le développement intégral de nos enfants. Je reviendrai, Madame la présidente, sur les nombreux projets que nous avons entrepris. Mais laissez-moi commencer par dire que *the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education has been in line with modern trend to ensure solid foundation upon which children can build their future learning. It thus places learning at the heart of schooling and has given rise to new measures to plug learning gaps. We have come up with the Early Support Programme to address this issue.*

Madame la présidente, *we all know the net result of allowing learning deficits to go unchecked right from the start negatively impact on the future of our learners. Qu'est-ce que nous avons fait ? Nous sommes venus avec l'Early Support Programme pour s'assurer que les élèves n'accumulent pas leurs deficits in learning et de ce fait, nous essayons de les remettre sur the right track très rapidement. Students having learning difficulties are put on remediation programmes, using innovative pedagogical approaches, 343 Support Teachers* sont là pour le faire.

Madam Speaker, the new curriculum developed is broad-based and learner centered with core and non-core subjects, the new mode of assessment has been developed at the end of primary cycle. The Primary School Achievement Certificate has been introduced. I would like to mention that I have often heard people of the Opposition saying that *on a remplacé le CPE par la PSAC, on a changé le nom des classes, on n'a plus de standard, on parle de grade.*

Vous savez combien nous avons apporté de nos écoles avec l'*Early Support*, avec la *Holistic Education*, avec la natation scolaire, avec le *after school sports* ? Il fait bon d'être à l'école maintenant. Les élèves vont avec beaucoup de joie à l'école, et les mesures que nous avons adoptées sont des mesures très réfléchies, et on sait où nous sommes en train de mener nos écoles.

Madam Speaker, all students having completed the primary cycle now transit to the secondary cycle. Those who did not attain the required level at the level of Grade VI enter the extended Four-Year Programme which has been elaborated for them.

Madam Speaker, let me stress, the extended programme is not the prevocational stream. It is a totally new concept, with a totally new approach, allowing the integration and inclusion of the child *dans le milieu scolaire*. The students are provided with the right support, *l'encadrement voulu*, for them to develop their learning skills. The school will provide them with the scaffolds they require, for them to rise. The educators, the facilitators, responsible for the section will provide the child with appropriate support. Innovative pedagogies would be used to ensure that they grasp the basic concepts of the curriculum.

Madam Speaker, the extended programme will receive the support of the CSR Funds. It has been mentioned. We are providing more resources, so that we can take care of all these children. After the two years, we have been following these students, we do realise that some of them will require additional attention, some of them will automatically rise and join the other stream, the regular stream, but some of them definitely will require more support. *Oui, ce sont des enfants à problèmes, mais ce ne sont pas des problèmes qu'ils ont créés, eux. Ils viennent d'un milieu difficile, ils ont des difficultés, et il nous faut réaliser qu'il va falloir qu'on leur donne tout le soutien nécessaire.* I believe that they will succeed, and perhaps one of the first signals of the success of our reform would be through the extended programme.

C'est difficile, je suis d'accord mais I must add, Madam Speaker, that I have been meeting the teachers, the educators working with the extended programme students *et là, je dois dire chapeau!* These teachers are so motivated, they know that it's a hard job, but they

are enthusiastic about it. I have met all of them and I must say that *ces gens, ces éducateurs sont en train de se réinventer pour pouvoir mieux servir ces enfants*.

I must, here, pay tribute to their educators, because it's not an easy job. As I have just said, these children come to school and when we educate people, it's not only giving them *le savoir*. It is about *le savoir-être, le savoir-vivre* and the teachers are compensating for any *manquement que ces enfants ont chez eux*. It's not only that, these teachers, educators and facilitators are also linking up with the parents. There is a whole set of measures that is being taken. At the primary level, we have parents being trained at the same time. Parent education is being done; it's a whole panoply of services that we are providing. I must say that we owe respect to the educators who are going out of their way to help these students, and I am the first one to say that it's not an easy job.

Aujourd'hui, le professeur n'est plus '*the imparter of knowledge*'. Le professeur est l'accompagnateur, celui qui doit être avec l'enfant, qui doit l'aider à discerner *what is right from what is wrong*. Il faut accepter, nous vivons dans une ère moderne où les jeunes sont exposés à différents courants de pensées, à travers l'Internet, à travers la télévision, à travers les medias, *social networks*, et le professeur doit se réinventer. Ils font ce travail. Et là, je dois dire que, moi, en les rencontrant, j'ai été extrêmement contente parce que ça m'a donné de l'espoir. Nous avons dans nos institutions des gens qui font un travail exceptionnel, qui ont à cœur l'intérêt de ces enfants, et je dois dire que nous croyons en ces jeunes.

J'étais un peu peinée, je dois dire, hier ou avant-hier, je crois, en entendant un des parlementaires de l'opposition dire que les jeunes vont tout droit dans le mur, et il a peint un paysage extrêmement noir, sombre, très pessimiste. Mais, moi, je dois vous dire que je suis heureuse et j'ai foi en ces jeunes, j'ai confiance en eux, et je suis convaincue que ces jeunes ont toutes les possibilités pour pouvoir demain prendre les rênes de ce pays. Et j'étais contente d'entendre, par contre, l'honorable Toussaint parler des jeunes et de leurs accomplissements. C'est extraordinaire! Nous avons aussi un devoir de leur donner le soutien, l'encadrement, et aussi, leur apprendre à vivre. Dans certains cas, il nous faut leur apprendre à se discipliner aussi.

Madame la présidente, le nouveau système que nous avons mis en place aura aussi à la fin de neuf années d'étude, l'évaluation, la NCE et le premier *assessment* qu'on va faire sera en 2020. Les élevés pourront par la suite se faire admettre dans les académies, les 12 académies.

Madam Speaker, the reforms and the transformation that we have brought are systemic. As I have said earlier, they cut across all the subsectors of education, pre-primary, primary, secondary. A lot is being done at pre-primary level as well. We are coming up with a new notion. At the level of the primary, we are coming with the notion of brain-based learning. I will talk about the ZEP schools later on. I will talk about the great work being done by the educators, by the private sector bringing their helping hand to these schools. We are training teachers, it's a whole new concept of teaching that we are bringing.

Madam Speaker, I have been talking about the achievements that we have made and we also have a strategic plan for the next three years. We have already been forward looking, and I will come to the title of this Budget, Madam Speaker, 'Embracing a Brighter Future Together as a Nation'. It becomes then a call for continuation, for consolidation of actions undertaken of what is now left to be done.

Madam Speaker, I will place the rest of my intervention within the context of human resource development. One major *raison d'être* of an education system.

At paragraph 23 of the Budget document, the notion of brighter future of the Republic of Mauritius impacted along the following lines –

- “where Mauritius will be in the league of High Income Countries and where Mauritians will live a healthier life style;
- where Mauritius will be a more inclusive nation, with better sharing of wealth and income and where prosperity is for all;
- where development will be sustainable for present and future generations; and
- where Mauritius will be an innovative country that glows with modernity.”

We must agree that the manifestation of such a brighter future is intrinsically related to the effective development of our human resources.

Madam Speaker, the importance of empowering human resources and the workforce has been a long running narrative, where education and training are concerned. I need hardly labour the point there, suffice is to say that this Budget gives my Ministry the means to fulfill the vision that it has set for itself so that Mauritius has its prime place in a global economy based on knowledge.

Madam Speaker, the setting up of the academy for teachers is, indeed, a milestone. This academy will facilitate collaborative and peer learning among the teaching community

such that tried and tested techniques can be shared, network established for the setting up of hands on communities of practice and it will definitely encourage action research within the classroom. It is obviously delightful to note that we shall have the academy for teachers, ultimately, in the Réduit to Côte d'Or corridor where a hub will be developed. It will include the Mauritius Institute of Education and the University of Technology.

Madam Speaker, if we want to train educators, we need to give them the right setup. Having MIE at the Côte d'Or corridor, allowing them to have the space required, allowing teachers to develop their skills in a better setup will definitely be fruitful for our students. I must say something more. When we are moving there with the academy allowing this networking among teachers, the MIE and the UTM, we are obviously providing space and resources for the future because human resource development is definitely linked to our future.

Teacher capacity building is extremely important and I must say that this has to start with building capacity of educators, facilitating their continuous professional development. Teachers today have to be empowered to enhance the delivery. Pedagogical approaches, as I have said earlier, Madam Speaker, will have to change. ICT mediated learning, especially at a time when technology gives students a voice of their own Learning should come naturally to them, above all the new realities of the classroom and the schools have to be confronted.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that in the 1990s it was the MSM in Government, we had allowed all educators in the secondary sector to upgrade their qualifications, to become degree holders, through courses offered by the MIE jointly with the University of Mauritius, and we have changed the landscape of the teaching profession in the secondary sector. Today, with MIE, now an awarding body, the same procedure is being set up for the primary sector. Courses are going to be launched in two weeks' time for the B.Ed. primary school educators. So, Madam Speaker, *on ne baisse pas les bras, on va continuer à travailler dur*. Today the MIE has got new horizons. Madam Speaker, the type of workforce and human capital will depend enormously on the way schools and the homes have been conditioned. Often, we cannot exercise much of control on what happens at home. but we can certainly do it in schools.

One of the cardinal principles underlying the reform agenda in education has been the compulsion to have schools where our children thrive, where they definitely have improved academic outcomes, but where they equally enjoy better health and wellbeing. My Ministry

now has a Health and Wellness Directorate. We want our schools to develop our children into happy, well-adjusted citizens rather than just pupils who can pass a test and get through school. Yes, we do want them to be sound, skilled, capable persons. Yes, we do want them to develop the soft skills that withstand in good stead in the work environment where goal posts are constantly shifting. But it is also important for schools to help breed healthy, social, emotionally balanced persons who can form close, secure and meaningful relationships, young persons, capable of developing positive coping strategies and strengthen emotional resilience. The four pillars of the Delors Report, 'Learning the Treasure Within', are still well worth their weight; 'Learning to do, Learning to know' have to be complimented by Learning to be' and 'Learning to live together'. And that must be fostered in our children right from an early age. It is, therefore, all the more worth highlighting that major innovative projects and programmes initiated in our schools are now being further supported and extended to more institutions.

The Emotional and Social Well-Being Programme introduced in our schools allow students to develop their capacity to manage and control their emotions. The Health and Wellness Directorate has launched this programme of well-being which aims at developing their emotional balance, training them to manage their emotions. And we did not stop at that, we have been working with SEDEC for the primary school students, using '*La Gestion des Emotions*' as a programme. But now, we are moving on to the secondary sector and we are coming with the ground-breaking 'Leader in Me Programme'. The 'Leader in Me Programme', in secondary schools for Grade 7 students, Madam Speaker, it is a programme based on 'Stephen Covey's 7 Habits of the Most Successful Leaders'. And we want this to start in our schools so that our children, our students, become self-disciplined, and they develop their self-esteem that will help them in their future. This will allow them to grow into responsible citizens of our Republic. And this, Madam Speaker, I must stress, *parce que l'honorable Madame Perraud avait mentionné qu'elle n'avait pas vu le montant* in the Estimates *pour le* 'Leader in me Programme'. This is a project that is being carried out along with our partners of the private sector and we are going to ensure that it gets credit to all our schools.

We also have the 'Get connected Programme', an initiative of the Prime Minister's Office. We have been working with the United Nations to come up with a curriculum for schools. It has been implemented in 56 schools, now we want it to spread to all our schools. I must here have a special word for my colleague, the Minister of Youth and Sports, and for

the Mauritius Sports Council for the wonderful work carried out in our schools *avec le projet natation scolaire*. We are trying to get as many schools involved in that project as possible. We have projects to extend these facilities to other schools. So many young children now learn to swim. We are not aiming at getting them into becoming professional swimmers or Olympic champions, but we at least want them to learn to swim. And you will be surprised, Madam Speaker, many of our children initially, in spite of the fact that we live on an island, were scared of getting into the swimming pool. So, we have made a progress and I must thank, as I have said, the Mauritius Sports Council for their support, because the coaches come from the Mauritius Sports Council, from the collaboration we have with the Ministry of Youth and Sports. It is a wonderful programme.

The After School Sports! The Prime Minister keeps on saying that we need to develop a culture *d'activités physiques*. Now, we need to start early and this is being done, again, with the help of the Mauritius Sports Council in all our schools. Grade 4 students stay back after school hours to practice some physical activities, like football. We intend to go further and try to put in theatre, music, etc. in the After School Concept.

Madam Speaker, the Budget also makes additional provision for the consolidation and expansion of these programmes, and this shows that these programmes were successful. But it is also a recognition that they do contribute immensely to the present and future wellbeing of our youths. Having said that, Madam Speaker, we must also remember that values in education are as important as the value of education. Such values as sound attitude, sharing, concern for others motivate students learning. However, we also need to have the conducive physical environment that contributes to the whole. The Budget recognises this and provides for the means to improve the infrastructure and the learning environment of schools. We talk about the 'Fortified Learning Environment', in primary as well as secondary schools, and for this, provision has been made in the Budget.

Madam Speaker, it is often said that the school is a microcosms of society, that whatever happens in society impacts upon the school. We want the impact to be a positive type. However, Government have to serve to the commitment it has made to the youths. We will ensure that they grow into responsible citizens, imbued with values and a sound code of conduct and behaviour. A disciplined learner grows into a disciplined citizen. This has to start right from their formative years while they are going through their schooling phase. But it can only happen when schools are seen as a safe haven for learners, where every one of them abides by rules and regulations that are preventive, supportive and corrective.

Accountability for creating an orderly and safe environment for effective learning to take place is at once the responsibility of adults at school and the students themselves, that is, the staff and school leaders as well as the students themselves.

We already have a panoply of measures being implemented to curbing indiscipline at school and I am deeply appreciative of the additional support promised in this budget. We will be having more educational psychologists, more educational social workers and we know that these cadres have a special role in advising, guiding and counselling our students with regard to the personal and social issues. I will not list them all but certainly anxiety, self-esteem, family problems, relationship and interpersonal issues, societal behaviours, anger management right at the top.

In this last context, I believe that all stakeholders are now pleased to hear that we will be having the discipline masters also there. The discipline masters will also undergo training before getting into our schools. But it is also important for us to understand that it is not, although, even one case of violence or of misbehaviour is one too many. We have to understand that in schools, you have students who are extremely well-mannered, who also have a discipline but we need to cope with all of them. So, it is important, Madam Speaker, that students do come to schools and get the support needed, get the counselling required and we should not allowed their personal problems to impair their learning. We all agree that discipline is an essential element which renders the school environment conducive to teaching and learning. We want our students to grow in the best environment possible.

Our educational counselling services have a number of cadres to help us move in that direction. We have Senior Educators, we have Deputy Rectors and all but we need to empower them to carry out their overall role effectively. Madam Speaker, our learners today, as I have said, are the human resources of tomorrow, slated to sustain the development of our country. They must be equipped with innovative, cutting edge knowledge, skills and appropriate attitudes. They need to provide a qualitatively rich and relevant education at all levels. The bottom line is that the high education level, the better educated the individuals are, the lower the risk of unemployment.

Madam Speaker, access to the world of high education has been democratised with the bold measure announced by the Prime Minister. Free education has now been extended to tertiary level in our public institutions. We are seeing to it that universities and polytechnics

programmes have a direct relevance to the world of work through partnership with industry. They do, in fact, meet the latter's need as well as their entrepreneurial ones.

Our tertiary educational institutions today have linked up with a number of renowned international foreign institutions –

- l'Université de Maurice avec l'Université d'Arizona;
- l'Université de Maurice avec l'Université de Paris;
- la Central Queensland University of Technology;
- l'Université des Mascareignes avec l'Université de Limoges et l'Université de Nice;
- au niveau de l'Open University, nous avons des *linkages* avec Imperial College de Londres;
- the Indira Gandhi National Open University de l'Inde;
- l'Université de la Californie, et
- l'Université de la Technologie qui a aussi des partenaires étrangers, BHU.

Madame la présidente, l'honorable Madame Perraud nous demandait pourquoi avoir le *Knowledge Hub* à Réduit ou à Côte d'Or. Pourquoi ? Nous ne sommes pas en train de travailler sans une vision, Madame la présidente. Nous avons l'intention de faire de l'île Maurice un *Knowledge Hub* et nous sommes en train de travailler dans ce sens. C'est bien de noter le nombre grandissant de jeunes étrangers venant dans nos institutions. Il y a autour de 2,000 ou 2,500 élèves à ce jour. Mais il y a aussi des choses importantes que nous devons garder en tête. L'Afrique, le continent, le continent de demain, le continent du futur, à 200 millions de jeunes en dessous de l'âge de 25 ans. Les leaders *Africains* sont conscients que la renaissance de l'Afrique ne se fera qu'avec une formation et une éducation de qualité. Ils sont tous en train de réaliser que le futur est là. Ils sont tous en train de se dire que –

“The demographic bulge, the youth bulge that they have must be transformed into a demographic dividend and that this dividend can only be achieved through education.”

And they are turning to us. We must not forget that we offer scholarships to Africa. But there are so many students wishing to come to Mauritius. Why? Why to Mauritius? Why is it that we have such a potential of becoming a regional Education Hub? We must not forget the high quality and the high standard of education offered here in Mauritius. We must not forget the safety issue, *la sécurité*. We must not forget the exceptional and unequal intercultural

experience that we can offer in Mauritius. We must not forget all that and we must not forget that even Polytechnics Mauritius has got collaborations with HTMI from Switzerland, La Trobe University from Australia and we have the potential of offering support to our friends from Africa. There is a demand for seats in our institutions and we are moving very confidently towards making Mauritius a Knowledge Hub and this will be possible, Madam Speaker, and this is our vision. And I must say such collaboration is not limited to our public institutions –

- Charles Telfair has linked up with Curtin University;
- Unicity working with *l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Nantes et l'Université Panthéon-Assas*;
- L'African Leadership College *avec le* Glasgow Caledonian University.

Je vous parlais tout à l'heure-là du *technical and vocational training*. Madame la présidente, tous les pays qui ont réussi à bouger vers le *high-income status* sont des pays qui ont mis l'emphase sur la formation et l'enseignement technique. Et là je dois dire que *as it is the case in most countries, there is a tendency for people to think that TVET is second class education. That they would go to TVET if they did not get a seat at the universities. This is a notion that we have to rub out.*

Madame la présidente, l'Allemagne, la Corée, le Singapour sont des pays qui ont réussi parce qu'ils ont pu développer le secteur du *TVET* et c'est ce qu'on va faire à Maurice.

Madam Speaker, I had been to Harvard University for a training and over there, they had asked me what is the legacy that I want to leave for my country in the education sector and what I said, Madam Speaker, was that I wanted a rebranded attractive TVET sector which will produce the higher end technical skills that we require to move our country to the high-income status and this is what we are doing, Madam Speaker.

There was another question raised by hon. Mrs Perraud, asking about the Polytechnics Mauritius. I must say with much pride, Madam Speaker, that the Polytechnics which started operation 2 years back, has managed to get 700 students and above this year, in March and they are going to recruit more taking into consideration that we are offering quality education, quality training, that we have links with HTMI of Switzerland and of Singapore. The students will have the possibility of going for training for certain semesters in these different institutions abroad and think of the exposure that we are providing to them, and think of the type of students that will move out of our polytechnics, how they are going to

contribute to the advancement of our country, how they are going to contribute to push Mauritius to this higher income status, Madam Speaker.

And skills development is extremely important in the drive to enhance productivity, stimulate growth and promote economic development. Moreover, one of the goals of the educational reform of our Government is to have a vibrant TVET sector which is responsive to the national economic needs. We are rebranding this sector and we are going to enhance the pathways for school leavers, from Grade 9, from Grade 13 to our polytechnics and the pathways created for them to move from polytechnics to the universities if they so wish. But the shortcut is that when you go to polytechnics, you get into the world of work, more rapidly. Your employability is enhanced manifold.

Now, another important public provider of training in this domain is the MITD. I must state that the MITD is working with ITES from Singapore. They had a 10-days workshop for the review of curriculum and they have reviewed a number of the curriculum so as to increase its relevance, capacity building and professional development of trainers is being carried out. We are providing state-of-the-art infrastructure and equipment along with it in the new training centres. We are strengthening the quality assurance system and we have improved our partnership with the world of work. This is why I am extremely appreciative that this new Budget is providing for funds for the Beau Vallon Centre which is going to be a jewel in the crown; the training centre to be constructed at the cost of Rs219 m.

Madam Speaker, one thing is certain, we have today a number of diverse providers operating in a sector that is yet not properly regulated. Going forward, if we want the country to move to the next level of its economic development in its quest to become a high-income country, we need to ensure that we provide good quality of programs. We must give due recognition to the various skills. We need to devise criteria required for training institutions to be given awarding powers and this Budget makes provision for the setting up of the Skills Development Authority as a regulator for the sector. In addition to that responsibility, the Skills Development Authority will have to foster the means to meet industries' need and it will help to boost the image of TVET and attract better qualified students to the highest skills development.

Madam Speaker, I was saying that...

Madam Speaker: Do you think hon. Minister, you'll finish, say, in ten minutes or you have more than that?

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: No, it's going to take another twenty minutes, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Another twenty minutes. So, I think then we better break for lunch but today lunch will be only for one hour. So, I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 1.04 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.10 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I'll just go back on what I was saying prior to the break. I was talking about the Polytechnic Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to draw the attention of hon. Members on the fact that polytechnics are fully operational now and they have the state-of-the-art campuses. The Prime Minister met students from the secondary schools in the Polytechnics of Montagne Blanche and I must say that the students were extremely surprised and, in fact, really fascinated by the fact that the polytechnics had such superb equipment. So, I think we can be optimistic about rebranding the sector and making it more attractive to our students. I was stating that the Polytechnic Mauritius had signed a number of MoUs with La Trobe University, Murdoch University of Australia, Amity Institute of Higher Education, Tourism Management Institute of Switzerland, the Red Hat Academy and even the Mauritius Institute of Health.

Now, our youngsters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, have a range of pathways to select from to pursue their preferred choice of studies. I was saying also, Mr Deputy Speaker, that the coming of the Skills Development Authority will again ensure that quality and standards are maintained high.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, au chapitre de la recherche scientifique, je tiens à m'attarder sur le *Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill*, adopté ici même au sein de cette auguste Assemblée, il y a quelques semaines de cela. Cette loi est venue donner un coup d'accélérateur à la commercialisation des résultats de recherche actuelle et future, en mettant en place l'écosystème propice à l'innovation et à un environnement favorable aux partenariats locaux, régionaux et internationaux.

Le Mauritius Research and Innovation Council est chargé de promouvoir la recherche appliquée à des fins commerciale, dans la mesure, où, à terme, un produit pourra être fabriqué

et breveté. Déjà, le gouvernement finance, à travers la *Tertiary Education Commission*, à hauteur de R 50 millions chaque année pour les recherches académiques au niveau des universités. Il y a aussi les projets de recherche avec le secteur privé. L'Université de Maurice est engagée dans la création des pôles d'excellence en recherche, dédiés au domaine de spécialité. D'autres universités s'y mettent aussi. L'Université des Mascareignes organise bientôt des assises de la recherche. Il y a des projets d'envergure, les projets Erasmus, qui viendront supporter nos jeunes chercheurs dans nos universités. M. le président, vous conviendrez qu'aucun gouvernement n'a pu ouvrir la voie à une feuille de route aussi efficace que la recherche, le développement et l'innovation, répondant à nos prévisions à l'horizon 2030.

Au chapitre de l'Environnement, on retiendra aussi que personne auparavant n'a eu le courage de venir de l'avant avec des mesures aussi courageuses et pragmatiques que celles prônées par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. Je citerai, ici, le nouvel essor donné à la campagne '*Moris nou zoli pays*' La méga *National Cleaning and Embellishment Campaign*, le *Centralised Cleaning Coordination*, le recyclage des déchets. Nous sommes aussi en train d'apprendre à nos élèves dans les écoles à commencer d'apprendre à faire le tri des déchets. La création du *scrap yard facility for end of life vehicles*, la mise sur pied d'un *national biomass framework*, l'élevage des coraux et la création des pépinières pour restaurer les récifs dégradés et notre écosystème marin. Et là, je suis contente, M. le président, de faire ressortir que les jeunes dans les écoles secondaires se sont aussi mis ; ils sont en train de travailler sur ce projet pour restaurer les récifs dégradés. Un protocole national pour contrôler la densité de la population de la couronne d'épines, une étoile de mer invasive, dévoreuse de coraux. Il faut aussi, M. le président, se rappeler que nous avons autour de nous l'océan, notre riche patrimoine, la biodiversité qui s'y trouve, et il va falloir qu'on s'attelle à le protéger.

J'aurai voulu retenir, ici, le programme *Active Mauritius Sports for All*, la création de *Sports Facilities Mauritius*, pour optimiser l'utilisation des infrastructures sportives. Côte d'Or, M. le président, deviendra le foyer du sport à Maurice, agissant comme base pour notre centre de hautes performances, pour soutenir le *Team Mauritius*, qui aura la responsabilité de développer l'Académie Sportive aux normes internationales pour nos jeunes. Admettons-le, M. le président, il y a aujourd'hui un *feel-good factor* incontestable, et comme l'ont dit certains avant moi, il semblerait que ce gouvernement a la bénédiction divine. La vérité triomphe toujours.

Nous avons, M. le président, pendant huit années, clamé l'innocence de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, et le jugement de la Cour Suprême de Maurice avait clairement démontré que nous avions raison, et que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth n'avait rien à voir avec l'affaire Medpoint et qu'il était innocent. Le *Privy Council* est venu confirmer son innocence. A l'unanimité, les cinq *Law Lords* ont confirmé le *ruling* de la Cour Suprême de Maurice, le 25 février dernier. Il est clair, M. le président, que l'affaire Medpoint est l'affaire du Parti travailliste, et l'affaire du ministre Jeetah. Et ce serait bon de souligner, que ceux qui avaient porté l'affaire au *Privy Council* auront à payer les frais, et ça, ce sera dur et lourd, M. le président.

M. le président, ce qui m'a vraiment surpris, c'est que certain de l'autre côté de la Chambre, de surcroit, un légiste, n'a trouvé rien de mieux que de revenir sur cette affaire, et de faire des commentaires allant à l'encontre du *ruling* du *Privy Council*, et cela malgré que c'était un *ruling* sans équivoque, et de la Cour Suprême et du *Privy Council*. *Shameful!* M. le président, l'affaire Medpoint est une affaire close. Le peuple mauricien n'est pas dupe. Les mauriciens savent sciemment bien qui sont les coupables.

M. le président, je vous parlais du *feel-good factor*. Nous avons tous vécu ce même 25 février 2019, un moment très fort dans l'histoire de notre pays. Je parle, ici, du dossier Chagos. Ce dossier a donné lieu à tout un élan de patriotisme chez le peuple mauricien. Le gouvernement *Lepep* a su, de manière intelligente, mener sa stratégie. La gestion de ce dossier et la stratégie adoptée ont porté les fruits escomptés. On a su, à travers un lobbying intelligent, efficace, contrecarrer la pression de la Grande Bretagne et des Etats Unis. On a su avoir le soutien d'une grande majorité de pays, et cela, malgré la pression des puissants du Royaume-Uni et des Etats Unis. Il serait bon qu'on se rappelle les étapes de ce combat, mené par Sir Anerood Jugnauth, quand on a été aux Nations Unies. Quand on a demandé que ce dossier soit porté à la Cour Internationale de Justice, l'Union Africaine et 31 Etats membres de l'Organisation des Nations Unies, y déposeront des exposés écrits, 94 Etats membres de L'Organisation des Nations Unies votent en faveur de l'Île Maurice, afin que le dossier soit porté à la Cour Internationale de Justice. Et La Cour Internationale de Justice a donné son avis sur ce litige datant de plus d'un demi-siècle. Et dans l'avis consultatif, M. le président, rendu le 25 février, la Cour Internationale de Justice, conclut que le processus de la décolonisation de Maurice n'a pas été complété lorsque ce pays a accédé à l'Indépendance, et que le Royaume-Uni occupe Les Chagos illégalement, et que dans les plus brefs délais, devrait mettre fin à son administration illégale de l'Archipel des Chagos. Le 22 mai dernier,

au siège de l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU, 116 pays voteront en faveur de la résolution et pour le respect d'avis consultatif, émis par la Cour Internationale de Justice.

M. le président, l'honorable Ramful a prétendu que le MSM est en train de chercher un gain politique de cette victoire, alors que c'est une victoire pour l'Ile Maurice entière. Une victoire qui aurait dû être applaudie par les membres de l'Opposition – comme aujourd'hui.

Je voudrais, ici, M. le président, saluer le ministre *Mentor*, qui, de par sa conviction, sa détermination a permis à ce que le monde entier reconnaisse la souveraineté de l'Ile Maurice sur l'Archipel des Chagos. Il y avait pourtant certains qui disaient qu'on allait se casser le nez, que nous n'allons pas avoir plus de huit votes. Cette victoire n'a fait que renforcer le sens de patriotisme du peuple mauricien et le *feel-good factor* règne dans ce pays aujourd'hui. J'ai là une pensée spéciale pour nos frères et sœurs Chagossiens, ceux qui ont lutté pendant des années, à Ollivier Bancoult, qui a su mené ses frères et sœurs de Chagos vers un *selfless battle to get back to their homeland*. *M. le président, chapeau aux Chagossiens !*

M. le président, jamais deux sans trois. Il y a un peu plus de deux semaines, un panel de juges de la Cour Suprême, a tranché en faveur de la *State Trading Corporation* dans l'affaire Betamax. M. le président, on a tellement parlé de Betamax depuis des années, dans cette Assemblée, quand on était sur les bancs de l'opposition, on a toujours été très clair sur notre position sur l'affaire Betamax. Je ne vais pas aller dans les détails.

Le *demurrage fee* que la compagnie Betamax aurait dû payer mais qui était payé par la *STC*, quelques R 100 millions payées pour Betamax par la *STC*, USD 43,787 par jour, R 1.3 millions par jour. Vous imaginez, M. le président, la somme que cela représente - après la résiliation du contrat Betamax, le pays a économisé plus de R 1.4 milliards.

M. le président, je ne vais pas aller dans ces détails, mais je prendrai la peine et le temps de cette auguste Assemblée pour revenir sur le jugement. Je ne lirai pas le jugement en entier, M. le président, mais je prendrai que quelques lignes. Ça vient du jugement –

“As a result of the contract, Betamax was expected to receive USD17.6 m. for the first year. Betamax was also guaranteed payment at the abovementioned fixed freight rate for 100% of freight capacity of its vessel regardless of whether the vessel carried a full load or not for an uninterrupted period of 15 years together with the preset escalating rate which meant that Betamax would be shielded from any downward fluctuations in freight rate.”

Je ne parlerai pas de toutes les délibérations, mais je lis une phrase –

“The enforcement of an illegal contract of such magnitude in flagrant and concrete breach of public procurement legislation enacted to ensure the protection of the good governance of public funds would violate the fundamental legal order of Mauritius. Such a violation breaks through the ceiling of high threshold which may be imposed by any restrictive notion of public policy. We have absolutely no difficulty in holding that the public policy of Mauritius prohibits the recognition or enforcement of an award giving effect to such an illegal contract which shakes the very foundation of public financial structure and administration of Mauritius in a manner which unquestionably violates the fundamental legal order of Mauritius.”

Je n’irai pas plus loin, M. le président. Mais ce qui m’a étonnée le plus, c’est qu’à la veille de ce jugement, certains membres de l’opposition avaient déclaré publiquement à la radio qu’ils n’étaient pas pour la résiliation de ce contrat. Ils étaient contre ! Mais ils étaient une petite minorité au Conseil ! Ils ne pouvaient rien faire ! Ces mêmes personnes ont déclaré publiquement qu’ils voulaient garder le contrat Betamax malgré les faits que La Cour suprême vient de révéler.

M. le président, moi, ça me gêne parce que je crois dans la bonne foi des gens qui s’assoient dans cette auguste Assemblée, mais quand quelqu’un sachant très bien les dessous de ce contrat vient dire publiquement, à la veille de ce jugement, en espérant que l’État perde ce cas, en espérant que l’État donne 4.5 milliards de roupies à ceux qui ont dilapidé les fonds de ce pays, et ce serait peut-être bon d’attirer l’attention de cette Assemblée sur les propriétaires de Betamax qui n’étaient nul autres que les proches d’un ministre travailliste. Et même l’épouse, parait-il, était actionnaire de cette fameuse compagnie.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Alors que le fameux Red Eagle de Betamax ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Let your food digest first and then you can get into heated arguments.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Quand le bateau venait livrer le fuel, il prenait cinq jours au lieu de deux pour la livraison du fuel. Pourquoi ? Parce qu’il y avait possibilité d’un

mélange de carburant et c'était trop risquant. M. le président, comme l'a souligné les juges, c'est quelque chose qui s'est produit dans notre État. Je ne viendrais pas parler de la chronologie de l'incorporation de la compagnie. Laissons tomber ! La Cour a déjà restitué. Et là on se demande : A qui profite le crime ? Et on se demande aussi qui sont les complices ! Je ne vais pas aller dans les détails d'enveloppes et des noms inscrits dessus.

M. le président, je suis heureuse que le ministre Gungah ait pris les décisions correctes et que ça a évité à ce que l'État ne débourse des sommes inouïes pour des gens qui étaient là prêts à tout accaparer, à tout voler.

M. le président, tout dernièrement, il y a eu le *Privy Council* qui a tranché en faveur encore une fois de l'État mauricien sur l'affaire opposant l'État au CT Power. Tout cela démontre quoi, M. le président ? Que ce gouvernement-ci, mené par Pravind Jugnauth, est un gouvernement qui a toujours agi dans la droiture et dans la transparence. On n'était pas motivé par une quelconque vendetta politique. On avait l'intérêt de ce pays à cœur, l'intérêt de ce peuple à cœur, pas de vendetta politique. Le peuple réalise aujourd'hui que le gouvernement a su prendre les décisions qu'il fallait.

M. le président, laissez-moi venir sur quelques points encore importants à souligner. Les revenus surplus que l'État a eus durant...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please !

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Entre 2014 à 2019, le surplus de revenus n'ont pas été *channelled to our friends* ou des copains ou des copines pour faire grossir leurs comptes ou pour remplir leurs coffres. Ils ont été retournés vers le peuple. Il y a eu la pension pour les aînés, il y a eu la pension des enfants handicapés. Il y a eu la pension pour les orphelins et laissez-moi retourner sur la pension de vieillesse. Durant la dernière campagne en vue des élections, on avait augmenté la pension malgré tout ce qui se disait à l'époque, certains voulaient nous faire croire qu'on ne pouvait donner plus de R 4,000, que cela allait être un gaspillage. Le gouvernement *Lepep*, M. le président, juste après sa victoire écrasante en décembre 2014, a rehaussé la pension à R 5,000 et aujourd'hui ce chiffre passe à R 6,710. Y a-t-il eu une quelconque augmentation de TVA ? Non ! Bien au contraire, plusieurs denrées ont été exemptées de la TVA depuis. Malgré cela, les parties adverses efforcent toujours à induire la population en erreur sans aucun résultat. Le gouvernement continue lui à démontrer qu'il peut bien réussir là où les autres ont échoué et cela en plaçant l'intérêt de

chaque citoyen au centre de chacune de ses actions et cela sans aucun agenda personnel ou familial.

La distribution de la richesse se fait de manière équitable. Personne n'est laissé-pour-compte. Fini les milliards de roupies annoncées et ensuite distribuées aux petits copains sous la forme déguisée du *stimulus package* – on se rappelle encore du stimulus package sensé être là pour relancer l'économie, pour permettre à ce que les entreprises puissent fonctionner pour qu'elles ne ferment pas leur porte. Mais a-t-on oublié le fameux cas d'Infinity, *senior adviser to the then Prime Minister*? Est-ce que nous avons oublié le *stimulus package* accordé à un ex-parlementaire, monsieur Mardaymootoo? Avons-nous oublié les stratégies du ministre Sithanen ? Il faut qu'on se rappelle de tout cela. On a tendance à oublier le moment où les intérêts perçus sur les comptes d'épargne avaient baissé énormément. Le ministre d'alors, le ministre Sithanen, était venu avec la taxe sur les intérêts et n'épargnant même pas les retraités. Pourquoi ? C'était pour canaliser les fonds vers d'autres entreprises qui paraît-il offraient des sommes alléchantes pour attirer les personnes retraitées à y déposer leur *lump sum*. Je parle ici de la défunte BAI. Si le gouvernement n'avait pas agi, des centaines et des milliers d'épargnants auraient perdu tout ce qu'ils avaient. Le gouvernement a agi dans l'intérêt du peuple mauricien. Et alors il faut qu'on se rappelle. Pourquoi on avait décidé de baisser les intérêts, on avait décidé de mettre la taxe sur les intérêts....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: You are starting crosstalking again, no crosstalking.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Afin que les épargnants se tournent vers le fameux Ponzi King BAI. M. le président, on se souvient comment durant le régime travailliste, on avait baissé l'intérêt des comptes d'épargne. Je viens de le dire. Tout cela pour pousser les retraités et ceux qui touchaient leur *lump sum* d'aller vers la BAI. Je voudrai inviter mes collègues parlementaires, ne serait-ce que pour quelques minutes, de faire un saut en arrière rien que pour se souvenir des agissements de l'ancien régime travailliste.

M. le président, je vous ai parlé du *stimulus package*, je vous ai parlé d'Infinity, je vous ai parlé de la compagnie Mardaymootoo, qui après avoir encaissé le *stimulus package*, avait sans aucun scrupule, sans conscience, fermé ses portes et mis des milliers de personnes à la porte. C'est dur à accepter, M. le président, très dur. Et après, avons-nous oublié le DY Patil Saga où la ministre et son époux avaient décidé d'ouvrir une institution pour permettre à ce que les jeunes médecins se spécialisent. Et par la suite, qu'est-ce qui s'est passé ? Le

Medical Council a refusé de reconnaître ces diplômes sans valeur. C'est ce gouvernement qui pris la peine d'aller chercher Imperial College de Londres pour leur donner le soutien qu'il fallait et on a pu récupérer certains de ces médecins. On a tendance à oublier comment on a encaissé l'argent de ces jeunes sans donner l'assurance qu'ils pourront par la suite opérer. Il y a eu Eiiilm, this one is a tough one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister for Tertiary Education, himself, the one who had put the regulations at the TEC. He, himself, allowed his family business, a trust, to open an institution pour encaisser la somme que ces malheureux élèves avaient à remettre comme *fees* et qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait ? Ces diplômes n'étaient pas reconnus. Là aussi, il a fallu que ce gouvernement *steps in* pour donner le soutien à ces étudiants et assurer à ce qu'ils puissent continuer à étudier, et pouvoir travailler et contribuer dans le développement du pays. Ils avaient ouvert – Eiiilm n'est-ce pas – avant même que la maison mère avait ouvert ses portes en Inde against the UJC of India, M. le président. Et après le *NRPT – National Residence Property Act* qui avait fait voler en éclats l'espoir des jeunes professionnels voulant acheter un terrain ou construire une maison ou acheter un appartement...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, les planteurs de Riche Terre qu'on avait évacué à toute vitesse. C'est ce gouvernement qui a retourné à ces planteurs des terrains pour qu'ils puissent continuer à opérer. Il est clair, M. le président, le peuple, je l'ai dit, n'est pas dupe. Ils ont déjà fait leur choix. Ils savent très bien...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I have said no crosstalking, please.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Ils savent très bien que leur bien-être saura être sauvegardé que par un gouvernement MSM/ML et nul autre. M. le président, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, à travers ses budgets successifs, est aussi resté fidèle à sa vision et à sa détermination d'améliorer la qualité de vie des citoyens. Les infrastructures sportives, les parcs de loisir ont été créés à travers le pays.

J'aurais voulu vous inviter à l'Agrément St Pierre, M. le président, où, vous allez voir un terrain de foot synthétique, futsal, complexe polyvalente, gymnase. Des gens qui étaient absents du pays il y a quelque mois sont retournés et se disaient : est-ce que je suis bien à l'Agrément St Pierre ou bien ailleurs ?

(Interruptions)

Le marché de St. Pierre, le marché de Quartier Militaire converti en shopping mall avec ascenseurs. Le terrain de foot à l'Avenir, terrain de foot à La Laura, terrain de foot à Valetta seront bientôt agrandis. Le complexe polyvalent de Petit Verger Saint Pierre, des aménités, M. le président, qui ne se trouvent pas seulement dans chaque coin de ma circonscription mais aussi dans chaque coin de l'île Maurice.

M. le président, nous avons une équipe au numéro 8, l'honorable Sawmynaden, le Premier ministre et moi-même, nous travaillons pour la circonscription, nous travaillons pour le pays. Et peu importe où, nous sommes des gens qui ont choisi à travailler pour le pays.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Je peux continuer. A Côte d'Or, à l'Avenir, à Ripailles, les gymnases – il faut dire, M. le président, et j'insiste pour le dire que ce que je vous raconte pour la circonscription numéro 8 et de même au numéro 20, au numéro 12, au numéro 16, partout ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: D'ailleurs, je crois que hier quelqu'un de l'opposition félicitait l'honorable Aliphon pour le travail formidable qu'il a effectué dans sa circonscription, de même pour les PPSs Monty, Benydin, Boygah et Ramkaun. M. le président, nous avons une équipe performante...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Et sans oublier les rodriguais, bien sûr. Pour conclure, M. le président, j'inviterai...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Pour conclure, M. le président, j'inviterai les parlementaires de l'Opposition à accepter le fait qu'aucun gouvernement n'a autant réalisé en

si peu de temps. Le gouvernement dirigé par Pravind Jugnauth demeure unique, exemplaire par sa capacité de joindre la parole à l'action tout en garantissant la chance égale à tous, M. le président. Je demanderai donc en toute humilité à mes collègues parlementaires de l'Opposition de ne pas sombrer dans la démagogie pour ne pas dire la médiocrité. Il est vrai que l'Opposition a comme devoir premier et sacré de ramener, de remettre en question les sujets ayant trait au bien-être des citoyens mais prendre la parole pour spéculer, pour induire la population en erreur relève d'une certaine irresponsabilité. C'est bien et c'est clair qu'ensemble, on peut amener le pays à bon port. Et cet esprit d'ouverture s'est bien traduit dans l'action gouvernementale à travers les consultations élargies et le dialogue. Rien n'a été fait sans l'adhésion populaire et sans avoir réfléchi. Comment peuvent, maintenant, certains membres de l'Opposition venir prétendre que tout va mal ? Est-ce de la mauvaise foi ? Est-ce de l'antipatriotisme ? Est-ce normal que seules ces personnes affichent un tel pessimisme alors que la population dans son ensemble est optimiste de par les mesures annoncées par les budgets successifs de ce gouvernement pour une île Maurice meilleure. Faites preuve de bon sens, réalisez enfin que votre vie aussi a été nettement améliorée et continuera à l'être avec le gouvernement *Lepep*, dirigé par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth.

M. le président, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth est aujourd'hui connu comme un chef d'État *who means business, a hard worker, a serious Leader who has won the heart of the population and has earned their respect*. *Hon. Members*, ressaisissez-vous et ne sombrez pas dans la médiocrité, la population vous regarde, elle vous écoute et elle vous juge.

M. le président, l'honorable Madame Perraud m'avait demandé un éclaircissement et je vais le faire. Elle se demandait comment se fait-il que dans les *Estimates of the Budget*, on n'avait pas fait mention des *Discipline Masters*. Les *Discipline Masters* vont être recrutés, en premier temps, sur contrat. Ils ne seront pas sur l'établissement et c'est pour ça que ce n'est pas sur l'*Estimates*.

(Interruptions)

Mais, nous avons les moyens à travers le ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, even if you are replying to what she asked, please address the Chair!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: *I stand guided by your advice*. Alors ce que je voulais dire, M. le président, c'est que dans l'item *extra assistance*, on trouvera les ressources pour cela.

M. le président, le budget 2019-2020 s'inscrit dans une logique de continuité qui ne vise qu'à faire de notre République une référence en matière d'excellence à tous les niveaux. Les bases sont jetées pour une île Maurice moderne qui respire la liberté, l'unité et, M. le président, avec l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, nous irons loin. Le pays a confiance en lui et nous avons confiance en lui et je suis toute fière d'être membre d'un conseil dirigé par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth.

Merci pour votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(2.44 p.m.)

Mr P. Armance (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am standing here in front of you in this august Assembly for the fifth time, I am debating on the budget. Twice, I was sitting next to my hon. friend, Ravi Rutnah, when I was on the Government side. The third time today, I am debating on the budget on the Opposition side.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say I am proud today to be part of this great team of the Opposition side, irrespective of Party, whether it is MMM, PMSD, MP or Labour Party. I am proud to be in this team. Why? Because the whole Opposition has been doing their job in this House. I have always been respectful towards the Chair, towards you, towards, Madam Speaker. Maybe one day, I have treated hon. Wong Yen Cheong of Minister *transfuge*. Two weeks ago, I have treated hon. Rutnah of *batchara*, but I did not treat him of *aboyeur de service* or whatever some people used to say about him. But I have always tried my best to be respectful.

This very morning, hon. Won Yen Cheong uttered some very serious allegations against me, and I will come back to this later in my speech. This is very serious. I am very surprised he is not here. I wish someone can call him and bring him to the House now. He came here, put some serious allegations against me and then he run away.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lots of things happened during the last five years. I did remember when I came with a Motion of Disallowance for the EIA of the Metro Express Project, that time, hon. Sinatambou stood up with points of order over points of order, saying hon. Armance does not understand anything. He does not know what he is talking about.

Time has told us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I was right. In this very same House today, how many times MPs of the Opposition have stood up and pointed out problems that relate to exemption of the EIA licence of the Metro Express Project? How many people on the street have complained about the work being carried out right now? How many times, at adjournment time, we raised the issue about work being done, maybe without compliance, and this is creating lots of frustration with the population? Time always tells the truth. Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun just said it.

People over there, on the other side of the House - I have listened carefully to some of them – came here and made a lot of speech. 50% of the speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about Pravind Jugnauth, praising the Prime Minister; Pravind Jugnauth is the best, whatever they said. I think hon. Mrs Perraud mentioned it, the campaign is on, the internal campaign for ticket is on. Hon. Jahangeer, a good friend, mentioned something I have to respect. He said he wanted to know what was his performance in this House, and then, he came with his realisation about PQs. I cannot remember the figure he puts. I think it was 100 and something PQs.

(Interruptions)

182 PQs he puts in this Chamber. We all here remember how many of his PQs have been withdrawn. Why? What does he fear? And then today, he comes to this House and says, I have been putting so many PQs, I am proud of myself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was also sitting on the other side of the House. I remember once I came with a PQ, the PQ was about the church and Montmartre something like that and the hon. Member, at that time, was Vice-Prime Minister, Ivan Collendavelloo. He shouted at me: please remove this, you are embarrassing the Government. Who is Armance? Why do you have to put this PQ? He was saving who? Because of the Mayor, because the Mayor was ML Party like him. I was forced to remove my PQ, and this was not the first time. On several occasions, we had to remove our PQ because we were embarrassing the Government. We were tied up; we were not able to talk. We were not able to put PQs. Now, I am free. That is why I started by saying that I am proud to be part of the Opposition now.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Continue with your speech, hon. Member!

Mr Armance: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My good friend, hon. Dr. Sorefan, stood here yesterday for about one and a half hours, having a long speech, but I only

remember one thing from his speech. He was saying: the fishermen will have Rs360 per year.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Do not argue, please!

Mr Armance: The hon. Member can take a point of order and correct me. Okay, maybe I miss the figure. It was Rs300 and something per year. He was so proud of the measure announced of Rs30 increase for the fishermen. He was so proud and praising hon. Pravind Jugnauth for that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a shame. It represents Rs1 per day or maybe less. How can you come and praise someone who gave R1 increase per day to the whole community of fishermen, while others will benefit Rs1,000 per month as from January 2020? And hon. Dr. Sorefan came here proudly to say that in the House. He is very happy. People out there are not happy. Come to my constituency, I can invite if you want, I'll bring you to Cassis, Bain des Dames to meet the fishermen. I will get you there. Talk to these people.

(Interruptions)

He is right.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Armance: They are unhappy about this measure that looks only on one segment of the population and not the other. I will come back to this later. But I was saying previously, hon. Mrs Perraud was right, everyone is campaigning. We are in the election year. Election is coming soon. There has been the writ for the by-election of No. 7, but that was announced, I think, yesterday or the day before. The hon. Leader of the Opposition made it clear. He said, and I will quote from what he said, he will give a certificate of *fou* whoever is going to organise this election. 'There won't be any election. There will not be any by-election in No. 7.' What are we trying to hide? What are we trying to do?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Armance: What are trying to do with the population? We waited till the last day at the expiry of the delay to call for the writ. Everyone outside was waiting because hon. Bobby went on the radio and said: 'Yes, there will be the election'.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

Mr Armance: Sorry, hon. Hurreeram, he is my friend. I apologise for that. He went on the radio and mentioned there will be the election. They did a Press conference for that justifying what he said. Fair enough! And then, time lapsed. After three months, now only the writ of the election is out and it is going to be in November.

Everyone in Mauritius knows that in December this House is going to be dissolved. There is no need to have one MP for one month. For one month, how much this will cost to the population? *Aux contribuables, combien cela va coûter, M. le président ?* Who cares about it? Who cares about public fund? Do they care about public fund? Why putting a by-election then? Why don't you go to the general election directly? What do you fear? Yes, smile! What do you fear? Call the election, don't be afraid. You are not afraid, please call the election.

(Interruptions)

Yes, of course, you do. Especially, yes, you do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance put his Budget, there has been a lot of expectations from the population. One of the expectations maybe was about the cost of living. Now, if I come back to what hon. Dr. Sorefan said - I am not talking about any one segment of the population, but for the whole population, about the cost of living, the purchasing power.

If I pick up from what Dr. Boolell said about nation building, not divided nation, some people were looking for better infrastructure. Some were looking for job creation; others were looking for more leisure. Some of them were very important measures would have been the fight against synthetic drugs. Some would have liked to see in the Budget the Prime Minister coming to reinforce measures regarding the report on the Commission of Drugs. So many expectations amongst the population! And then, on 10 June, the Budget *tape la table* came. Hon. Sinatambou gave us the whole lessons about *tape la table* here. For hours, he has been standing and speaking about how we should *tape la table*.

Before I get into the measures of the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would rather like to go back to see some measures. Many of my friends have canvassed about the measures which have not been realised, but I will pick up one or two just to see how efficient the Government has been for the last five years. The 12 priority was announced in the Electoral Manifesto of *l'Alliance Lepep*. Let us only focus on one - maybe not. Just give me

one minute, Mr Deputy Speaker. Before I come back to that, in 2014, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. when there was *l'Alliance Lepep, which is no more now*, it is *l'Alliance MSM/ML...*

(Interruptions)

And *transfuges*, sorry, I forgot about them, they are not important to us. People out there were saying we should not be voting for these alliances. I was there, I was also part of the alliances, I was standing as candidate. People were making lots of criticisms. I am going to quote from a Newsletter. They gave eight reasons, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why we should not be voting for *l'Alliance Lepep* at this time. This was Advance Newspaper of Friday 14 November 2014.

The first reason: *c'est l'Alliance de la fraude et de la corruption. Deuxième raison, des candidats sans moralité. Moralité pas rempli ventre, someone said that. Troisième raison, une alliance communale et sectaire. Quatrième raison, M. le président, une alliance totalement intolérant de l'Opposition. Cinquième raison, une alliance intolérante des medias. Ça c'est pire encore. Sixième, une alliance foncièrement anti-démocratique. Septième, une alliance intolérante, malade du Judiciaire. Where is hon. Wong Yen Cheong ? And now, the eighth reason, qui me tient à coeur, dominer envers ti-dimounes. Now you see avec quoi on s'est associé en 2014...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon, please!

Mr Armance: ... et on pouvait comprendre maintenant les raisons pourquoi on n'est plus de l'autre côté de la Chambre, M. le président. Je pense que l'honorable Madame Perraud a parlé de la Commission, je ne vais pas revenir là-dessus, mais je vous ai dressé...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier, please! Do not disturb the hon. Member.

Mr Armance: Je pense que certaines personnes avaient raison en 2014, malheureusement. I quote from the Manifesto: '*construire 2,000 unités de logement chaque année et allocation d'un lopin de terre à un prix nominal aux nécessiteux.*'

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my Constituency, Constituency No. 1, many of the habitants have applied for a social housing unit for more than five years now. Some of them, I can say eight to ten years as well. It was one of the main criteria why people over there choose to vote for the alliances.

Now, how many housing units - it was hon. Soodhun, I think, who constructed before and then hon. Jhugroo - were built and delivered in Constituency No. 1? I have some figures which I took from his website. Projet récemment complété : Pointe aux Sables, 24. Ce projet-là avait été initié sous le gouvernement Travailleurs-PMSD qui a été livré uniquement *coupe ruban* par le gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

C'est la vérité ! *Pas bizin fer enn diplome pou coupe ruban.*

Les projets récemment complétés sont Madame Azor, Cottage, Piton et Souillac. Il n'y a pas de circonscription numéro 1. Ces endroits-là ne sont pas dans la circonscription. Les projets en cours sont Sebastopol, Mon Goût, Souillac, Calebasses, Baie du Tombeau. Je peux m'arrêter là. Il n'y a toujours pas de maisons en construction dans ma circonscription et vous savez quelles sont les circonscriptions qui ont une concentration des pauvres, des gens qui sont dans le besoin ? Pour commencer par le No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 et No. 4. Je ne dis pas que dans d'autres circonscriptions il n'y en a pas. Mais ces quatre circonscriptions de la capitale méritent une attention de la part du ministre, M. le président.

Vous savez - ça c'est bien intéressant- ce que le gouvernement a fait au lieu de construire des maisons ? Il y avait des *squatters* qui méritent d'être relogés, je pense à Cité La Cure, Tranquebar, et dans le faubourg de la capitale. Le gouvernement a octroyé des lopins de terres aux *sugar planters* à Pointe aux Sables, à ces gens-là. Très bien ! Parce qu'il fallait les reloger, mais il n'y avait pas un plan de relance. Ils ont eu un lopin de terre, ils ont démonté les petites bicoques en tôle et sont partis remonter cela à Pointe aux Sables. Vous savez qu'est-ce qu'ils ont créé, M. le président ? On appelle ça *Cité Tôle* et c'est le nom qu'utilisent les gens maintenant pour définir l'endroit qu'on appelle Cité Blanche, c'est Cité Tôle.

People there were living in unconditional circumstances. They were left by themselves, no water, no electricity, no proper road network, no street lighting and no amenities. The hon. Leader of the Opposition and I went there, then we bring a PNQ to the House. I remember that day, hon. Soodhun said: 'Tomorrow morning, I am going there.'

(Interruptions)

Exactly!

He never went there, but we are happy because, as part of the team of the opposition here and the Leader of the Opposition, we put a PNQ to the hon. Minister and things happened. This is how things are happening in lots of constituencies nowadays. Maybe some are favored like Constituency No. 8. Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun was just having a long list of projects. Some of the PPSs were having a long list of projects. But, my dear PPS, hon. Mrs Monty, never gave me a list. Yesterday, I was expecting, I was looking at her on TV, with a big literature. Where is the list of projects ?

(Interruptions)

Molière ! Mais il n'y avait pas une liste de projets. Allons imaginer qu'est-ce qui va se passer actuellement, on est en hiver. Dans quelque temps...

(Interruptions)

Maybe Mrs Monty wants to take the floor, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. She is disturbing me. I am addressing the Chair.

What is going to happen when we reach summer and then we are going to have cyclones? What will happen to my dear Cité Tôle of Pointe aux Sables? What will happen to the people living there? Do you know how many times I have to go there myself to help these people when there is flood, heavy rains and cyclones?

What is our hon. Minister of Social Integration doing for these people? Do you know what he did? He brought one container, and then the container has been transformed into a small center. That is all. He promised he is going to give them *des poubelles*. These *poubelles* never reached the site there. There has been no social measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to empower these people there. No one cares about them. Who go and visit them? Ask the hon. Minister responsible for the Constituency how many times he has been there. Do not go there to *bwar, manzé, koup riban*, but go there to see the real needs of these people. Go there to see how the people are living there. You created a *cité* and then you cannot handle it, yet you are the Minister responsible for social integration, social inclusion or whatever it is. This is a shame. Shame on this Minister! I will come back to him later, I have plenty of things to say about him, don't worry. Maybe after, hon. Rutnah can come and say a few ...

The Deputy Speaker: I have said, you address the Chair, please!

Mr Armance: Now, we understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, somehow someone has failed in his duty or simply someone somewhere has not performed efficiently. You cannot

stand on a *caisse camion*, promise to the population, we are going to build 10,000 houses. I got a nice picture from Facebook, describing each and every budget, what has been allocated for the construction of houses. And then coming here, again this year, saying: 'we are going to build 6,000 more in the next coming three years. Where are the first 10,000 that were promised in 2014? How many have been delivered? I think my friend, hon. Ameer Meea, gave the figures.

(Interruptions)

Oh, that is so good, he is coming! *Caisse camion!*

They have been lying to the population, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They have been lying because they never ever took the promise of delivering these 10,000 units. This was impossible. It will be like 2,000 per year, and at the time that I am talking to you now, 8,000 should have been delivered.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Armance: Maybe hon. Rutnah is going!

(Interruptions)

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are we expecting...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Armance: Are we expecting for the next coming three years, 16,000 less one thousand something, that have been delivered. About 13,000 housing units...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, take your seat! Hon. Jhugroo, you just entered the Chamber. Please, let us listen to the speech of the hon. Member quietly. Thank you.

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is, we call it, *kuyone lepep!* Selling dreams...

The Deputy Speaker: Do not be provocative also in your speech!

Mr Armance: No, I am not. I am telling the truth. This is the truth.

The Deputy Speaker: Anybody can tell the truth without being provocative.

Mr Armance: Okay. If I say *tout simplement, mentir*, it is not provocative. This reminds me about this famous show *Menteur, Menteur*.

On the same line, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a budget for the construction of 200...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Armance: There was a Budget for the construction of 200 units for families who have their plot of land. I leave it to the population now to conclude about the performance of this Minister and his colleague, hon. Alain Wong Yen Cheong, as well. I leave it to the population. Time will tell me again. As I said earlier, time will tell who was right, who was not right.

(Interruptions)

Hey mone sorti en tete de liste mwa!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Armance: Let me take another example of his Ministry. How many people are waiting for the contract for the house that contains asbestos? Ask him what he did. Ask him.

The Deputy Speaker: Are you telling me to ask him or are you asking him?

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: No, I will. You can ask him!

(Interruptions)

I will ask him through you.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: That you can do.

Mr Armance: Even in the constituency of the Prime Minister at Cité Ste Catherine, which I went to visit, people are still waiting for the contract. They are not owners and they

cannot demolish the asbestos. How many more months they will be waiting for the Minister to wake up, stop dreaming, and stop selling dreams to these people? The Minister of Housing intends to build high-rise six-storey building. This is in the Budget. Has he done any survey? I invite him again to come to La Tour Koenig. Come and I will show you...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Armance:...these people living there, what are the difficulties. There, it's four storeys and he wants to build six storeys. Will this be having lifts? Will there be lifts?

(Interruptions)

To pou met l'ascenseur? What about people with physical disability? How are they going to climb the six storeys to go on the sixth floor, because hon. Jhugroo has decided to build a six-storey building to put them in?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Armance: I will stop talking until he finishes. Maybe I will ask him, I will also suggest something. I will suggest him to go to Seychelles. There is a nice project in Seychelles. There is a nice project there; the name of the project is 'Perseverance Island'. It is a fully integrated estate for poor people. Go and visit! Go and learn, and maybe copy and come to Mauritius. Because what you intend to do with your six-storey building is not feasible. It is not correct and it is not acceptable. We have to learn our lessons from now. We started with high-rise buildings all around the island and then we came with housing units, we came with duplex, and now you want to go back to the six-storey? So, I will ask him to, please, review. I mean, somewhere, somehow we know this is not going to happen anyway.

Let me come on some of the very famous and popular measures that were announced by several Ministries here, especially for my constituency. On top of the list, the famous ferry of hon. Nando Bodha. Fairy tale, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! This has never happened. I do not even know if the tender has been launched. The project is dead.

Réouverture du pont de Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest, c'était pour soulager le trafic dans la région de Grande Rivière. Faites attention, je pense que les licences pour le *scrap metal* vont être relancées. Il faut faire attention. Attention que les gens commencent à

démonter le pont, comme ce fut le cas quelques années de cela, parce que le pont n'est toujours pas ré-ouvert.

Le *Area Health Centre* de Pointe aux Sables de l'honorable Dr. Anwar Husnoo, vous savez depuis quand cela dure ? Depuis 2015 ! On est, aujourd'hui, en 2019. Je sais quelque temps de cela, il est venu dans la Chambre pour dire que le projet est en *tender*, qu'il va construire, etc. Mais, M. le président, effet d'annonce, effet d'annonce, effet d'annonce depuis quelques années, c'est maintenant qu'ils vont tout construire, en six mois. En six mois? Même Vishnu n'est plus là, le magicien. Qui va construire en six mois ? Combien de projets vont-ils faire en six mois ? Des terrains synthétiques dans la circonscription, laissez-moi vous dire, il y a eu deux ; un à Les Salines et l'autre à Grande Rivière. Et là, je dois dire un grand merci à nos conseillers municipaux qui ont poussé pour le projet. C'est à eux que reviennent le mérite d'avoir deux terrains synthétiques. Par contre, ce qui a été promis par le ministre à La Tourelle n'a jamais été réalisé. Jamais ! Ce qui a été promis à Pointe aux Sables n'a jamais été réalisé. Ce qui a été promis à Pailles n'a jamais été réalisé, et ne sera pas réalisé. En six mois, on ne peut pas faire tous ces projets-là.

Rénovation des jardins d'enfants dans la circonscription. Allez voir, Madame la *PPS* ! Allez voir ! C'est une honte ! Les enfants ne peuvent plus partir jouer dans les jardins d'enfants. Asphaltage des rues, parlons-en. A Pailles, c'était catastrophique. Mais il y a eu des projets qui ont été réalisés, sous pression des habitants. Mais l'état des rues est toujours dramatique. A Pointe aux Sables, on a ré-asphalté la route principale qui a coûté des millions de roupies alors qu'il y a beaucoup de chemins qui nécessitent une attention particulière, et c'est un peu partout dans la circonscription. Et là, ce matin j'ai été faire mon petit *homework*, j'ai retrouvé cette photo-là, c'est bien, c'est propre, cela a été asphalté. Et dans la même rue, les drains ont été faits. C'est joli, c'est bien. Mais vous ne voyez pas la voiture qui est au fond. C'est la voiture de notre honorable *PPS*. C'est le chemin où notre honorable *PPS* habite. Elle a asphalté devant sa porte alors que tout le monde attend.

(Interruptions)

I am not going to give way. You have had your chance to talk.

The Deputy Speaker: No, she has requested for a point of order.

Mrs Monty: *Rectifier quelque chose.* On a point of order! He is imputing motives, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Because I would like to rectify something.

L'honorable Armance est en train d'induire l'Assemblée en erreur puisque la route asphaltée chez moi a été initiée quand son collègue, le *PPS* Abbas Mamode était encore en fonction.

Je vous remercie.

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: M. le président...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, j'allais faire ça un peu plus tard, mais laissez-moi remercier l'honorable Abbas Mamode. C'est grâce à lui, c'est grâce à l'honorable Abbas Mamode qu'on a eu des projets réalisés dans la Circonscription No. 1. Grace à lui ! Maintenant...

(Interruptions)

Je vous dis encore fois...

(Interruptions)

Non, je vais revenir vers vous là! C'est grâce à lui! Les projets ont été discutés avec moi et on a fait la liste ensemble. Cette liste-là, c'est la même liste qu'aujourd'hui notre chère *PPS* est en train de travailler. Merci Abbas! Mille fois Abbas!

(Interruptions)

To envie kozer?

Les drains, M. le président ! Camp Firinga sous les eaux à chaque fois qu'il y a de la pluie, Cité Mauvilac, toujours rien. On avait promis les drains, l'asphaltage des routes, mais notre *PPS* n'a pas trouvé bon de réaliser ces projets-là. Vous savez pourquoi ? Peut-être que c'est par ignorance ; elle ne sait pas, parce qu'elle est mal conseillée, sinon elle les aurait faits. Camp Firinga, je l'invite la prochaine fois qu'il y aura de la pluie.

(Interruptions)

Je vous y emmène, Madame. Je n'ai pas de BMW aussi luxueuse que la vôtre, mais je peux vous y emmener.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, address the Chair, please.

Mr Armance: I will talk through you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Pourquoi, aujourd'hui, je suis en train de dire que ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Armance : Je suis en train de dire que la *NDU* n'a pas vraiment travaillé dans la circonscription. Je vais vous donner un autre exemple. En 2015, je me rappelle on était dans la région de Pailles à faire campagne pour les municipales. L'honorable Abbas Mamode, le *PPS*, il a couru vers moi pour me dire : « Patrice, on a eu le feu vert pour mettre les lumières sur le terrain de foot à Morcellement Raffray, à Pailles, et on va aussi réaménager le terrain de foot de Cité Saint-Louis, Cité La Butte ». On était tellement content qu'on a annoncé cela immédiatement à nos mandants, à l'électorat. On a gagné les élections, M. le président. En 2015, le projet était approuvé. Le projet est listé sur la liste soumis par le Premier ministre. Alors, j'aurais bien aimé savoir pourquoi ça n'a pas été réalisé !

(Interruptions)

Ale deman municipalité ? But who is responsible for the NDU in Constituency No I, la municipalité ? Who is paid for that? Municipalité? Piscine à Les Salines ! M. le président, mardi dernier, dans cette Chambre, j'ai posé une question à la Vice-Premier ministre concernant la piscine Les Salines. Elle nous a dit qu'elle était au courant, mais qu'il y a eu un problème et le projet n'a pas pu partir de l'avant etc. Elle a aussi admis qu'il n'y a plus d'argent pour faire le projet et qu'elle va écrire une lettre au ministre des Finances pour demander des fonds. Ce n'est que maintenant, après le Budget, qu'elle va écrire une lettre ! Vous savez de combien d'argent on parle ? De R 7 millions ! Et là, à ma grande surprise, à la municipalité de Port Louis justement, *Capital project 2019-2020*, item no.1, *Upgrading of Les Salines Swimming Pool, estimated project value R7 millions*. Qui c'est qui ment ? Qui c'est qui ne dit pas la vérité ? Alors que la municipalité affiche déjà le projet, la ministre nous dit qu'elle n'a pas le fonds nécessaire pour le projet, qu'elle va demander des fonds. Donc, il y a un problème quelque part, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Je sais que ça blesse certaines personnes. Je vais m'arrêter là et je vais passer à autre chose. D'ailleurs, le temps qui m'est alloué passe très vite.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me come to what we call the biggest infrastructural project made in Mauritius over the years, the Metro Express. Members before me have canvassed about it, but still, we want to know the truth. Once again, the government has lied and manipulated public opinion on the matter. We all remember what was being said when the

project was brought back on track. The Government said the Metro Express will largely contribute in creating jobs for the young in Mauritius. I want to come to the job creation for the young of Mauritius. They said 5,000 jobs will be created with the Metro Express project. Two years have gone now. Who are working on the site of Metro Express? Larsen & Toubro, with a majority of Indian workers! We heard yesterday about their conditions of work, how they are being employed there. Simple mathematics for us, we have 203 and we add to 200 that are working there, which make a total of 403 persons employed on the Metro Express project. You can go and check.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr Armance: Another item which I want to bring to the attention of the House regarding the Metro Express is the amendment to the legislation so that this Metro Express can be operational. There was the Tramways Act in 1878. But when is the Minister responsible going to bring this legislation to the House? He is saying that, in September, the Metro Express is going to be operational, but the law has not yet being amended. What is he doing again?

(Interruptions)

When are you going to come here and tell us the truth that this project is not going to happen in September? It's not only about the construction; it's not only about the infrastructure, now, I am talking about the law. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one day, we are going to open this drawer and *dossier pu fini mais scandal pu rester!* We will know about the truth.

Another measure that was announced by the Prime Minister years ago is about the negative income tax. The negative income tax is a bad joke for many workers in Mauritius. I don't know for the Minister of Finance, himself, but for many of the workers who have not benefited from this measure since its introduction in Mauritius, it is so. As the official statistics are not easily accessible, we don't know why this Government has Trust Issues with the freedom of Information Act. Around 30,000 people registered to benefit from the negative income tax have not received the money yet, Mr Deputy Speaker. I am not going to elaborate a lot about that, but I leave it to the Prime Minister on this summing-up to please give us an explanation on the figures because the figures are not available. Mr Deputy Speaker, I don't know if the hon. Prime Minister has ever had a trip with his Minister of Social Integration to go and see about poverty in Mauritius. Poverty is everywhere. We have

seen in the Press recently, on social media, how people are still using wood to cook food; to have water, no proper hot water to bathe. They say they are going to be a caring Government. We have a Minister of Social Integration - he needs to integrate himself.

(Interruptions)

He needs to integrate himself!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: We don't need a Minister to be a *minis publicité*. He can swim, he can dive, he can do whatsoever he wants to do.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't need my bodyguard to press the lead button for me to get into the lift, like him!

(Interruptions)

Yes, we will miss him next year. We will all remember about him. The *question pour un couillon*, we will all remember about that. The whole Mauritius will remember about that. We saw this again this morning.

(Interruptions)

Yes, *question pour un couyon*. Wait, you see, hon. Duval always misses my paper. Let me quote what his staff think of him. There was this letter that was sent to the Leader of the Opposition and I have a copy. I will quote from that –

“The management is not aware of the scheme provided to the beneficiaries. The PS and the Minister are always under relaxed mode. They do not see the urgency of implementing the scheme. Major decisions are delayed and files are kept pending to the heads.”

I am not saying that. This is the staff of the Ministry that is saying that and they go further down.

(Interruptions)

“The management is more concerned...”

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: “The management is more concerned...”

No, when they finish, I can continue.

“The management is more concerned about organising gatherings and parties. Both they stay after working hours...”

The Deputy Speaker: There is a point of order being raised.

Mr Armance: Yes, please.

Mr Sinatambou: I am afraid the gentleman seems to be quoting from an anonymous letter, maybe he will tell us what the source is because otherwise he cannot quote from it.

The Deputy Speaker: You have been quoting from a document. Can we know which document and will you be laying that document on the Table of the National Assembly?

Mr Armance: I mentioned the letter that was sent to the Leader of the Opposition, I have an extract of it, I don’t have the full letter. I have just...

(Interruptions)

I will quote only one more line.

The Deputy Speaker: No, you take your seat! If this is an official letter, it requires a signature and then you table the letter.

Mr Armance: In this letter, someone said that the Minister and the PS...

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you have ruled that unless he is prepared to give the origin of the letter, then he should not be able to quote from that letter.

The Deputy Speaker: This has been my ruling. I told you. If it is an official letter, you table the letter and you don’t have to refer to the letter if you won’t table the letter.

Mr Armance: Yes, okay. I am not quoting. I will give you a copy of the letter later if you want. So, what I have heard is that the PS and the Minister always stay late at night to have wine and gajacks. This is what I heard.

The Deputy Speaker: This is imputing motives, I have said. Please, take your seat. Hon. Members, you are allowed if you want to hit hard when you make remarks, but please do not hit below the belt, this is hitting below the belt.

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: I made my point.

(Interruptions)

C'est regrettable, M. le président, qu'à ce jour le rapport Marshall contre la pauvreté est toujours en train de dormir dans un tiroir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Armance: Gajack, banane...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, you have been a former Deputy Speaker in this House, at least behave yourself!

Mr Armance: M. le président, ayons un peu de sérieux dans la Chambre. Ce document qui identifie les faiblesses et donne des recommandations spécifiques sur les mesures à entreprendre pour combattre la pauvreté, M. le président, est aujourd'hui un rapport utilisé à faible capacité. Les 11 sections clairement définies du plan Marshall permettent d'avoir un aperçu de l'étendue du problème de la pauvreté à Maurice.

Annoncé dans le manifeste électoral de *l'Alliance Lepep*, c'était prévu l'élaboration du plan Marshall c'était dans le manifeste électoral de *l'Alliance Lepep*, je vais le répéter 10 fois, c'était dans votre manifeste électoral. Pourquoi ne pas l'introduire aujourd'hui, pourquoi ne pas l'utiliser ?

Bon, je suis vraiment chagrin, je n'ai pas beaucoup de temps à développer sur les autres points mais néanmoins, M. le président, je tiens à répliquer à l'honorable Alain Wong Yen Cheong, qui, ce matin, a fait des allégations sérieuses contre moi concernant le paiement d'un ticket d'avion pour l'île Rodrigues. Déjà, M. le président, si on arrête de me déranger, je vais terminer dans cinq minutes.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please, complete your speech.

Mr Armance: Il a parlé de l'association 'FAITH'. 'FAITH' est une association que j'ai créée. Moi, Patrice Armance, je l'ai créée et j'en suis fier. En tant que député, je n'avais plus le temps de m'occuper de l'association, j'ai *hand over* l'association à un Monsieur qui s'appelle George Brelu Brelu et je vais vous montrer la preuve. C'était en février 2018 et je vais vous lire ce que j'ai écrit. Il a rejoint l'équipe de *FAITH* en 2016 comme *Project Manager*, après *manager* en 2017. Fort de son expérience dans le social, Monsieur George Brelu Brelu a été primé *Best Performance* et je conclus pour dire parallèlement, Monsieur George Brelu Brelu a été nommé Président de *FAITH* pour l'année 2018/2019. Je lui souhaite bonne chance et à son équipe aussi. Que le bon travail continue !

Il ne fallait pas m'associer à *FAITH*. S'il avait fait son devoir d'aller vérifier, il a parlé de *FAITH*, qu'il y a un website, ça n'existe pas. Il n'y a pas de website, menteur ! S'il avait vérifié, il aurait trouvé sur la page Facebook.

(Interruptions)

Non, j'ai dit menteur, menteur, l'émission de l'express.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Can you take your seat? I have said you should not impute motives, please, when you make your speech.

Mr Armance: Okay, c'est faux, c'est faux. Ce n'est pas la vérité. Je ne vais pas rentrer dans les détails, M. le président, il a parlé d'un billet d'avion que j'ai payé avec les fonds de l'association. Les fonds de l'association ne sont pas gérés par moi. Je ne signe pas les chèques de l'association. J'ai payé mon billet d'avion, M. le président, et voilà la preuve, le reçu qui a été payé et je cite –

« reçu de ANC Associate - qui est ma société - en faveur de Patrice Armance. »

Je pars à Rodrigues tous les mois. S'il veut - *mo capave amene twa*. Je n'ai pas fini dessus. M. le président, quand le staff de *FAITH* partent à Rodrigues, laissez-moi vous dire, ils économisent de leur salaire pendant un an, chaque mois ils contribuent R 500 de leur salaire pour payer leur billet d'avion. Personne n'a de billet d'avion payé par *FAITH* ici. Il n'a pas le droit de venir dans cette Chambre pour venir dire des mensonges à mon sujet.

M. le président, je suis fier de l'association *FAITH*. Il a cité Rodrigues comme exemple, pourquoi ? Parce que *FAITH* a une école à Rodrigues. Il a financé à travers le *National CSR Foundation*, trois projets, trois écoles pour *FAITH*. Le projet était de R 1 million. Ce matin

quand l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval lui disait 'pourquoi tu as coupé les projets en deux ? Il n'était pas au courant, coupé en deux, ces officiers étaient en train de rire de lui...

The Deputy Speaker: Are we going again into the PNQ of today morning or you are explaining what he said in the morning?

Mr Armance: I am explaining to you because I have to make it clear to the population. Il n'était pas au courant ce matin lors de la PNQ que les projets ont été tranchés en deux. Oui, c'était dans la PNQ, il ne savait pas. Les officiers qui étaient assis là-bas, étaient en train de rire. C'est une honte ! Alors, l'école de Rodrigues ne figure pas sur la liste financée par la NCSR ! Je vais vous citer les trois écoles : l'école de la Tour Koenig, l'école de la Grande Rivière et l'école de Camp Firinga. Ce sont les trois écoles qui sont financées par la NCSR. Et *FAITH* a sept écoles, M. le président. Ce n'est pas la NCSR qui finance *FAITH*, c'est le secteur privé, mes amis et moi, qui finançant *FAITH*.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, I have given you ample time to give an explanation. This is Budget Speech. Either you get back to the speech with regard to budgetary measures or you wind up your speech.

Mr Armance: I think now I have made this point clear.

(Interruptions)

I am very sorry; I am very sad he is not here today. Maybe, he is going to talk whatever he was going to talk about when he will do so after me, but I have made my point clear, and I am very proud of what *FAITH* has achieved, so far.

I will end on a very positive note, Mr Deputy Speaker. Hon. Jahangeer said that he has to know of what metal his Prime Minister is made of. And then, hon. Khoonjoo makes me smile. Sorry, I don't speak Hindi, but I am going to try to quote from what he said –

“Katore pe katora beta baap se bhi Gora”

I did not understand. I asked my hon. friend Ms Sewocsingh what it is about. She was telling me about one container, and then a small container, etc. But, today...

(Interruptions)

It's not about what metal the *katora* is made of which is our concern, it is what is inside the *Katora*, and do you know what we found inside the *katora*? Some *tukmaria* only!

(Interruptions)

I am not going to quote Shakespeare. I am not going to quote our famous ...

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Armance: I am not going to quote Shakespeare. I am not going to quote anyone else. I am going to quote *la voix du peuple*, the persons sitting on the road, what they said about the Budget, what they said about the Government. There is very nice song, - I think hon. Toussaint should be praised for that – ‘*Tam Tam dan zil*’. It is a song of Kokofaya. And the song says: “...*penep penep aller, penep penep aller!*”

I am done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

(3.44 p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me also to extend my congratulations to the hon. Prime Minister upon the resounding success of this Budget exercise. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, when you said that we are debating on the Budget and we should confine ourselves to the debates on the Budget, *ce n’était que du bla-bla-bla de la part de l’honorable Patrice Armance. Il y a cette rhétorique : « Le chien aboie, la caravane passe ».*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Armance mentioned that not a lot of people are benefiting from the popular measure, that is, the negative income tax. Time and time again, the Prime Minister, myself and other Members in this House, we have made it a point to tell the population that 73,000 persons have benefited from this popular measure. Coming to say that, he does not even know what he is talking about. Those people who are directly concerned, those people whose life have been positively affected by this measure, they are *reconnaissants envers ce gouvernement*.

Talking about Metro Express, let me reassure the hon. Member that Metro Express is on, and we, on this side of the House, will be the first to have a ride in it. Unfortunately, maybe, he is jealous, because they are no longer in Government. Maybe, they would have liked to be on this side of the House.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please! The hon. Member does not need your help to make his speech. Let him make the speech.

(Interruptions)

Mr Callichurn: When you split up, it falls on you.

At the beginning of his intervention, the hon. Member made reference to an article, which was written by someone in 2014, that is, during the electoral campaign, giving *l'Alliance Lepep* all sorts of names. He has forgotten that the PMSD was a member of *l'Alliance Lepep*. He was a member of *l'Alliance Lepep*, so, whatever this gentleman wrote in that article, equally applied to him and the PMSD. Yes, *bla-bla-bla*, making fun, people laughing on this side of the House, on the other side of the House, I will not get into those films, because we have listened enough to those *bla-bla-bla*. Let's get down to some serious debates.

(Interruptions)

Yes, Rt. hon. Minister Mentor.

Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this can only be attributed to the exceptional leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. He has had not only a strategic outlook towards the future, but also has laid the cornerstones for ensuring sustainable growth in this transformative journey, from a middle-income to a high-income economy. The foundations for a robust and a resilient economy were already laid in the very first Budget of this Government, under the able leadership of the Rt. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the then Prime Minister. We have, therefore, continued consolidating it with each consequent Budget. This Budget is, therefore, not the outcome of randomness. I would, in fact, state unequivocally that there has been rational and careful planning to prepare our future to ensure that our youth, senior citizens, workers as well as the rest of the population continue to benefit from shared prosperity.

The fundamental principles underlying this budget are clear and explicit-principles of continuity, consistency and ingenuity. It goes without saying that this is so as we remain committed to our transformation agenda.

Allow me, now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to share my thoughts regarding some of the measures we have had the privilege to hear in the current Budget Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a significant share of the Budget has been dedicated towards resolving one of the long-standing and deeply rooted ills of our society, that is, poverty. One and all would concur, poverty is often a vicious cycle which requires momentous efforts to be

able to be overcome. Despite this daunting challenge, the hon. Prime Minister has through successive innovative budgets been precisely doing his utmost to attain this objective. The vision of this Government is to create and sustain the enabling framework to reach this aim; and, in this bid, bold measures have had to be taken. This invariably involves eliminating every single barrier which precludes our citizens from participating fully and productively in our economy.

As a matter of fact, the host of measures successfully implemented to support and empower vulnerable groups to emerge out of poverty include the introduction of income support initiatives such as the Negative Income Tax, fulfillment of the Marshall Plan, exemption from payment of public utilities for specific categories, assistance for meeting examination costs for children of families registered on the SRM, and customised skills development programmes. Taking a leap forward, the Prime Minister earlier this year announced that tertiary education for first time registrants to undergraduate programmes will be fully sponsored by the State. As education also requires accompanying measures, free internet facilities will be made available to some 11,000 families registered on the SRM.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the message of the hon. Prime Minister could not have been clearer to the effect that in the fight against the scourge of poverty, generous investments in training, education and continuous learning would be the essential ally. Although we have heard rhetorics regarding empowerment of people, we can pride ourselves in having walked the talk; we have not only enunciated clear action plans, but have also implemented relatable, accessible and relevant social and development programmes for equipping our people with the right skills, competencies and knowledge at the right time, and in the right manner.

Allow me to once again commend the hon. Prime Minister for upholding these values of inclusiveness and consideration of the people. This is, indeed, a budget which reconciles the imperatives of the economy whilst meeting the aspirations of the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, much have been said about this budget. Some said that it would be a “*budget électoraliste*” in view of the forthcoming elections. However, by presenting such a responsible budget, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has proved them wrong. We have, once again, shown that this Government means business and that we have at heart the interest of the country and our fellow citizens.

In fact, ever since we came to power and from the very first day itself, we have demonstrated our determination to improve the standard of living of the population in our

quest to join the league of high-income countries. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is unprecedented in the history of this country whereby a Government has done so much in such a short lapse of time. Members of this august Assembly will surely concur with me! Through this budget, Government is envisaging a brighter future together as a nation. This connotes a common vision with tangible measures for the whole population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you would recall that during my budget intervention last year, I informed the House that as per our pledge taken in the Government Programme 2015-2019, we would come up with a new piece of labour legislation. As announced by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I am proud to state that, to better protect the rights of the workers, we are coming up with the Workers' Rights Bill which will replace the Employment Rights Act 2008. I see my good friend, hon. Veda Baloomoody looking at me. He asked PQs in this House when will it come and my answer to his PQ was 'very soon'. I still maintain 'very soon'. This new legislation will address the shortcomings of the said Act and cater for the changing labour market in the wake of the fourth industrial revolution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it comes to the rights and welfare of workers, I can, without hesitation, state that no other Government - and I mean it, no other Government - has done that much for the upliftment of the working class of this country. In January 2018, we created history by introducing the national minimum wage. The House will recall how there were apprehensions before its introduction. It was said that the introduction of the national minimum wage would entail closing of enterprises followed by massive loss of jobs. Today, we are proud that, through this bold decision, the minimum wage is a reality which has raised the standard of living of some 120,000 of our fellow workers and their families.

I would like to inform the House that, according to the findings of the first report of the National Wage Consultative Council on the impact of the introduction of the national minimum wage, released in January this year, the introduction of the national minimum wage, coupled with the special allowance and the negative income tax, has positively impacted upon consumption expenditure which in turn has been one of the drivers of economic growth.

It has also been found that the total employment has not been negatively impacted. The introduction of the national minimum wage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has furthermore raised the earnings of low-paid workers thereby reducing income inequality. Indeed, the wage Gini Coefficient based on basic wage, which measures wage distribution, has improved

from 0.448 in 2017 to 0.440 in 2018. The introduction of the national minimum wage has thus moved a number of households out of the relative poverty.

Here, it would be unfair if I fail to highlight the collaboration of the private sector enterprises in our endeavours. I wish to reassure our social and economic partners, who may be having qualms about all these historical measures announced. This Government has always lent its ears whenever there have been apprehensions and my Ministry will ensure that collaborative relationships continue to exist, with the aim of proactively addressing labour issues, as alone no one can accomplish this. In the end, we must all come out as winners.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are coming yet again with another landmark measure for all workers of the private sector; that is, the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF). It is this Government which has heard the cries of the workers of the private sector and it has taken remedial actions accordingly.

Again, this is unprecedented in the history of the country. The PRGF is a revolutionary measure which will transform the lives of workers and secure their future after their retirement. I will here wish to acknowledge the invaluable contribution of some Trade Unions which have militated for this measure for decades.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the PRGF will provide a new form of social protection to workers by guaranteeing a gratuity on retirement for their whole length of service irrespective of the number of employers they have worked for during their career. This is not actually the case under the Employment Rights Act whereby the computation of the gratuity on retirement is based on the length of service of the worker with his last employer only. This bold measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will undeniably eliminate an injustice which has so far been prevailing on the private sector employees. I will have the opportunity during the debate, when representing the Workers' Rights Bill to explain in depth our social plan to the nation.

We have not stopped here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Another historical measure of this Budget is the setting up a Wage Guarantee Fund. During the past months, we have witnessed the tragic sufferings of workers and their families following the recent closure of a few enterprises. I have in mind, particularly the cases of Palmar Ltd and Future Textiles Ltd. Workers who have been working in these enterprises for more than twenty years, some even over thirty years, suddenly found themselves overnight without a job, a salary and more

tragically, without any form of compensation for all their dedicated years of service in those enterprises. Fortunately, we were there for them.

As a caring and responsible Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we could not have remained indifferent to such human tragedies. The Wage Guarantee Fund will specifically address such situations faced by workers who are paid neither wages nor severance allowances in cases of insolvency or compulsory winding up of enterprises. The Fund will be a major relief to workers of the private sector and will guarantee them the payment of remuneration, including unpaid wages, wages in lieu of notice and end-of-year bonus up to an aggregate amount of Rs50,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this country is today facing numerous challenges, such as an increasing ageing population and a low fertility rate, which are having serious impacts on the world of work. As a forward-looking Government, as soon as we took office, we have increased the Maternity Leave from 12 to 14 weeks, and have extended paid maternity leave to working mothers with less than one-year service. In this present Budget, we are moving a step further. We are extending the six-month breastfeeding facility, which is currently applicable only to the private sector, to working mothers of the public sector as well.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to inform the House that, in light of so many measures and protection afforded to our working mothers, I have, on behalf of the Government, last week, deposited the ratification instrument regarding ILO Maternity Protection Convention 2000 (No. 183) with the Director General of ILO during my recent participation at the Conference.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming now to employment, the House would concur with me that promoting employment has always been at the core of our development strategy. As we all know, the labour market is constantly and rapidly changing. We, therefore, need to adapt to the changes that are affecting the world of work.

Since we took office in December 2014, we have opened our economy to facilitate the setting up of industries leading to creation of jobs. In this context, we have been, with the collaboration of the private sector, assessing all possible avenues to facilitate access of jobseekers to the labour market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, the slowdown in economic growth is a global phenomenon where the unemployment rate is prone to increase and existing jobs are being threatened. Next door, the African continent has an unemployment rate of 26%. Nevertheless,

this Government rose to the challenge and implemented appropriate measures to counter the situation. This is evidenced by the decrease in the unemployment rate from 7.8 per cent in 2014 to 6.9 per cent in 2018. It is the lowest since the last 17 years.

But that is not what we are aiming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are not complacent about this figure. An unemployment rate of 6 per cent by 2020 and 4 to 5 per cent by 2030, that is our new target. I will elaborate later on how my Ministry aims to rise to the challenge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I read about the comments made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition concerning the rate of unemployment. He based his analysis on official figures of the Statistics Mauritius, whereby he stated that, in December 2018, there were 1,400 people less working in Mauritius than there were in January 2018. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition would have perused the same document in question, he would have found just one line below that the number of unemployed had also decreased from 41,800 to 40,100, meaning that 1,700 persons have been employed.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition is using figures of Statistics Mauritius to highlight the decrease in the number of people working, but, at the same time, questioning the figures of growth rate from the same institution. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, either he accepts all figures from the Statistics Mauritius or he rejects all. He cannot be selective about this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has referred to a high number of people who are leaving the job market, supposedly for the sole reason that they have lost hope and have given up looking for a job. If that would have been the case, my Ministry would not have had 11,223 new registrations of unemployed jobseekers in 2018.

I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry will continue to strive to further reduce the unemployment rate. In fact, at this very moment, six of our Employment Information Centres are conducting an exercise known as the *Semaine de L'Emploi*. Employers from different sectors are conducting job datings and informing jobseekers about emerging jobs. Recently, My Ministry has organised focus group workshops with jobseekers and employers to provide a showcase of our service delivery and obtain feedbacks. All these activities are being carried out under the Employment Outreach Scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, instead of making jobseekers and employers attend our premises, officers of the Employment Information Centres (EICs) are being assigned to perform direct community outreach. The aim is to provide proximity services to a targeted audience. Employers are now being given facilities to conduct interviews and select

jobseekers in the premises of the EICs. In addition, a pamphlet on Training and Employment Opportunities is in preparation and will soon be distributed widely. The objective is to widespread information on training and employment opportunities provided by Government and parastatal bodies such as HRDC, MITD, Polytechnics Mauritius and MMTA, among others.

With the coming up of the National Employment Department (NED), a new and responsive service delivery to jobseekers, employers and other stakeholders will be made available. The NED will mark a paradigm shift from the traditional, reactive system of managing the labour market to a proactive and sustained one. It emphasises on one-to-one counselling session with jobseekers to understand and respond to their specific needs, design customised training programmes to enhance their employability skills, conduct research and labour market surveys to identify labour market trends and skills gap. The jobseekers will now be accompanied in their training requirements and job search until they get a decent job.

All the infrastructure and equipment of our Employment Information Centres are being upgraded. Eight EICs have already been transformed into modern office space. They are now equipped with audio visual facilities and conference rooms that are conducive for both administrative work and, at the same time, support and realise the objectives and goals of the Ministry.

We all know that skills mismatch is still a matter of concern, particularly among young people. This is notwithstanding the fact that this Government has had foresight and has been able to resolve partially the problem through the inception of the National Skills Development Programme. Indeed, the NSDP has served its purposes and has widely contributed towards improving the employment prospects of young people. As Minister of Labour, I welcome the initiative of the creation of a National Skills Matching Platform and setting up of an '*Espace des Métiers*'. The National Skills Matching Platform will help to assess the training requirement of job applicants and direct them towards the relevant employability scheme with the guarantee of a job at the end. The expansion of the number of trades under the National Apprenticeship Programme from 23 to 30 will offer even more prospects and will undoubtedly attract more jobseekers whose areas of interest were probably not in the previous programmes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another laudable initiative taken in the Budget 2019/2020, is the proposition for a Masters in AI and Robotics to be offered by *l'Université des*

Mascareignes in collaboration with *l'Université de Limoges* and *l'Université de Nice*. The HRDC initiative to set up a 6-month AI Skills Development Programme for 100 students with the support of the local universities and international experts is geared towards the same line. We are for sure embarking on the future of work now.

In the same line, a National Employment Policy (NEP) is in preparation. Members of the NEP Drafting Oversight Committee have already had their preliminary meetings since February of this year. Further consultations are under way as it has to consult widely to reach common agreement among all interested parties in the economy, including employers' and workers' organisations. We will be assisted by the ILO in the preparation of this document, which will help us to reach our employment goals. As I speak, a team of experts are on the island for this purpose.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to say a few words on gender mainstreaming. I must once again congratulate the Prime Minister for including this topical consideration in our national budget.

It is a matter of pride for this Government that we have always been at the forefront of improving the participation of women in the socio-economic development of the country. One such example has been the seminal training programme of Women Back-to-Work Programme which has given a number of women the opportunity to return to the world of work confidently.

The Work-from-home Scheme, announced last year, is yet another initiative which has allowed women to engage in paid employment while reconciling family obligations.

I have to mention that, for the unemployed and vulnerable women, appropriate facilities are being provided for holding of "*Atelier des Métiers et Savoirs*"

I hereby commit that we will explore every possible avenue for pursuing this warranted cause in a world of work where no exclusion may be afforded.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, indeed, as I have been explaining to the House, the challenges of the labour market are multi-faceted. While specific training and development programmes have been devised to meet the requirements of needy economic sectors, the critical mass of workers necessary to fulfil production demands is nonetheless still amiss.

This has been repeatedly voiced out by the industry operators and the employers.

We were, therefore, duty-bound to pay heed to those who ensure the viability of our economy. Since we took office, we have left no stone unturned to assist employers in sourcing workers adequately for optimising production.

In this respect, following consultations with all relevant stakeholders, primarily employers and training providers, the procedures for work permit applications have been re-engineered.

However, I reiterate that these initiatives were designed to be complementary to our existing employment programmes. Consequently, the employment of foreign workers, as we promised in our Government Programme, is planned in such a way so that it not only fills labour market gaps, but also, it may act as a precursor of employment of Mauritians in key emerging sectors.

To cite a few groundbreaking decisions, the duration for expatriates to stay and work in Mauritius has been extended from four to eight years in several sectors. As regards the textile manufacturing and export-oriented enterprises, employers may retain specialised talents for longer periods subject to usual conditions being met.

Moreover, expatriates would no longer be compelled to spend a whole year abroad after completion of the maximum duration of their contract in Mauritius. In fact, employers may rejoice that those workers can now be recruited anew after a period of only three months.

These changes will undeniably enable employers to earn human capital dividends on their investments as their qualified and experienced manpower would be able to contribute to their enterprise for a longer period.

With this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are further reviewing the processing of applications for work permit. The Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act is being amended to introduce strict timelines for assessment of requests for work permit. This will undoubtedly enable us to be more responsive to the expectations of the employers.

We are further providing for a “Post-Study Work Visa” to allow international students to work for three years in Mauritius after completion of their studies. We aspire thereby to attract and retain expertise in areas where there is a scarcity of skills, particularly in new and innovative fields such as Fintech and AI.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, therefore, today, the Mauritian labour market has become synonymous to diversity. Notwithstanding what a few detractors might want to say, we, as a responsible Government, have unfailingly ensured that adequate and timely measures are adopted to better protect the rights of these migrant workers. May I recall our partnerships with the international organisations such as the ILO and foreign Embassies present in Mauritius which enabled a number of laudable accomplishments such as the '*Know Your Rights*' Pamphlet earlier this year. This has been much appreciated and welcome in all quarters.

In the same vein, last week during my participation at the ILO Conference in Geneva, I have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nepalese Government to promote safe and regular migration, recruitment practices for workers along the same principle of ethical recruitment will be promoted. Collaboration of such nature is expected to be established with most of the countries which send their migrant workers for employment in Mauritius.

On an ending note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that this budget is one of excellence. During the last five years of our mandate, we have not been idling. This can be attested by the overwhelmingly positive response to this Budget. None may say that they have not been considered. Our journey towards joining the league of high-income economies is already on. I am confident that we shall certainly, together as one nation, reach our destination and embrace a brighter future as aptly stated in this Budget.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(4.26 p.m.)

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the fifth Budget of this Government, and thanks God it is the last one. As we all know, there will be another Government this time, next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the intention of the hon. Minister of Finance in preparing this year's Budget was to dish a little bit here and there so as to please the maximum in view of the forthcoming general election - however, dishing here and there, with a bit of popular measures at the expense of the real economic issues.

The net effect of this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a total deception by the population as a whole. Be it the workers, both in the private and the public sectors, the PME, the trade unions, the old age pensioners. Do you remember prior to the Budget, Members of the Government were going round, raising the expectation that they will be aligned with the minimum wage, *les petits planteurs*, and especially, the fishermen? I will come to the fishermen later.

The economic fundamentals have not been addressed. Be it in the agricultural sector, the tourism, the textile sector, the PME, the blue economy and the financial sector. What is worse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it comes to public debt, with one political cronies at the Bank of Mauritius, who very soon will be probably a candidate for the MSM, not to say a certified stooge or smiling idiot as others will say. The Bank of Mauritius Act will be amended to allow the bank to settle the debts of this irresponsible Government that has made an abuse, waste of public funds, hard-earned public funds.

So, without any increase in wealth, we are going to settle our debt. In so doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are witnessing the end of the independence of the Bank of Mauritius. Let me quote what an ex-Governor of the Bank of Mauritius had to say with regard to the independence of the Bank, I mean, the Bank of Mauritius. I quote: “Have a look at the amendments of the Bank of Mauritius in the last four years and find out for yourself the gradual erosion of the independence of the Bank of Mauritius.” This is Mr Basant Roi. And we know how to assist the foreign investor, Mr Alvaro Sobrinho. The Bank of Mauritius Act was amended so as to allow him to get a licence to operate in Mauritius.

Let me quote another former Governor of the Bank quoted many times by my friend, hon. Sinatambou. This is what he had to say: “Do we have a Minister of Finance? I thought he was only Prime Minister. It is unfortunate to have a Finance Minister who has never been involved in finance at all. As it appears to me, it is the people at the Finance Ministry who are doing what they can. The senior servants will just work to please the Government of the day. They don’t have a long vision for their country, they don’t care.” And you know who said this? Mr Dan Maraye in *The Weekly* of the 14 of June 2019, a few days after the Budget was presented. But, this is not new for the independence of the Bank of Mauritius, because under this Government what we have seen?

Most of the public institutions have either lost their independence or have been *politisées* with political cronies as members of the Board or either heading the institution. Let

me name but a few: the IBA! Is the IBA independent with a political agent there? The ICAC, the way the current Director General was appointed, as we all know how close he is with Members of the Government. The FSC! The MBC, no Director - the Ag. Director and a Chairman very close to the Government if not members of the family of these Members of this Government.

Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun has referred in the cases where members of family have benefited. I am going to refer to cases as well where members of the family of this Government have benefited. The Electoral Commission, even the Electoral Commission they have appointed somebody very close, who, apparently, would have been a candidate for them in 2014. Airport of Mauritius! The Post Office, somebody with no qualification, just because she is from Constituency No. 8, she is Chairperson of Post Office. The IVTB, the MIE! The MES, an institution which grants certificates, prepares examination certificates, how the Director, in a public meeting, wearing a *tricot orange* on the platform. This is what we have had with this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Even the State House has not been spared; it turned out to be an agency and the one occupying it now is an agent for a South African Rolls-Royce owner and what is...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Veda Baloomoody, please take you seat.

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I will refer you to Standing Order 40(5), where it is stated –
 “The conduct of the President and the Vice-President or the Republic or the person performing the functions of the President’s Office, the Speaker, Members of the Assembly, Judges, Members of Statutory Commissions or other persons engaged in the administration of Justice shall not be raised except upon a substantive motion moved for that purpose; and in any amendment, question to a Minister, or remarks in a debate dealing with any other subject, reference to the conduct of the persons aforesaid shall be out of order.”

Mr Baloomoody: I go to your Ruling, but it does not mention ex-President.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Baloomoody: So, I can talk about the ex-President who was very close – in fact, the last 2014 campaign – we are going to have a woman as President and she will be Mrs...

(Interruptions)

And this we know, in which area in my Constituency; I know how her name was used to get votes. What has happened to her? She had to resign. She was forced to resign and there is a Commission of Inquiry on her. The report is out yet? No! We are still awaiting the report. Anyway, this is this Government today. People they have appointed, people who have been associated with them and all the institutions, unfortunately. But, thanks God, we still have an independent Judiciary. They wanted even to tamper with the power of the DPP. We should not forget that a Bill was coming to amend the Constitution to control the DPP. This is this Government we have today in front of us.

I have listened carefully to the hon. Minister of Labour. He said that we are coming with a Workers' Rights Bill. I hope we commend on this Bill, but it's a good thing that we are coming with this Bill at last, because all throughout I was asking questions, what was the reply – the Deputy Prime Minister is presiding for a committee to amend the Employment Rights' Act and the Employment Relation Act.

So, now we hear we are coming only with a Workers' Rights Bill. We want to know about the Employment Relations Act. This has to be amended as well. We know the abuse, specially the private sector which is being made with regard to discipline committees, harassment of trade unionists; disciplinary committee just for dismissal, appointed by the employer, paid by the employer. The Chairperson is paid by the employer, appointed by the employer and he just presides a disciplinary committee and it becomes an unfair dismissal. This has to be amended as well. But, he has not said anything about this. So, will the new law correct all these anomalies with regard to trade unions' rights, with regard to workers' rights especially in private sector and the abuse being made by what we know today with regard to disciplinary committees?

Now, we are coming again with the Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund. This is welcome. He said that there has been consensus with all the parties with regard to the contribution, how much the worker will have to contribute and how much the employer's contribution. But my information is apparently there has not been consensus yet. I hope there will be consensus and that we will come with that Bill very soon.

Now, the wage guarantee fund is welcome, up to Rs50,000. I have tried to find in the Budget Estimates where is that fund coming from. I have not heard anything from the hon. Minister of Labour. Is this maximum of Rs50,000 a one-off payment? Will it be inclusive or exclusive what they will receive from the Receiver Manager, whenever a company is

insolvent? What is happening? Okay, Rs50,000 will be paid as a one-off, but we insist that the Insolvency Act should be amended. Private sector cannot borrow money from the bank and make an abuse of that money, and the bank gets its money back whenever that company goes insolvent. We have to amend the Insolvency Act so that both the bank and owners of enterprise are more responsible because the bank borrows, it gets money, and it gets its profit. The one who gets the money, it's *jalsa* with the money, and then when the company is closed, it is the workers who pay. This has to be reviewed.

Government has given in the public sector Rs1,000 across the board. Not all the civil servants are happy but, at least, they are getting an advance of Rs1,000 across the board as from January 2020. I have not heard anything from the hon. Minister of Labour with regard to the NRB, the private sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are 30 sectors in the private sector governed by the NRB. The NRB has already made its recommendation since September 2018, nine months ago, but, up to now, the Government has not released the report of the NRB and is not implementing it. Why? Why are we penalising the workers in the private sector when we are giving an advance to the public sector? And we know the PRB is reviewed every three years, but the NRB, sometimes every 10 or 15 years to be implemented.

(Interruptions)

Every 5 years, yes. But some have remained behind; have not been implemented for more than 5 years. So, why we are not implementing it? The report is over. The recommendation has been made. Why cannot the people in the private sector get what is due?

Now, let me turn to that Rs30 to a fisherman. In my constituency, there are many fishermen. In this Budget, they have got only Rs30 as bad weather allowance.

(Interruptions)

I will tell you. When they were given before, there was not minimum wage.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking!

Mr Baloomoody: Do you want to know? There was no minimum wage. And today, the minimum wage is Rs380.

(Interruptions)

And you are not even giving the fishermen the minimum wage. Now, we have minimum wage, Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, and they should...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Baloomoody: They should get at least the minimum wage. The minimum wage today is Rs380, and we are giving them only Rs340. You have to correct it if you want to treat all the people equal...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: ... especially the fishermen. They do a very, very tough job and they are probably the poorest on the social ladder. They should have been given a push. They have asked for other things which I do not want to go into detail. I have talked to the president of the fishermen, he lives in my constituency. Some have not been able to pay their debt at the DBM, small money, Rs25,000, Rs30,000. I have asked for this to be waived. Nothing! Nothing from this Government for the fishermen!

(Interruptions)

So, I am making an appeal. Now that we have got the minimum wage, at least, make an effort, give them the minimum wage. Let it be Rs380. If you can make it Rs400, make it, but, at least, Rs380 which is the minimum wage per day in this country today.

Nothing on the Civil Service Bill which has been promised to the civil servants, and we know whenever there is a case of corruption or abuse of authority by Ministers, it is always the civil servants who pay that, who are arrested first, because, unfortunately, there is not a Bill for the civil servants. They have to do, there is pressure from the Ministers, pressure from politicians: 'You have to do that, you do that. I want you to sell MedPoint, to buy MedPoint. You sell MedPoint, you buy MedPoint.' Where is the law to protect the civil servants? Again, neither the hon. Minister of Civil Service nor the hon. Minister for Labour has mentioned it.

There is another sector in the manifesto of *l'Alliance Lepep* which does not exist now, the IT sector. The IT sector was supposed to create 10,000 jobs per year. Do you know how much it has created this year, according to the statistics? 657! We are going down in all the international indexes. Import of goods dropped by 21%, the growth declined from 5.4% to

4.4%, GDP contribution dropped from 5.7% to 5.67%, UN e-Government Index ranking dropped from 58th to 66th. There is not a single word mentioned in the Budget for this sector, except to say that we are giving money on innovation. But already Rs150 m. were given three years ago. Are we doing any better with that money? It was given in 2015, what has been the effect? We have declined on the Global Innovation Index from WIPO and INSEAD from 64th in 2017 to 75th in 2018, and we are giving them more money. And when I addressed the Bill on the MIRC, I did draw the attention as to why. Have we enquired why, because again, we are not putting competent people at the institutions.

Now, let me take that important issue of drugs. Here, I will draw some similarities. When the MSM is in Government, what we have, and when an inquiry on drug is set up. The Commission of Inquiry which was set up by this Government has made several recommendations and addressed three important professions –

- Lawyers;
- Doctors, and
- Pharmacists

They are asked to reform the prisons' regime. Have we reformed the prisons' regime? More cameras in the prisons, 24/7, 70% of the cameras in the prisons are not working. Better conditions of work and salary for the Prison Officers, do you know what is happening to the Prison Officers today? Prison Officers are being treated as prisoners. I have a copy, here, of a circular dated 10 June. Now, when Prison Officers go to work, they are allowed to bring their food and it is stated, and let me use the word "very reasonable quantity". So, it is the Commissioner of Prison who will decide - *lors ration* - how much I have to eat. And they have to eat it before taking their work at 07:00 p.m. So, when they enter the Prison, they will leave the day after at 07:00 a.m. What are they entitled? *Pas biscuits marie ek delo*. They will be entitled...

(Interruptions)

They will be entitled only to *deux tranches du pain, deux fromage Vache qui Rit* and coffee. So, for 12 hours, they will have to live on this. And you want these Prison Officers to have the interest to work when they are treated like this? And what is worse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Commission of Inquiry asked for the dismantlement of ADSU because he has studied what has happened in ADSU for the last years. And what did this Government do? Take the one who was at ADSU, put him to run the Prison. The gentleman was at the ADSU where the

Commissioner on drugs has said: “You should scrap ADSU, *il n’a pas été efficace*”. Now, you put him to run the Prison. Are we going to be surprised now that everything we are getting in the prison? It is the headquarters, *tous les commanditaires* of all the drugs seized, apparently, they are all sitting in the Prison. It is going to become the head office of the Directors of drug traffickers. This is what we have done with our Prison.

Again, so many recommendations have been made for the Prison and look at the Budget of last year. Rs830,000! And this year, Rs830,000! Not a single cent extra for the Prison Service. And we want people to work for the interest of this country in that prison when you have somebody like the Commissioner we have actually.

So, my question is what action has been taken, in the prison? I am sure the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor when he addressed the House, and I will be listening, will give us a list. But, unfortunately, most of the time when he gives a list and when we check on the ground, there is much difference.

Now, let me come to the pharmacists. There has been a recommendation for a Code of Ethics for the pharmacists. Those who go to Ian Palach, Curepipe, to Rose Hill, *la gare de Rose Hill*, to Victoria, but, unfortunately, Ministers are in their cars, they won’t see. I quote on page 104, paragraph 10.3.10 –

“The Commission has received evidence from several stakeholders including the ADSU, former addicts, several NGOs etc. to the effect that there prevails a malpractice at the level of many pharmacies around the island, one which consists of an illegal trade in relation to substances available in pharmacies (...).

Psychotropic substances for the most are sold over the counter but also overselling of cough syrups (...).”

(Interruptions)

I know what I am talking, I live in Curepipe.

“requiring prescription, to persons who are most likely drug abusers. The presence of empty cough syrup bottles in high numbers not far off from certain pharmacies has been reported by some of the witnesses.”

What action has government taken? Has we tightened the role on the pharmacy? Has there any search landing on certain pharmacies to see what is happening? Nothing!

Now, coming to the barristers, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor answered to a question on Tuesday, he said that there are 10 barristers who have been named. Two are hon. Members of this Parliament, members of the MSM and no action has been taken against them. And here, I must say, we are proud in the MMM, not a single barrister! Not a single named in that report! Not a single is associated with the MMM and this we are proud of our record. But now, after having had that Commission of Inquiry, after having found the findings of the Commission of Inquiry, the Government is embarrassed. The Government is embarrassed because of the names mentioned are so close to the MSM, are members of the MSM, MPs of the MSM, Ministers of the MSM. And if you look at page 222, I quote –

“The Commission has very strong reasons, in the light of the evidence adduced before it, to believe that there is a handful of barristers who may have acted and may still be acting in a most unethical manner (...).”

When he referred to one barrister, senior member of the Bar, who was a candidate for the MSM in Constituency No. 3, there is evidence that he has taken drugs’ money during the last electoral campaign. This is what we call money politics; using dirty money, badly gained money, immoral money to campaign to be in power and once in power, use that power to protect certain people involved in drugs. So, the Commission of Inquiry is so embarrassing, the findings is so embarrassing for the Government and when there was a PNQ by the hon. Leader of Opposition, on 23.10.18, what the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor had to say, and I quote –

“Well, it does not mean that every recommendation is a sacred one. We are not bound to agree with everything that has been said in the report.”

Challenge their own report! They named the Commissioner; they paid the Commissioner. They appointed the Deputy Commissioners. When the report coming is not in their favour, they challenge that report now. And now, because they are not ready, they are not prepared to accept all the findings of this report, they named a Committee. A Committee composed of 13 Ministers – can you imagine! - chaired by the Prime Minister, and this Committee will be supposed to pick and choose which one they agree, which one they don’t agree; what they want to do? *Zot mem nomer, zot mem decider, zot mem pren action*. Then, after that, when they have *tripoté* with the report, if I may use that word, they send it to a Task Force under the Chair of the Secretary to Cabinet, now. And the members of ICAC, all those institutions have no credibility, are sitting in that Commission. So, there is a Commission chaired by the

Minister to look into what Government agrees, but they don't agree. Then, it is sent to a Task Force. Now, the day before, we were informed that we have to wait for the Supreme Court's ruling in a Judicial Review case to take action. Are they serious? Now, does this Government really want to fight the drug? And I know that Commission of Inquiry very well, Commission Rault, because I was a Junior Counsel with hon. Collendavelloo, assisting the main witness, the then Deputy Prime Minister, ex Deputy Prime Minister, founder of the MSM, in that Commission.

Again, the *Commission Rault* in 1986. When it was published, there was a list of names, MPs of the MSM. It is good reading in English. I like the reading of Rault, it's very good reading. A list of names, the Bombay Pilgrims, the Amsterdam Quartet, the drug tycoons which, apparently, if you look at the report, there was not *la cuisine* then, but they were climbing the stairs of the Government House. *Ban zenfan lakaz*.

Now, coming to the *zot mem aster*, *zot mem vender*, the MedPoint. Good, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister of Mauritius won his case. There was no conflict of interest, but the fact remains. Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun mentioned relatives, friends were benefiting in the Betamax case, etc.; it's true. But the fact remains that it is the Jugnauth family who benefited from the Rs144 m. of taxpayers' money for a building which was first valued at Rs75 m. and it was the Jugnauth family, again MSM, who benefitted from the wave of tax, capital gains tax because it was quickly signed. The deal was done before the law coming in operation. So, we should not deny this. These are facts, and hon. Toussaint mentioned hon. Pravind Jugnauth as Minister of Finance in 2004. Again, in 2004, as Minister of Finance! I am not accusing him of anything. He had to compensate the Jugnauth family in the sum of nearly Rs44.5 m. for the Sun Trust because of a contract *béton*.

(Interruptions)

Ecoutez! You will talk after me, I will listen to you carefully. There was a judgement of the Supreme Court, yes, but in that case *zot mem plaiyan*, *zot mem defander* and this is what the Judge has to say – the case was not defended in Court – and I quote -

“There was absolutely no evidence to contradict or question the plaintiff's claim regarding the loss and prejudice suffered as a result of cancellation of the contract nor was there an iota of evidence adduced by the defendant.”

It was a case which was undefended and we know who the Attorney General was then. We know; I don't want to quote his name, I think he is not well. Anyway, it was an MSM elected

Member. This case was not defended. I have been a barrister for 35 years. I have never had a judgement against me like this. I quote: “No evidence adduced.” Not an iota of evidence adduced. But it’s normal that the judge had no choice but to give judgement, and then the debt was left pending, Rs45 m./ Rs55 m. again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, let me now come to the Police Force. Unfortunately, our time is limited. In the Police Force, there have been many recommendations last year with regard to training and a full-fledged Police academy. This has been repeated every year. Where is the Police academy? Equipment in the 2018-2019 Budget, Rs8.5 billion was provided to the Police Department for an additional 1,000 Police constables. Unfortunately, only 500 were recruited. Acquisition of equipment: zero; implementation of CCTV Cameras in all Police stations: zero; Mauritius Force Training Academy: zero. So, even in the Police! And we have today a Commissioner of Police who does not earn respect among his rank. I work with the members of the Police Force every day. I meet everybody, be it the ACP, CP, the Police officers. And if the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor...

(Interruptions)

If the Government is serious for the fight against drugs, how can you protect a Commissioner of Police who has signed, in less than 24 hours, a new passport for someone to travel to Reunion Island to pick up his boat?

If you are a Minister, maybe you might get it earlier, but if somebody loses his passport, it takes....

(Interruptions)

Yes, of course, I will listen to you carefully. If you lose your passport, you have to go and make a declaration and the Police have to make an enquiry. Now, the enquiry lasts for more than 4-5 weeks; then, with the findings, it confirms that it has been lost and then you get a new passport. But this one, no! And he is still Commissioner of Police!

(Interruptions)

I have to finish. I wanted to say something on education, unfortunately I don’t have time. The hon. Minister has made a very long speech, but she has not addressed the fundamental issue, the failure in our system. HSC, only 35% passed the examination. Failure in Grade 6: 30%. These issues were not addressed. The issue of violence in schools! The situation at the MITD is dramatic. Even the MQA is not recognising the curriculum of the MITD. Even Metro

Express went to MITD to recruit welders, they were not happy with the standards of these people and they had to bring the welders from India.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I have to conclude. In 2014, people trusted *l'Alliance Lepep*. Today, what do we have in front of us? Nothing resembling the *Alliance Lepep*, which the people chose! One of the main partners in the *Alliance Lepep* is in Opposition; one Minister had to resign for an allegation of corruption. He is still flying the MSM colour - his ties - and he was compensated Rs15 m. Two Ministers had to resign from the Assembly, one of whom was supposed to be the duo of the *second miracle économique*. One PPS had to resign as PPS - he is still a Member of Parliament - for an indecent act in Parliament, and is still a Member of the MSM.

A Deputy Speaker had to resign after being named by the Drug Commission. A Minister had to resign for the same reason and she was speaking yesterday. My goodness, to my mind, she thinks she is still a Minister. She has the guts to stand here and to criticise the MMM, when she has been named by a Drug Commission to have attended 32 drug traffickers during one visit, my goodness!

Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, you have been a Barrister, this will go in the Guinness World Records Books, attending 32 visits to prisoners in one day! One Minister had to resign for treating a community all sorts of names – prostitute. That they can't give them NHDC houses, they can't go and live in Palma! These people, no! This community, no! He had to resign. Another Minister, who has insulted another community...

(Interruptions)

I have not mentioned your name! If the hat fits you, you bear it and you take your responsibility!

Another Minister who has insulted another community, he is still Minister...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: Another Minister who is supposed to be the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, hon. Sesungkur - the hon. Prime Minister answered a Question, the Police are enquiring on five cases against him. The Prime Minister, whom the people elected in 2014, the duo of the *miracle économique*, one is out, gold finger is out. The Prime Minister has been relegated as Rt. hon. Minister Mentor; this is an insult to the wish of

the people. We have today a Prime Minister, who has not been chosen by the people, but chosen by his father and who is advised by Senior Advisers of the Prime Minister's Office; one is on bail for corruption, Mr Prakash. Yesterday, one had to be banned, *persona non grata* from the National Assembly for indecency - attacking an hon. Member, a lady. I am sorry if I missed one of the culprits, because the list is long.

(Interruptions)

I apologise if I have not named one. I apologise. This is why Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, out there, there is a big 'Ouf!', people are not talking about the Budget. While we are discussing in the Chamber, people are talking out there. They want the general election. They realise that they were duped in 2014. People want a clean Government, a party which is clean, which has never been involved in corruption, never been dealing with drug traffickers, which has an history of honesty. This is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, people are waiting there: *Zott tou pu virer mam, pu devirer mam!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 5.11 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.49 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon Roopun!

(5.49 p.m.)

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr P. Roopun): Madam Speaker, let me join in to congratulate and commend the hon. Prime Minister for the presentation of this fourth Budget of this present Government.

Madam Speaker, before going straightaway to the Budget, let me answer to a few remarks made by the hon. Member who spoke just before me. I was listening to him and I had also the privilege of reading the two previous speeches he made on the Budget. I must say it is the same rhetoric, the same issues, again and again, being raised and this is only indicative of the MMM. What he stated today, what he stated last year, what he stated the year before is just a reflection of what MMM is. They are always in the past, not evolving, stuck in the opposition for 50 years. Today, *la tête haute...*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No provocative remarks! Right! I would advise Members not to make any provocations.

Mr Roopun: Today, after 50 years, this *parti historique*, as they call it, is still *lor coaltar* without any militant. This is to what they have reached. And now, they are talking about bits and pieces, as if we have come with bits and pieces. Today, the MMM is in five pieces since we have this Government. They are already reduced in five different bits and pieces. They talked about cronies, about political nominees. I could also come with a list. Although they have not been in Government for long, in their political career they have been in Government, at least, I believe only twice, in 1991 and 2000-2005. But yet, who doesn't remember of Bidianand Jhurry? We remember. I don't want to dwell further in this. He was a trade unionist. Who does not remember Ananda Rajoo? Were they not nominated when you were in power?

(Interruptions)

They were, my dear! Just to remind you! Weren't there other nominees of MMM when you were in power? Yes! This is what the hon. Member stated. For you there is no problem; for us, there is a problem. This is the double language, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Don't show fingers at others when you are not better!

(Interruptions)

I will come with it. I was talking about Bidianand Jhurry, about Ananda Rajoo, *militant coaltar, première heure*. When you are in power, you try to see what competencies you have around you and you try to use those competencies. Just like you had Seilandra Gokhool, you had the famous Jean-Mée Desveaux! When tomorrow you come to power, are you going to appoint me? Just tell me! Be realistic, my friend! Don't we remember *les frasques* d'Ajay Guinness? He was appointed Junior Minister at the Ministry of Public Infrastructure - when I was appointed also. We were together. Don't we know what happened? We know what happened, okay. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth aussi, mind you!

In 2005, during the electoral campaign! Now, you show fingers at others. Don't you remember the *bouche à bouche*? Recently, at Flic en Flac, what happened? We talked about money? Just tell me! The MMM, how does it finance its campaign? You just tell me! We

know. I can tell you, as far back as the Libyan connection up to the BAI connection, Rs10 m. Do not make as if you are 'Mr Clean'!

Now, let us come to the drug issue! Do you wish that I show photographs of the last campaign as to who were with you, who were with your partner? Please! You want me to talk of drugs, well, we are proud of what we have been able to achieve in these two years. We are proud! History will remember that two Commissions of Inquiries were the doing of the MSM...

(Interruptions)

The number of arrests, the number of drugs that we have been able to seize! Madam Speaker, what saddens me, lately we seized about 110 kgs of drugs out in the sea. I believe it was in November last year. Just see to what extent the Leader of the MMM went. Instead of congratulating us, - even if you don't want to congratulate us, there is no problem - what he stated is that, whatever was there, was but *une mise en scène*, a show. This is how he described it, as if the Prime Minister organised everything, looked for 110 kg of drugs, called all those to come and filmed it. This is how they reacted, Madam Speaker, as if they believe that it was in their own good days, when whatever they are going to say, the population is going to accept blindly. This is what they have been doing all throughout, and the bluff of the MMM today, everybody knows it.

Madam Speaker, I prefer not to go further on this line. Hon. Baloomoody was just talking about *pêcheurs*. He was very forcefully stating why we did not equate whatever allocation with the minimum salary. *Quel culot!* They have been there acting as if *les grands défenseurs des travailleurs!* But we are the ones who came with the minimum salary, Madam Speaker. We are the ones! And now, when we give a 9% increase in the allocation when the inflation rate is less than 2%, *ils sont offusqués*. We should have come with whatever we place as minimum salary, as if they are the ones who did it. But, we should remember, it is not a salary, it is an allocation of bad weather. And just for the sake of comparison, let me state that, in 2012, the increase was merely Rs15. In 2013: Rs10. In 2014: Rs9. And today, we are giving a 9% increase of Rs30 per day. They are making lots of calculations to make as if we don't know, as if they are more concerned about the fishermen than us. I prefer not to lose my temper, Madam Speaker.

Let me come to the Budget itself. I must say that this is yet another Budget where we have taken a compassionate, yet realistic and responsible approach in answering the

expectations and aspirations of the population. As stated by the hon. Prime Minister, we wish to embrace a brighter future together as a nation. And this, despite the fact, Madam Speaker, that we know that there are lots of uncertainties lingering on the international front. A trade war, rather protectionism, extremism in all its forms, instability of the world scene, yet, we are proud that we have been able to create and maintain a vague of optimism in the country. What we have heard from the opposition, the same rotten rhetoric, painting everything in dark, either nothing is good, *nani en pa bon*, too little or too late; they are just criticising. In fact, nobody should be surprised.

We heard the first Member from the Opposition, the Leader of the Opposition when he intervened, what did he say? He candidly stated: 'we are paid to criticise, we are going to do it without fear'. It is as if this is the only role of the Opposition. There was quite a fuss about a budget *électorale*, a budget apparently *pou faire la bouche doux*. If we say that this budget is *électorale*, we should likewise qualify all our previous budgets as *électorale*. In fact, in each of our budget, we came with groundbreaking measures. In 2016, we made provision for the introduction of the subsistence allowance for the extreme poor where families were given subsistence allowance up to Rs9,000 and this was never done before, Madam Speaker. Previously we had a regime where those who are invalid were given something, if you had some problem, but you were never given except for an allocation for food allowance, you were not given anything for the mere fact of being poor. We came with a mechanism and we created the subsistence allowance and the extreme poor, for the first time in history, get an allowance irrespective of his condition of health, we gave that allowance.

In 2017, we went on the same trend. We came with a negative income tax. A system instead of paying taxes, the MRA pays those whose salary does not exceed R9,900. This was in 2017. In 2018, we introduced the minimum wage. We did wait for the budget to announce it. It was announced in January. Just like this January also. We announced free tertiary education in all public institutions. What we are doing today is a mere continuation of what we have been doing all throughout our mandate. Others are talking about *mesures panadol*. These are *mesures panadol*? We have taken measures which bring fundamental and meaningful change in the lives of our countrymen. We are a people-centric Government, always focusing on the welfare of our countrymen.

In fact, Madam Speaker, the Opposition, as usual, are busy to find what I may call *lipou dan poule*. Let them do so because we know that the Opposition is interested in the

lipou while the population they are interested in the *poule*, they are not interested in the petty details. You take the *lipou* and the population is benefiting the *poule*.

One measure however, which has raised some passion, I must say, and much debate is on the decision of the Prime Minister to use the Special Reserve Fund from the Bank of Mauritius to pay our debts. The hon. Leader of the Opposition came with a PNQ. He clearly explained that our reserve has reached an unprecedented level of Rs141 billion, that inflation is very low. He also added that we have to pay some Rs400 m. of interest on our loans and he considers that there is no point in keeping this special reserve and that it is better to use it to reimburse our loans. He considers this to be sound management in the interest of people of this country and he still believes that making maximum and best utilisation of the money available was in the best interest of the country. He reassured everyone that this is not going to jeopardise the interest of the country and that everything is going to be done in full consultation with the Bank of Mauritius. The hon. Prime Minister stated loud and clear here in this House.

The Leader of the Opposition is of different views. We respect his views. He made his point. Likewise we had two previous Governors of the Bank of Mauritius. They also have got divergent views. One more or less is on the same wavelength as the hon. Prime Minister; another one sharing the views of the Leader of the Opposition. He agrees to disagree, I have no problem. But what I consider to be most inappropriate and irresponsible and I may even say unpatriotic, when in a Press Conference, he went as far as comparing Mauritius with Zimbabwe. I must admit I did not expect that from him at all. It is not just innocent and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition, intelligent as he is, must have realised what harm such a statement on his part has done to the image of our county. Be it locally among the business community, be it on the international scene. And I wish, Madam Speaker, to deplore such an attitude which was not only excessive, inappropriate, irresponsible but also unpatriotic as I stated earlier.

Madam Speaker, I would like before coming to the budget itself, briefly comment on the exceptional context under which we are presenting the last budget of this Government.

Madame la présidente, je vais maintenant commenter sur plusieurs évènements qui se sont succédé ces derniers temps et qui nous réconfortent dans les décisions très courageuses qu'on a prises jusqu'ici. Commençons par l'affaire MedPoint. Nous nous réjouissons que la plus haute instance d'appel de notre système judiciaire ait exonéré le Premier ministre.

Pravind Jugnauth a été lavé de tout blâme à l'unanimité aux termes d'un jugement du *Privy Council*. Que n'a-t-on pas dit, Madame la présidente, sur l'affaire MedPoint ? J'étais moi-même dégoûté de voir jusqu'où la démagogie peut aller, à quel degré certains peuvent être impitoyables et souhaiter le malheur des autres. Pourtant, c'est bon de se rappeler de ce qu'on reprochait précisément au Premier ministre. C'est tout simplement que même s'il avait, en 2010, en tant que membre du Cabinet, bel et bien refusé d'être partie prenante d'une quelconque décision concernant l'achat de MedPoint, le fait qu'il ait par la suite procédé à une réallocation des fonds qui était considéré comme étant contre les dispositions de la loi, il est censé avoir commis une infraction à la loi, même s'il était de bonne foi et sans intention criminelle. C'était cela la charge qui était retenue contre le Premier ministre. Ce n'était pas un délit directement lié à quelques fraudes ou faits de corruption. Aujourd'hui, Pravind Jugnauth, à travers le jugement de notre plus haute instance judiciaire, a été de façon nette, claire et inconditionnelle établi qu'il n'avait, et n'a rien à se reprocher dans cette affaire. Je dois dire que je ne considère pas ce jugement comme une victoire pour Pravind Jugnauth mais beaucoup plus un soulagement pour lui et ses proches. Nous savons tous ce qu'ils ont vécu pendant ces sept dernières années et je ne souhaite pas, même à mon pire ennemi, qu'il vive un calvaire pareil. Trainant injustement ce fardeau pendant sept ans n'est pas chose facile, Madame la présidente, et pour ceci pour n'importe quelle personne. Ne dit-on pas que c'est dans l'adversité qu'on reconnaît l'homme ? C'est ainsi que la population a pu découvrir un Pravind Jugnauth qui ne s'est jamais laissé intimider. Il a montré une grande résilience, une grande ténacité tout en restant un homme de principe et de valeur. Même étant l'architecte de la victoire de l'alliance Lepep, il n'a pas réfléchi deux fois pour démissionner comme ministre afin de préserver son honneur après le jugement de la Cour Intermédiaire. Même après avoir été blanchi par la Cour Suprême et qu'il est retourné aux commandes, l'appel du *DPP* l'a contraint de vivre encore avec une épée de Damoclès sur la tête mais il a trouvé sa force de caractère et est resté imperturbable et constant à travailler pour le progrès de notre pays et pour réaliser ses projets. Ce devoir ne l'a jamais empêché de combattre la mafia de la drogue, de venir avec des mesures révolutionnaires comme le *negative income tax*, le salaire minimal entre autres. Madame la présidente, c'est cela qui caractérise l'âme d'un grand leader. Et moi, je dois dire que personnellement j'ai beaucoup d'admiration pour lui. Ici, combien parmi nous aurait pu tenir cette pression qui était celle du Premier ministre ? Imaginez un instant que vous passez par ce même calvaire. Lui, il est resté résilient, concentré sur ses objectifs et c'est pourquoi aujourd'hui il surpasse ses rivaux de loin, de très loin. Allez imaginer maintenant, Madame la présidente, quels sont les miracles qu'il a le

potentiel de réaliser, maintenant qu'il s'est débarrassé de ce boulet qu'il a si injustement trainé pendant ces sept dernières années.

Mais il est quand même malheureux de constater que certains mauvais perdants ont voulu insinuer que le changement de position de l'ICAC aurait influencé la décision du *Privy Council*. C'est surtout regrettable et choquant je dois dire que certains puissent dire que l'ICAC essaie d'influencer le *Privy Council*. C'est totalement irrespectueux envers les *law lords* et une grave insulte à leur intégrité, indépendance et compétence.

Whether submission or not, Madam Speaker, these are facts and I am surprised that many hon. Members from the legal profession - no one dared - as if they don't know the procedure, insinuating that the law lords whenever somebody, any party just comes and states whatever they have to state and blindly the Judiciary is going to follow them. This is what has been the insinuation. What you wanted people to believe and this is why I wish to raise it here.

Madame la présidente, je dois aussi dire que cet heureux dénouement dans l'affaire de MedPoint, si c'est un soulagement pour Pravind Jugnauth pas une victoire, par contre c'est une grande victoire politique pour le MSM. Oui, une très grande victoire du MSM sur le Parti travailliste en premier. Tout le monde sait que l'affaire MedPoint était un piège politique, une vendetta du Parti travailliste, une manœuvre machiavélique pour ébranler à jamais le MSM

et je le dis haut et fort il y avait implication personnelle de Navin Ramgoolam dans l'affaire de MedPoint pour finir la carrière politique de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth...

Madam Speaker: No. Hon. Minister, please sit down. I would ask you to refrain from imputing motives. If you say that there has been direct implication of the former Prime Minister, I think it would be better for you to withdraw these words.

Mr Roopun: I withdraw, Madam Speaker. I do not want to unduly come into argument with anybody, but I am going to refrain and state that there has been an attempt to undermine his political career. Politically, they wanted to finish the Prime Minister. What I am saying. We had an example quite recently. You know I believe it was in December. What did the previous Prime Minister state?

I just recall. He stated that he has un cadeau pour Pravind Jugnauth en 2019. You can check my friends. Personne n'est dupe. Nous savons tous ce qu'il voulait insinuer à ce moment-là. Mais Dieu n'a pas permis à ces forces maléfiques de réussir dans leur cadeau. Quel cadeau que l'ancien Premier ministre aurait pu donner à Pravind Jugnauth en 2019 ? Est-ce qu'on doit grimper sur une montagne pour voir cela ?

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, you stated very clearly that the hon. Minister should not impute motives knowing perfectly well that the person whom he has named is not a Member of the National Assembly.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I have already given my Ruling on that matter and you can rest assured that if there are further attempts to impute motives, I'll be there to stop him.

Mr Roopun: Thank you. At least, we have got a defender of the previous Prime Minister here.

Madame la présidente, laissez-moi continuer, je vais m'arrêter maintenant au Parti travailliste pour prendre maintenant le MMM. Chez le MMM aussi, Madame la présidente, c'est une très grande victoire pour le MSM. On se rappelle tous, ici même, dans cette Chambre, les gestes de l'honorable Bhagwan signifiant que le leader du MSM allait avoir des menottes aux poignets, pas seulement des paroles, des gestes aussi...

(Interruptions)

Tout le monde sait, Madame la présidente, que le MMM s'est servi de l'affaire MedPoint pour briser le *remake*. Ils savaient très bien que Pravind Jugnauth n'avait rien à faire dans

cette affaire; qu'il n'était pas impliqué dans aucun conflit d'intérêt mais pour des raisons purement politiques, ils ont choisi de jeter la pierre sur Pravind Jugnauth comme prétexte. Nous savons ce qui s'est passé. Ils ont couru vers le Parti travailliste. Quelle prétexte qu'on avait à ce moment-là ? Ah, ils étaient outrés. Pourquoi ? Parce que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth n'avait pas demandé un *early trial*. C'était ça la raison. Eux, qui prétendent tout savoir, pensaient que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth ne devait pas prendre des objections préliminaires dans l'affaire criminelle, devant la Cour Intermédiaire. Voilà les raisons. C'est pourquoi je dis que cette victoire, Madame la présidente, c'est une victoire du MSM sur le Parti travailliste et le MMM.

Madame la présidente, heureusement, tout cela est derrière nous. Comme on dit : tout est bien qui finit bien. Justice est faite. *I will emulate the hon. Chief Government Whip by coming with a saying: Satyamev jayate*, la vérité finit toujours par triompher, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de parler maintenant de l'affaire Betamax et de CT Power. Laissez-moi, avant tout, réitérer ce que j'avais dit dans le passé. Nous avons et nous avons une obligation et le devoir moral, légal et politique de tout faire pour mettre de l'ordre dans le pays. Pendant la campagne électorale de 2014, nous avons critiqué que ce soit Betamax, que ce soit CT Power, que ce soit Airway Coffee, Dufry-Frydu, quelqu'un avait parlé de D.Y Patil tout à l'heure, EIILM. Nous avons critiqué tout cela et c'était connu d'avance. On avait promis à la population qu'on allait tout faire pour rectifier le tir, et aujourd'hui, je dois dire que je suis fier que pour l'affaire de Betamax, on a pu vraiment faire valoir nos points de vue et que ces points de vue ont été retenus par la Cour Suprême.

Mais c'est bon aussi de rafraîchir la mémoire de certains, les procédures pour que le pays s'offre les services d'un pétrolier pour le transport des carburants avaient été enclenchées quand ? En 2010, quand on est entré au pouvoir ? Non. Peut-être en 2007, sous le gouvernement du Parti travailliste et du PMSD. Ce que je crois comprendre, tout avait commencé quand un certain Dr. Rajesh Jeetah était ministre de l'Industrie et du Commerce. Je dis avec quelques réserves. Je dois vous dire, Madame la présidente, ce que j'ai cru comprendre. C'est à ce moment-là qu'on a commencé avec ça. Aujourd'hui, c'est tout à fait malhonnête d'associer le MSM à cette machination et venir dire qu'on a été partie prenante de ça. Il ne faut pas oublier aussi que le comité interministériel était présidé par nul autre que

l'ancien No. 2 du gouvernement qui est aujourd'hui le Leader de l'Opposition, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. C'était lui, qui, en 2009, avait recommandé au Conseil des ministres de donner son accord au *deal* entre la STC et Betamax.

Autre chose, posez-vous la question, comment se fait-il que le Bhunjun Group, comme a observé la Cour Suprême, était impliqué, je vais citer –

“Whose activities historically were focused (...).”

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. The hon. Minister has said something which is not correct. In 2009, the Leader of the Opposition did not give his accord to give the contract to Betamax. What he did do ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, he is providing erroneous information, imputing motives on the Leader of the Opposition. What he has done, Madam Speaker, is to chair a Committee with regard to the evaluation and whatsoever. He did not give his accord and it is not correct for him to say that.

Madam Speaker: I would ask the hon. Minister to check his records and to see to it that whatever he is saying is correct because he is taking the full responsibility of what he says.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, I maintain what I stated and also my hon. friend will have the opportunity to come and rebut whatever I have said. And I am sure the hon. Member from this side also has taken good note of what is stated. They are also going to come and substantiate on what I have stated.

(Interruptions)

Now, we know what has been stated. It is a good thing. I will come back to what I was stating, Madam Speaker. I state what the Supreme Court found very strange is that the Bhunjun Group, which, historically were focused on property development and the construction industry, *subitement se trouve dans un secteur tout à fait différent, très loin, Madame la présidente, de leur champ d'activité.*

Ce contrat, taillé sur mesure, pour le beau-frère de certain, signé en 2009, était clairement un jackpot, Madame la présidente. Ce n'était pas un contrat, parce que moi, quand je parle d'un contrat, il y a deux parties, chacun a des prestations, il y a aussi des risques. Dans ce contrat, il n'y avait pas de risque. Il y avait une garantie de paiement ...

(Interruptions)

Les produits que vous ne fournissez pas, on vous paye. Et de plus, d'après quelques rapports, les conditions qu'on avait dans ce contrat, des experts vous disent – *never seen before in this type of business. Escalation rate!* Et même si le fret baissait sur le coût mondial, les acolytes de l'ancien ministre allaient avoir régulièrement une augmentation. On avait eu les chiffres récemment, R 200 millions payés à Betamax sur le *dead freight*, soit un volume de produits qui n'a jamais été transporté et R 4.3 milliards payés par la STC, Madame la présidente. Comme je disais, ce n'est même pas un contrat. C'était un *scheme* pour pouvoir donner de l'argent à d'autres parce que la Cour Suprême spécifiait -

“The whole obligation was irrevocably and mandatorily guaranteed in favour of Betamax by the State of Mauritius.”

C'est ça, l'État Mauricien est venu pour garantir et pour s'assurer que *whatever maybe*, Betamax allait être payé. Comme disait Sir Anerood Jugnauth, le ministre *Mentor*, on doit se poser la question, s'il avait déclaré ses intérêts au moment des négociations, au temps où il était ministre de tutelle. Quand on est ministre de Commerce, il y a l'affaire Betamax. Quand on est ministre de l'Education tertiaire, on a ELIIM, ça on va établir. Mais je dois dire aussi, Madame la présidente, l'honorable Adrien Duval avait voulu défendre le Leader de l'Opposition. Moi, je vais dénoncer cette fois-ci le volte-face et le double langage du Leader de l'Opposition, qui avait souligné à l'issue du jugement du *Singapore International Arbitration Centre*, qu'il avait, pauvre diable, supplié le gouvernement au Conseil des ministres de ne pas aller de l'avant avec la réalisation du contrat de Betamax, quand cette décision allait à l'encontre de l'avis légal du *Solicitor General*. Et là, il commet une entorse, en tant que membre du Cabinet, il est collectivement responsable. Est-ce qu'il a le droit de dire quoi que ce soit ? Et il devait être solidaire, on ne va pas à tort et à travers dire, et même si on faisait, ici, Madame la présidente, vous nous auriez arrêtés. Et aujourd'hui, après le jugement de la Cour Suprême, qu'est-ce qu'il vient dire ? C'est un 'ouf' de soulagement pour la population. Enfin, Madame ! 'Ouf' de soulagement pour la population ! Aujourd'hui, Madame la présidente, la Cour Suprême a eu raison de déclarer le contrat Betamax illégal. Trois juges ont conclu, et je cite –

“We have absolutely no difficulty (...) that the public policy of Mauritius prohibits the recognition or enforcement of an award giving effect to such an illegal contract (...)

public financial structure and administration of Mauritius (...) which unquestionably violates the fundamental legal order of Mauritius.”

C'est cela que la Cour Suprême a dit clairement, c'est contre l'ordre public, *it violates the fundamental legal order of Mauritius*. Et heureusement, comme disait mon ami, Adrien Duval, que grâce à ce jugement, favorable à l'Etat, nous, les citoyens de Maurice, n'auront pas à payer R 4,7 milliards à Jeetah et consort.

Je viens, Madame la présidente, maintenant avec le CT Power. Pourquoi je vais prendre le CT Power, parce que les faits sont semblables, *same modus operandi*, même scénario, et aussi, autre gifle magistrale pour l'ancien régime, mais une grande victoire pour la nation et le pays tout entier. Encore un cas de *unsolicited bid* avec beaucoup de zones d'ombre. Et là, on avait une supposée garantie bancaire. Quelle sorte de garantie bancaire avec tellement de clauses exonérant dedans que cela ne valait rien du tout. Le *Privy Council* a précisé tout ça, alors le promoteur qui vient, croyant pouvoir duper l'Etat avec deux *letter of comfort*. Et le schéma était quoi ? On voulait qu'il nous donne deux *letter of comfort* qui ont la capacité financière pour venir faire ce projet, eux, ils voudraient avoir avant le *letter of intent*, ensuite pour aller avoir des *comforts* financiers, et heureusement, Madame la présidente. Et là, je ne vais pas rentrer les détails, que l'Etat qui voulait promouvoir l'énergie propre, allait se retourner avec le *coal* - le charbon. Mais tout ça, c'est encore un autre exemple de ce que je vais appeler le '*money grabbing scheme*', initié par l'ancien régime Travailleiste, et là, j'emprunte ici un terme de mon ami, l'honorable Sinatambou. Le *money grabbing scheme* était initié par le régime Travailleiste sans oublier aussi le PMSD.

Madame la présidente, MedPoint, Betamax, CT Power, maintenant on est rassuré. Mais ne pensez pas que c'était sans risque. Il y avait un risque dedans. Parce que vous avez tous ces contrats ont été scellés avec du Betonix, en béton, il y avait un risque. Mais on a eu le courage de prendre ce risque et je suis fier, what we had promised, we have been able to deliver, because we are bound morally, politically to take actions.

Et maintenant, *there are some unfinished business, I must say*. On voudrait bien pouvoir retracer 17 milliards chiffonnés en dehors du pays par la BAI. On voudrait bien pouvoir établir qu'est-ce que ces 220 millions dans le coffre de Navin Ramgoolam, unused dollars, d'où ça vient. Et ce que nous, nous souhaitons, c'est qu'on arrive par la suite à faire la lumière sur ça aussi, Madame la présidente. Parce que, moi, je crois toujours dans l'adage qui dit : 100 jours pour le voleur, un jour pour le maître. On verra!

As a son of Mauritius, Madam Speaker, I would fail in my duty towards our motherland if I do not comment on our history over Chagos. If I don't comment on our struggle to complete the decolonisation of the Republic of Mauritius, while acknowledging the contribution of those unsung heroes who have fought during these last decades, some still among us, like Olivier Bancoult, but many more have left us today, like Lizette Talate and others. But we should all put on record the unprecedented breakthrough that we have been able to achieve during these two years.

And here, I hope that everyone would be thankful to this Government, in particular to Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, who was sufficiently bold and daring to proceed on the path that we chose, starting with a vote supported by 94 countries, when we first went to the UN Council, followed by the endorsement we had at the International Court of Justice by a majority of 13, out of 14 Judges.

When we increased our support at a UN General Assembly from 94 to 116, this is no small feat, Madam Speaker. We have flown with this judgement that even a small island State like Mauritius, we can stand in front of bigger countries whenever we feel that we are on the right track.

I won't dwell on the details. There were some who were pessimistic; they wanted to choose another path. It's a question of opinion, but what I wish to put on record, Madam Speaker, and what I wish to deplore is what happened is the aftermath of the pronouncement of the International Court of Justice. It was a big victory for us. What happened here the following day?

There were supposedly independent observers, people from the Press, instead of applauding what we have achieved as a country, they were stating that *c'était une victoire stérile*. Others were stating that the judgement is not binding.

(Interruptions)

This was what was being said my dear friend, and did you expect, you know among those who were stating and undermining whatever victory we have had, we had a previous Ministry of External Affairs who stated that the judgement was not binding, and what do you expect if we are not speaking of the same voice as a nation here, forcefully defending it, did you expect that UK will say otherwise.

It was grossly unpatriotic. Do you feel that we don't know what the purport of a judgement of the ICJ is? We don't know that it is not binding. Everybody knows. But then it

was vital at that point, at that juncture that we speak with the same voice, one voice, otherwise I don't believe we can move further if we don't have the support of each and every one. This is why I wanted to raise it here, be it from Members of the Opposition, you may have had different attitudes, you may have had different strategies but what we have been able to achieve today, let us, whatever be our personal views, leave aside our ego, join us and let us speak with one voice on this issue. This is my solemn request to each and every one. Those inside this House, those outside, this is what I expect from a true patriot.

I'm glad also, Madam Speaker, that what we have been able to achieve on the international scene, has increased our stature and prestige on the international scene. We have consolidated our relationship with our traditional partners like China, India, France and so on. We have also increased our collaboration with our brothers and sisters of the African Continent by building new bridges, as we have also reinforced our relationship with countries like Estonia, Norway, Saudi, Japan, among others. And I am proud of what we have been able to achieve on this core, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I don't want to transgress more on those issues and having in mind the time constraint that I have, let me make a few remarks on the Ministry for which I have been given the responsibility of the Ministry of Arts and Culture.

There was a lot which has been said about the Ministry of Arts and Culture and let me state that this budget is a continuum of the measures proposed and implemented during our mandate. Whatever has been announced in this budget is yet in addition to what we have been able to achieve during the past years, and it cannot deny that artistic and the cultural sector has been enhanced and there are more incentives given to fire creativity of our artists.

The Prime Minister has been very sensitive and has always lent an attentive ear to the needs of our artists. The House may recall that in our Government Programme we promised to come up with a special scheme to give incentives to our cultural entrepreneurs. In this endeavour, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister announced in his budget last year, the setting up of a National Arts Fund. This *grande première*, Madam Speaker, was designed to encourage emerging talents in the production of artworks and stimulating research in various fields of arts and culture. And further triggering the development of our local artists, boosting the creative economy and enhancing artistic *savoir-faire*, covering different forms of art.

Initially, a sum of Rs50 m. has been earmarked under the Lotto Fund, and I am glad to say today, Madam Speaker, that the National Arts Fund is fully operational since August last

year. In January, it was extended to cover also cinema projects. As at date, we have had three calls for proposal, 40 projects have been approved and we are funding different projects to a tune of Rs20 m., and if you make the calculation, Madam Speaker, you will have the average amount that we are supporting all those projects.

This scheme has triggered laudable artistic projects, brightening our artistic landscape and just to name a few, we had given support to Mamaja project, Partage as well as artists in numerous fields such as Pierre Argo, Briz Mason, the Bhojpuri Boys, Stephen Bon Garçon, Dr. Isa Asgarali, the Indian Folk and Music Academy, Sadaraja, Gerard Louis, amongst others.

In this year's budget, Madam Speaker, a further amount of Rs20 m. has been earmarked following the trend of expenditure and different course launched so far. We have established a monitoring and evaluation exercise and my only hope is that artists come with more projects which meet our criteria and have no doubt that the Ministry of Finance will provide additional funds whenever the need is felt.

I wanted to say a few words on the National Art Fund, Madam Speaker, in answer to what hon. Quirin stated during his intervention. I know that normally he talks about Sports where at times he seems to know better than the Minister of Sports himself, but he stated that *qu'il faut mettre un fonds pour subventionner les artistes pour financer la création artistique*. I just wanted to tell him that this *fonds artistique* is here since quite some time and I hope that he will take good note of it.

We are also very proud, Madam Speaker, that we came with a National Award for our artists. This is another groundbreaking measure announced by the Prime Minister, and which is highly appreciated by our local artists. Last year, in 2018, we organised the very first award ceremony. This provided a unique platform where around 400 artists from all fields of art were invited. And being given that it was organised in the context of the Golden Jubilee of the Independence of Mauritius, artists who had made outstanding achievements in the fields of literature, cinema, music, dance, theatre and visual arts were rewarded. 18 local artists were awarded cash prizes and a shield as a recognition for their valuable contribution in the fields of art and culture since independence. And it was a great moment in our history when the Prime Minister handed over shields of recognition to many of our stalwarts in the cultural sector like Serge Lebrasse, late Abhimanyu Unnuth, Anna Patten, Gaston Valayden, Surendra Brijmohun, Vaco Baissac, Feroz Ghanty, and I resorted to add another name here, Dev

Virahsawmy. Why I want to add this name is that we know at that time he was a member of the Parti travailliste, he was a member of the Labour Party. But even then, we wanted to recognise his contribution in the field of literature, we honoured him and gave him an award in 2018.

This year, we organised our second edition, last April, where 20 artists received awards and for this year's edition, two new awards, that of Lifetime Achievement and Most Promising Talent were included to encourage artists to pursue the process of creativity. We have among the winners The Prophecy, Groupe Abaim, Jean Renat Anamah, Ramesh Ramdoyal, among others. Dhyaneshwar Dausoa was conferred with a Lifetime Achievement Award in the field of visual arts while Appadu Hitesh Kalisetty received the award of Most Promising Talent for his contribution in the field of cinema.

Madam Speaker, one of UNESCO's recommendations concerning artists under Article 4(f) is to adopt and develop coordinated comprehensive vocational guidance in training policies and programmes taking into consideration the particular employment situation of artists and enabling them to enter other sectors of activity, if necessary. This year we have come with yet another measure where we are financing the cost of high level exams, thus giving opportunities to our local musicians to take international music exams from grade 8 up to diploma, and Government is going to pay the bill; the cost of the exams ranging from Rs3,700 for grade 8 up to Rs32,000 for diplomas.

As a result, we hope that many highly talented musicians, who could not sit for exams due to financial difficulties, will be able to do so. And this is also in line with what we have done: free exam fees for SC and HSC; free exam fees for repeaters of those who are under the SRM and now, we are coming yet with another scheme, this time in the field of music. I have no doubt that this will encourage a larger number of musicians to follow formal training and obtain internationally recognised music diplomas. This will increase the mobility, not only in Mauritius, but also overseas. We are thus ensuring that music education become more accessible. We also know that hotel musicians having varying performing standards and music qualifications fail to earn their living through hotels because the work is seasonal, but we hope that by helping financially through a payment of music exams, those artists will be given the opportunity to upscale themselves.

As we know, with the education reform, music is going to be one of the subjects which is going to be taught at Grade 7. There is a dire need for music teachers and we just

hope than we can, in this way, encourage others to go in that field. To answer the queries of hon. Barbier who is not here, I am glad to state that, in addition to reviewing the Copyright Act to make better representation for the artist community, I wish to inform that the tariffs for the MASA, which have pending since 2018, have been worked out and a few weeks back this has been communicated to my Ministry and we are actually having consultations with different Ministries to finalise those tariffs.

Similarly, I wish to state that, regarding the recruitment of a Director, which is going to be on contract, procedures for the recruitment have started. We have received applications which are being scrutinised. Mention was also made, Madam Speaker, of the International Slavery Museum. In the last Budget, the Prime Minister earmarked funds to undertake preliminary works and today I can report that the preliminary study and survey, which started in 2018, have been completed early this year and this long overdue project is well on track. A committee, comprising a panoply of competencies, including historians, scholars, anthropologists, archaeologists, members of the civil society, has been set up to work out the concept of the museum. In addition, my Ministry has availed of the services of an expert to carry out a photogrammetric study of the ex-Military Hospital.

When hon. Baboo intervened, he mentioned that the *Musée de l'esclavage* was only in his speech. I wish to request him to ask his own Leader why this project has been delayed. There had been dillydallying as regards the site and quite recently in January, the Leader of the Opposition was still maintaining that the site we have chosen was not the appropriate site. But I wish to reassure him that the new Intercontinental Slavery Museum will be housed in the ex-Military Hospital Building near to the Aapravasi Ghat.

Insofar as the National Archives and National Library are concerned, I wish to inform that the preliminary design for the construction of a new building has been finalised. The building, which is going to be located at Reduit triangle and costs about Rs450 m., is well on track. A first meeting had been held with the consultant to finalise documents for the launching of the project.

Madam Speaker, the restoration and rehabilitation of our historic buildings closely linked to our past memories have always been at the centre of our priorities and I doubt if previous Governments have ever earmarked such huge amounts of money for the preservation of our natural heritage sites. Since 2016, an amount of over Rs400 m. has been spent on conservation and restoration works undertaken by this Government.

- We had the renovation of the phase 1 of Port Louis Theatre where an amount of about Rs74 m. had been spent;
- We are glad that phase 2 of the renovation work of the Port Louis Theatre which includes interior finishing works, a sum of Rs30 m. has been earmarked in this budget.
- For the Plaza Theatre, phases 1 & 2 have been completed. Tender document for phase 3, Rehabilitation and Restoration of the Plaza Theatre is being finalised and would be launched shortly. The estimated cost for Plaza Theatre is Rs320 m.;
- The Château de Mon Plaisir had been renovated by the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security for an amount Rs23 m.;
- The State House renovation works costs an amount of Rs34 m.;
- The Curepipe Town Hall renovation works are being carried out to the tune of Rs140 m.;
- The National Heritage Fund had, during these last two years, restored some 14 heritages sites, just like we have given fund for the restoration of the St James Cathedral of Port Louis;
- I understand also that the Moulin à Poudre which is vested to the Ministry of Health, rehabilitation and restoration will be on-going;
- I am also pleased to state that the renovation of the National History Museum of Port Louis to the tune of Rs20 m. has been completed. We are currently restoring the exhibits and reorganising the display and very soon, same will be reopened to the public, and
- The next on the list is the National Museum. Initially, a sum Rs10 m. was earmarked, but we have now reviewed upwards the scope of work to be carried out and the new estimate will exceed Rs20 m.

Let me also state, Madam Speaker, that I am most grateful to the hon. Prime Minister who has acceded to a joint request made by my Ministry and the Ministry of Youth and Sports to secure funds so as to provide improved facilities for holding of concerts at Anjalay and Germain Comarmond Stadiums. Modalities for the implementation of this project is being looked into by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the Mauritius Sports Council.

It is also a pride that we will soon have our Multi-Purpose Complex at Côte-d'Or. The setting up of this complex is putting our sports and artistic infrastructure in higher pedestal. Artists will also benefit from infrastructure with state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, thus providing a rich experience to Mauritians. I am pleased also to share that the Pointe Canon Theatre, with a seating capacity of more than 300 persons has been renovated.

I wish also to remind the House that last year, we announced the National Regeneration Scheme to encourage private owners of heritage sites to benefit from fiscal measures by investing in renovation, restoration and maintenance of their heritage buildings. In the same spirit, we are favouring the public/private collaboration to preserve our heritage structures. The *Batterie de l'Harmonie* site at Rivière Noire is being converted into a *village des artistes* through the build-operate-transfer mechanism. The private sector will be invited to invest and manage the *village des artistes* while ensuring that this heritage structure is not only put to use, but also accessible to the public and properly maintained.

Madam Speaker, over the last 3 years, our collaboration with UNESCO has taken an even greater height with the organisation of two scientific committees, one roundtable and one international conference. The international recognition of our intangible cultural heritage has given Mauritius a respected position at international level. Mauritius hosted and chaired the UNESCO the 13th Intangible Cultural Heritage meeting from 26 November to 31 December last year at the SVICC with the participation of some 600 delegates from some 128 countries. The opening ceremony was attended by none other than Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director General of UNESCO. History was made in Mauritius, Madam Speaker, when two nomination files, with unique attributes, were unanimously approved at the Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee. First, the inscription of Korean Wrestling to the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on the basis of a joint application by North and South Korea. As stated then by Ms Audrey Azoulay, I quote –

“This marks a high symbolic step on the road to inter-korean reconciliation.”

It reminds us of the peace building power of cultural heritage as a bridge between people.

Secondly, we have the immense pleasure that the Reggae Music of Jamaica was also listed as Intangible Cultural Heritage here in Mauritius on the rhythm of a song from Bob Marley. As a result, our visibility on the World Tangible and Intangible Heritage has been enhanced, thus, reinforcing our sense of pride.

It is likewise with much pride, Madam Speaker, that I wish to announce that this year, we are proposing, for the first time, the nomination file for Sega Tambour Chagos and the Sega Tambour Chagos is going to be described on UNESCO's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity which needs urgent safeguarding as we note that the number of performers of the Sega Chagos is decreasing year after year. The nomination file was submitted to UNESCO in March 2018. In May last year, UNESCO informed the Ministry of Arts and Culture that they are processing the nomination file for possible inscription in the 2019 cycle. The nomination file will be examined by the intergovernmental committee for the safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage at its 14th session which will be held in December next, in Bogotá and I am fully confident on our nomination dossier of Sega Tambour Chagos will be favourable considered and this will be a matter of pride for our Chagossian community.

Madam Speaker, let me also state that I am proud that contrary to what my good friend, hon. Baboo, has been stating, that the Ministry of Arts is *lakaz diable*, we have been able to put some order there. We have been able to renew a new relationship with the artists' community. Unfortunately, he was not here when I spoke earlier to give some details about issues which he has raised and that we are proud that we have been able to do our best for artists, trying to bring improvements where they had to be brought, brought amendment to the law where it was needed. For me, it has been a real pleasure to work with the community of artists, to assist all the cultural centres, all the Speaking Unions, all the different institutions like Le Morne Heritage Trust Fund, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, the AGTF and together, we tried to enhance our visibility in terms of arts and culture.

Madame la présidente, cinq ans après notre arrivée au pouvoir, nous pouvons aujourd'hui nous réjouir du chemin parcouru, ainsi que des résultats obtenus. Même si nous reconnaissons que notre travail n'est pas terminé, malgré cela, la population jugera que cette équipe a fait ce dont on avait promis, qu'on a reçu là où les autres ont failli. On ne prétend pas être parfait mais nous, nous avons osé, nous avons pris les risques, nous avons apporté des changements fondamentaux et les résultats sont devant vous. A commencer par le problème des marchands ambulants, que je remercie mon ami, le ministre, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo. Aujourd'hui, nous venons avec le projet de Metro Express qui révolutionnera le transport urbain. Dans le domaine de la santé, je dois, encore une fois, remercier mon ami, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo. Nous allons construire trois hôpitaux spécialisés, cinq cliniques. Et hier, j'ai remarqué la hargne avec laquelle un membre de l'Opposition attaquait

l'honorable Dr. Husnoo. Et cela démontre au moins une chose, on a peur de lui. On n'a pas parlé du budget. J'ai eu l'occasion d'être dans cette Chambre à plusieurs reprises, Madame la présidente, mais c'est la première fois que je vois un *bashing* d'un membre de l'Opposition directement sur un adversaire...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, I have said that nasty remarks across the floor are unparliamentary. Right! You are from a sitting position and you shouldn't make nasty remarks across the floor.

Mr Roopun: Je voudrais aussi saluer tout bas l'honorable *Deputy Prime Minister*. Plus de 440 km de tuyaux défectueux remplacés, des tuyaux datant de plus de 100 ans. Malheureusement, Madame la présidente, je n'ai pas pu élaborer sur ce qui a été fait dans ma circonscription; juste pour vous dire le nombre des travaux, l'échange des tuyaux frôle les R 400 millions juste dans la circonscription. Sans compter les mesures sociales, révolutionnaires, que ce gouvernement a pris, dont l'introduction du salaire minimal, le *Negative Income Tax*, plutard ce sera le *Portable Retirement Scheme*. Je peux continuer comme ça jusqu'à peut-être demain matin.

Madame la présidente, nous avons pris des mesures pour bâtir l'île Maurice. Nous sommes fiers de léguer à nos enfants et à nos petits-enfants une île où les gens peuvent réaliser leur rêve et vivent dans la prospérité et la paix.

Madame la présidente, avant de terminer j'aimerais dire quelque chose. J'ai eu le privilège d'être dans cette Chambre pendant quelque temps. Pendant la période que j'ai passée ici, le MSM était au pouvoir entre 2000 à 2005. Quand on est parti, il y avait le cybercité, il y a eu des travaux, la construction de plusieurs collèges à travers l'île, 38 ou 40 ; on est venu avec le *VRS* pour l'agriculture, entre autres. Et là, de 2014 à 2019, on a pu révolutionner notre système en ce qui concerne le transport avec la construction de Metro Express, de nouvelles routes, les tuyaux qui ont été posés à travers la *CWA*, nous avons les hôpitaux, parmi tant d'autres. Vous avez eu l'occasion d'écouter chaque membre du gouvernement, les *PPSs*, en particulier, ils ont élaboré sur ce qui a été fait, des centaines de projets, que ce soit dans les villages, que ce soit dans les villes, que ce soit au niveau régional, que ce soit au niveau national, et c'est ça qui fait la différence, Madam Speaker.

Comme disait l'honorable Fowdar, on doit dépenser, on doit investir. On a pris des dettes, oui, mais ce n'est pas pour remplir les coffres. Ces dettes qu'on a pris, c'était des

investissements pour ce pays, pour l'avenir et je suis sûr que la population appréciera. La population appréciera qui est mieux apte pour être le Premier ministre, l'année prochaine, quelle est la meilleure équipe pour diriger le pays pendant les prochains cinq ans.

(Interruptions)

On peut dire ce qu'on veut ici. On a écouté cette chanson depuis pas mal de temps avec le MMM, depuis belle lurette avec le Parti travailliste, mais on verra. Comme on dit: rira bien qui rira le dernier.

Madame la présidente, merci beaucoup.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(7.17 p.m.)

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Madam Speaker, let me start at by saying, Madam Speaker, that I am happy to have been able to participate in the Budget debate. At some stage, I was apprehending the fact that, maybe, I would not be able to, but I am happy to be back and I am happy to see you again, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I am sure.

Mr Mohamed: I have missed your presence I must admit and I am not being sarcastic in anyway.

Madam Speaker: I am sure.

Mr Mohamed: All of us sometimes, life happens, there are ups and downs, there are exits, there are entries. I exited, now I am back. And on that score, may I immediately take this opportunity to address to you a very important issue, Madam Speaker, through you, to other Members and it's as follows, I mean, at the last occasion when I was expelled and named, on that particular day, if I am not mistaken, I also, whilst not admitting any liability whatsoever, if I use the legal terminology, I also was wrong in one element when I used very unparliamentary language, and I say so even though it's not on Hansard. A lot of people have asked me why do I apologise for something I have done when it's not on Hansard. I apologise for something I do even though it's not on Hansard because it was simply wrong. What I said words used *à l'encontre du député* Rutnah were very wrong on my part and that's why I apologised on facebook, I apologise here in public where I wronged him, I say here that I

was wrong and I once again apologise for what I said. It was very unbecoming and unparliamentary on my part.

Now, having said...

(Interruptions)

Thank you. I hope it's not the only time that Government Members applaud what I say. I hope it comes again.

(Interruptions)

It's nice to see that there are friends, on the other side, who are very ready to advise me as far as behaviour is concerned, but I thank them for their good thoughts and kind thoughts.

However, let me get back to issues which concern us. I have listened with a lot of interest to our good friend with whom I share the legal profession with, the Minister Roopun, and I must say that there are certain parts of his speech that he made reference to, he said *bouche-à-bouche*, something to do with *bouche-à-bouche*. I mean, I don't know exactly what he meant. He made reference to *bouche-à-bouche*...

(Interruptions)

I thought that someone was unconscious or required some sort of emergency *bouche-à-bouche*. I didn't really understand what he meant by that. Maybe he tried, it was not very clear, but he was very critical about the MMM. Let me put it very clearly. I am not a Member of the MMM, I do not hold a brief for the MMM. But once upon a time, true it is, we were in alliance, just the same way we were in alliance once upon a time with the MSM, and I also was a Member of the MSM at one point in time. But for that matter, I find it very improper to hear the hon. Roopun be so critical about the MMM, though they have never been in alliance. I mean, if he was critical about the policies of the MMM, fair enough. But he is not critical about the policies of the MMM, he is very vindictive about the personalities belonging to the MMM. Just like he forgets, strangely – I do not know why he forgets. Maybe, I'll try to help him out. I am not in any way trying to give lessons, but it's just a remark, and a humble remark on my part...

(Interruptions)

Thank you for noticing.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Roopun! Please!

Mr Mohamed: I am just trying to say that he forgets when he is very critical about persons in the Labour Party. He is not critical about the policies of the Labour Party, but in everything he says, and a lot of it coming from the other side of the House. They make things very personal, and the manner in which they thrash people in person, it is unfortunate. What we should try to do is re-centre everything around the real issues, and this is what I am going to try to do. I am going to try not to be personal at all in my attacks.

And, if I am, that you bring me back to order, I will bow to what you say, Madam Speaker.

As far as the International Court of Justice issue being binding or not binding, and when there is an invitation on the part of the hon. Minister to join them, he says: "Join us, we should act as one nation and as far as this issue about our sovereignty on Chagos is concerned." I totally agree with him. We should act as one nation. There should be no division amongst ourselves. Let us not forget, however, that all Parliamentary Committee was set up by the then Rt. hon. Prime Minister, now the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor. And the reason why this all parliamentary group was set up as regards our fight to gain back our sovereignty - I form part of that Parliamentary Committee, the former Prime Minister and former Leader of the Opposition also form part of that Committee, without a Member of the MMM. Hon. Ganoo was in that Committee, the hon. Leader of the Opposition was in that Committee and other Ministers on the other side. But, the issue is, and the people should know, why is it that the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor did not call the Committee for many, many months, years. Why? It is not a way to tell us, join us, let us fight this as a nation, but I shall not call the Parliamentary Committee and I will all leave you in the dark. We shall not be bothered about your opinion with regard to Chagos. We shall not consult; we shall not inform you of what we are doing, what are the steps. We shall not tell you to be one with us, but we tell you we should be one.

I recall the speech of hon. Uteem. I was not in Parliament, but then, Madam Speaker, I was watching from afar, since as I said, I must be in your presence here, amongst all of us. And when I listened to hon. Uteem when he said, with reason, and I applaud him for having said that, that we should be thankful not only to the Government, which we should be, the Government which is also our Government. We are Mauritians, all of us. We are thankful for what the Government have done. Obviously, we are proud of the win at the United Nations. We are proud that Mauritius has got such a victory. But, it saddens us, that when you listen to Government, there is only one Party, that has ever done anything for the Chagos

community and for the sovereignty issue. And it is the MSM and no other Party! No one! If you listen to them, Madam Speaker, without the MSM, nothing has ever been done with regard to the Chagos and the sovereignty issue. You see, they have this ability of changing history, or of falsifying history. I am congratulating, and I have always said, when we won, I said: “Congratulations! It was a great victory.” But you see, this is my third mandate. When I listened to the speeches pronounced by Members on the other side, it’s as if they are making un ‘*Au revoir*’. I listened to the hon. Minister Roopun; it is like telling you, this is what I have done, this is what I have achieved. I have listened to other Ministers, hon. Minister Sinatambou. I have listened to other Ministers, each and every one of them, telling us, this is what we have done in five years. And basically, it is almost as telling us - and this the impression I get - that they will never come back again.

(Interruptions)

This is the impression I got! But for the third time that I am in this august Assembly, let me say that it is quite a pity ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can I know whose phone it is?

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: I would like to set history – and allow me that little luxury. I came across the United Nations General Assembly, Friday 27, September 1979, the 2,247th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations. And this session was presided by Abdelaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, and at that session there was someone who intervened on behalf of the Republic of Mauritius, and that person was no other than late Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed, and he spoke in lieu, and he was asked to speak there on behalf of Mauritius, and he was delegated to go there by the then Prime Minister, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. He talked about the declared zone of peace by the Assembly three years ago, Resolution 2832. And what he said, at paragraph 199, I quote -

“(...) the Indian Ocean is at present the scene of dangerous rivalries.”

And he says -

“Any decision of the United Kingdom and the United States to extend communications and military facilities on the island of Diego Garcia would constitute a flagrant violation of the United Nations resolutions on the subject. May we appeal

to those directly concerned, especially United States of America, to reconsider their present policy which certainly far from being conducive to the creation of a zone of peace is rather conducive to the creation of one of tension.”

And he goes on.

So, others have spoken in favour of sovereignty. And it is important to say: ‘Congratulations to all!’ and not only congratulations to the selected few. This has never been spoken of in public in this House. Why is it that ever since 1974, when I was only six years old, why is it that I have to wait all those years, for me to have myself discovered this. Because we have a habit, as time goes on, of saying, whenever ‘X’ is in Government, it is only ‘X’ that has done everything. When ‘Y’ is in Government, it is only ‘Y’. I wonder, therefore, how is it that we managed to survive for what, 50, soon 51 years of independence. It is quite a pity that we all have this really bizarre attitude. But anyhow! This is what Mauritius is all about, so be it.

Madam Speaker, I have listened with a lot of interest to all Members’ piques. I have listened to the speeches, to the bait, listened to the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance make his Speech on the Budget. And now, we have to ask ourselves: “What are we left with?” I am of the view that we are left with a divided country, and the reason why this country is so divided, it is precisely because the policies of this Government have divided the country. The division and the caesium that exists between the rich and the poor is widening. The rich, undoubtedly, are getting richer, and I shall explain in a few moments, how through the policies of this Government, the rich are getting richer. I have no doubt that the poor are getting poorer, and as far as this middle-class that is, supposedly, most of Mauritius, it is dwindling extremely rapidly. And those facts are because of the policies that are put in practice by this Government. We have divided this country, as I have said, between rich and poor, but we have also divided this country into regions. Discrimination when it comes to development. People in the North are treated differently to those in the Centre. People in the East and the West have a different treatment; people in the South, the downtrodden as far as job creation is concerned, no treatment whatsoever; people from Roche Bois struggling to obtain jobs at the Port, but finding that those from other constituencies have easier way into the Port. People in this country are divided geographically through policies of this Government. We live in a divided country because not only are we divided, as I have said, in matters of rich and poor, geographical division, North, South, East, West and Centre, but we are also divided according to political appurtenance. You have to belong to a political party in

power in order to be able to obtain a nomination. We have heard hon. Roopun say it. What is wrong if we are to choose, amongst ourselves, in order to nominate people? But therein lies the problem. He goes on to say well, even the MMM, when you were in power, what is wrong when your name goes around you. He could even say that for the Labour party and he would not be wrong. But therein lies the problem, when 51 years later on, after independence, we still reflect in the same manner that we should always nominate and choose and give jobs to those around us. What nation will be united if we continue to think in that manner? Maybe it was good 10 years back, maybe it was good 20 years ago or 30 years ago, but can it be the recipe for the future? My response to that is: No, I hope not. This is not what I share as a philosophy.

Let us look at Georgia and how this country has managed to develop. Let's look at Rwanda, how this country has managed to be the champion of Africa after what he has gone through. Let us look at Singapore! Hon. Osman Mahomed shared a document recently with me about what Singapore is and how it has become what it is today. The common denominator between the three countries, Rwanda, Singapore and Georgia, is what, that they choose people according to their merit. This is the difference. When are we going to become a country where we choose according to merit? This Government refuses to change. On this side of the House, our leader, the former Prime Minister has talked about *rupture* and *rupture* means we have to live in the past, the ways of the past because the ways of the past are not apt for the future development of our country and will not be good to secure the future of our children.

I speak to you not only as a Member of Parliament, I speak to you not only as *le chef de file* which I am honoured to be of the Labour party and I have been so for almost five years. It has been an honour. But I speak to you as a father, a father of three boys and a husband. Like all of us, I would like to secure the future of our children and if we are to use the same mechanisms of the past, we cannot secure the future of the children of this country. Therein lies the difference between the Government and us, on this side of the House. Division of the country cannot go on. They have divided this country according to the policies of this country between those who work for the public sector and those who work for the private sector. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker, today we hear Government coming to propose that Rs1,000 will be given as from January 2020 to civil servants in advance of the report of the PRB. I have no qualms with the fate of the civil servants and whether they should get Rs1,000. If it were up

to me, they should get more because the work they do is commendable. The reason that this country still stands when one takes into account the folly of politicians, is because the civil servants have kept its standing. We should bow to the work of civil servants. They have really kept us together, glued as one country when you take the folly of this nation because of politicians who come to say each time: well, we did that, you did not do that. And then I'll explain later on as I develop how this Government has harmed this country.

Today, we give Rs1,000 to those working in the civil service, but they forget totally those in the private sector. The answer is I know why. I have called myself the National Remuneration Board today. I gave them a call. I wanted to know when the law came on the minimum wage. There was a clause therein that talked about *la relativité salariale*. And what people need to understand, ce que les mauriciens et les mauriciennes doivent comprendre que dans la loi qui a été amenée par ce gouvernement sur le salaire minimal, la relativité salariale est une obligation sur le gouvernement. Et c'est quoi exactement la relativité salariale ? Il doit, d'après la loi, avoir un réajustement salarial pour tous ceux qui *are stuck*, sont bloqués avant le salaire minimum. Il doit y avoir un réajustement et c'est pour cela, Madame la présidente, que le ministre du Travail a envoyé une requête au *National Remuneration Board* pour que ce comité puisse travailler sur cela afin que tout le monde puisse avoir une augmentation salariale à travers le réajustement que la loi prévoit.

Mais, malheureusement, ce que j'ai appris c'est que l'année dernière, et je crois que l'honorable Baloomoody l'a dit avant moi, le rapport est prêt depuis l'année dernière. Le rapport a été envoyé au ministre du Travail depuis septembre de l'année dernière et ce rapport reste lettre morte, oublié quelque part dans un des tiroirs du ministre du Travail. Ce rapport n'a même pas été amené au Cabinet ministériel et si ce rapport avait été amené au Cabinet ministériel et que le Cabinet ministériel d'où le ministre avait décidé d'implémenter ce rapport, non seulement les employés du service civil, les fonctionnaires auraient eu R 1,000 à partir du janvier, mais ceux du secteur privé aussi auraient bénéficié de cette augmentation conséquente qui aurait amené le réajustement à cause de la relativité salariale qui est dans la loi déjà.

Alors je me pose la question : pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement a décidé de commettre une discrimination à outrance contre nos frères et sœurs qui travaillent pour le secteur privé ? Pourquoi alors avoir favorisé les fonctionnaires ? Pourquoi alors avoir créé une animosité entre ceux qui travaillent pour le secteur public et ceux qui travaillent pour le secteur privé ? Pourquoi créer une situation où finalement les gens se disent : mais vaut

mieux que je vais travailler et devienne fonctionnaire et ça vaut plus la peine de travailler dans le secteur privé ? Déjà qu'on a un grand problème de ressources humaines à l'île Maurice, pourquoi alors avoir créé cette discrimination ?

Why, therefore, divide the country along a new line between those who work in the civil service and those in the private sector? What we say, on this side of the House, que la relativité salariale est un droit qui est dans la loi, c'est la responsabilité. Je vais plus loin. C'est le devoir, c'est une obligation de la part du gouvernement de venir nous expliquer comment se fait-il que ce rapport du *National Remuneration Board* qui recommande une augmentation salariale conséquente qui est une chose normale après qu'il y ait eu l'introduction du *minimum wage* que ça doit venir. Pourquoi cela n'a pas été amené au Cabinet ministériel ? Et moi, je pense le savoir, c'est parce que le Cabinet ministériel veut à tout prix protéger le secteur privé.

Il y a au sein du gouvernement, Madame la présidente, certaines personnes qui oublient qu'ils sont ministres du gouvernement, il y a certaines personnes qui oublient qu'ils ne sont plus les représentants du secteur privé, il y a certaines personnes qui sont ministres aujourd'hui, qui ont, dans le passé, été très proches du secteur privé. Et de ce fait, ils oublient qu'ils doivent laisser derrière eux dans le temps, cette proximité avec le secteur privé. Mais du fait que le secteur privé a son représentant au sein de ce gouvernement, de ce Cabinet, c'est pour cela que ce dossier n'arrive pas à sortir de ce tiroir et être amené vers le Cabinet. C'est pour cela que ceux qui sont dans le secteur privé n'auront pas cette augmentation salariale qu'ils méritent de par la loi et ce n'est même pas une question de demander, c'est leur droit. C'est malheureux. Les employeurs du secteur privé sont protégés par certaines personnes au sein de ce gouvernement.

Now, what is really interesting - I don't want to really go into all the details that all my friends have gone before me because there have been some excellent interventions, Madam Speaker, with regard to what exactly was decided and the promises that have been broken by this actual Government. You would recall Vision 2030 of this Government. How can we have forgotten – very briefly, I'll go on that – what the Rt. hon. Prime Minister in those days had said, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. He had promised 100,000 jobs over five years.

Now, a simple mathematics tells us that, yes, it should have created – this Government - 20,000 jobs a year. Why is it, therefore, that this Government has not been able to create 20,000 jobs a year? Why is it that they are so quiet about it? Broken promises! Why

is it that they had promised us a growth of 5.5% and we could not even achieve 4%? Why is it that when I was on a radio station with hon. Sinatambou, he said: “but the 100,000 was not a promise. It was only a target.” In other words, he fails to tell us that he was a target that was promised. He cannot tell us that there was a speech of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister who basically said that was a target that he was not promising. Obviously, when he said that was the target, it was a target that he was promising. Then, he went on to promise all sorts of things. Look at the words he uses. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister then said: for the whole year 2014, Sir Anerood says: no decision was taken while our national debt spiralled over Rs250 billion. What exactly should he be feeling today? I wonder. When he was really up in all and really angry and really upset about debts spiralling above Rs250 billion, how should we be feeling today when it has spiralled almost to Rs350 billion? How should he feel today? I wonder when he goes on to say that basically he has identified four key areas that he will personally drive. If he has taken personal responsibilities, the Minister Mentor, therefore, is personally liable if none of them work. He said that he would address unemployment and what this Government maybe should start answering. You know, it is so easy to come and say that everything is rosy. Let us check the fingers. I am not inventing figures. Just like the hon. Leader of the Opposition – I have started out by saying – when I look at the figures for 2016, why is that the people who were economically active gone down. En d’autres mots, la masse salariale, le nombre de personnes qui travaillent à l’île Maurice en 2016 chute. Cela veut dire – to simplify it – il y a moins de monde qui travaillait: comparer 2015 à 2016. En 2016, il y avait moins de monde qui travaillait et beaucoup plus en 2015 et quand on regarde maintenant les chiffres de 2018, encore une fois, les chiffres officiels, les statistiques émis par le bureau des statistiques sous l’égide du ministère des Finances, on voit clairement ici, Madame la présidente, que, encore une fois, il y avait plus de mauriciens et mauriciennes qui travaillaient à Maurice en 2017 et en 2018, le nombre chute. Il y a moins de monde. Alors ce gouvernement – they are so proud about unemployment going down, but where do you expect it to go is the number of people working in Mauritius has gone down? What do you expect the mathematical results to be?

On s’attend à quoi exactement là, Madame la présidente ? Si le nombre de personnes qui sont *in employment* à l’île Maurice a chuté ; si le nombre de personnes qui quittent le monde de l’emploi de par leur retraite et que la création d’emplois n’a pas pu rattraper cela, c’est tout à fait logique alors que le nombre de personnes qui sont en emploi, ça chute, ça

tombe mais c'est aussi logique mathématiquement, du moins pour certains, qu'il ne y peut avoir autre chiffre qu'une baisse dans le pourcentage de chômage. C'est tout.

So, how can they be so proud of this fact? On the contrary, this Government should be ashamed that the number of people in employment has gone down. Why is it they are so proud of the number of people in employment going down? This is why I believe that it is very unfair on their part to come and talk about such facts and be so proud about it.

And then I am thinking about it. I'll go about that later on and that is going to be a bit nasty, but I'll talk about it later on. Now, what exactly is going well in the country when the hon. Minister Mentor said, at page 7 of his Vision 2030? He said we are going to have a revamped and dynamic manufacturing base. As far as the figures for manufacturing sector is concerned, everything is down. Everything is down as far as export is concerned, as far as deficit is concerned down, as far as creation of employment – down. As far as loss of employment is concerned, it has gone up. Scandals are up. But then again, I mean, they are constant. The constancy of this Government is amazing. They always are regular when it comes to creation of scandals. Imagine each and every time you find a new one coming up.

Our country is also divided when it comes to religion. That is what I have seen. This is my view divided when it comes to religion. Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, that everything the Government does is only to score political points. You see they have tried everything in order to give a bad name to their opponents.

Madam Speaker, I fail to understand and look at the way they operate. I think it is important for people in Mauritius to understand that. They will go to India with a bowl; they will go to Saudi Arabia with another bowl and they will say please give us some money. Now, because I said it is about India, they would say, I am against India. I am doing India bashing, but they forget that I am closer to India when it comes to my roots then a lot of them are concerned. They forget about that. I have family living in India. I feel at home in India, but I am a Mauritian at heart. I am a born Mauritian. I am proud of being a Mauritian and my sovereignty is of utmost importance. I fail to understand. They go to India and say: give us some money and then they come to Mauritius and play the whole game about: well, you know, since we are so close to the Government of India, therefore, one component of Mauritius should be happy. Then they go, they send someone else to Saudi Arabia. Well, he is going to see the sheik and the sheik is going to give us another cheque. Alright! And then, we should all be shaken by it and then we should all be happy about it and then we go, oh well! You see Saudi Arabia likes this Government; therefore, the Muslims should be happy.

Then what is really shocking also is the bad taste of this Government. You see, Madam Speaker, I had been taught and all of us – tous les mauriciens, on est comme cela, on aime accueillir les invités. On sait accueillir les invités. Mais la chose que l'on ne fait jamais et ça tous les mauriciens et les mauriciennes qui m'entendent aujourd'hui dans cette auguste Assemblée vont le comprendre. Quand on invite quelqu'un chez soi, on ne vient pas lui dire : bon, voilà monsieur, on vous a invité chez moi, ça vous a couté tant. On ne le dit pas. On ne va pas inviter quelqu'un chez nous pour venir dîner ou pour venir passer une journée et puis on dit : 'monsieur, ça vous avez couté tant et regardez je vous aime tellement que j'ai vraiment dépensé sur vous.' It does not make sense. But it make sense when hon. Sinatambou said: well, you know those on the other side did not *tape la table* and their faces dropped because His Holiness the Pope is going to be called to Mauritius, well you know, I mean, they were jealous because we called for a public holiday. And he went on to say, well, and we are going to be spending what. Was that Rs50 m.? Why did you have to place it in the Budget? Why did you have to in the Budget come and announce that you are going to go for a public holiday? Why? Why do you have to make this an announcement in the Budget if it is not to play politics on the arrival of the Pope? It is to play politics because of the arrival of His Holiness.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, I believe that this matter has amply been debated and I would not wish that we bring again that question of His Holiness visit to Mauritius.

Mr Mohamed: I have said very clearly what I have to say. I repeat again, I would not go on what this issue of His Holiness is concerned because, I think, it is a lack of respect to have done what was done and, I think, that basically, a little request is we should not, in any way, politicise our foreign relationship with any State, with any person in order to gain political mileage. This is not what we should do. We have even heard the Commissioner of Police say: I will not leave my office because I have to welcome His Holiness, the Pope. My God! The thing is, Madam Speaker, either we think about a budget that is going to, basically, bring the people around a common objective, we should not think about party politics, but about the national interest. But, here, this budget is nothing else, but party politics. Nothing has been done in order to ensure that there is job creation. Nothing has been done in order to ensure that there is wealth creation. Nothing has been done for a lot of people of this country. I have been walking around my constituency, and I have met with certain people who have asked me to impart certain information to the House as regards budget issue is concerned.

They like saying: well, we have given Rs500 *augmentation pour la pension*. Good! Congratulations!

And the thing is, I asked a very simple question *et c'est exactement ça que le peuple dehors demande et la raison pour laquelle je dis ça c'est parce que le gouvernement est totalement déconnecté avec la réalité du terrain. Ils sont dans leur tour d'ivoire et ne savent pas exactement ce que les gens disent dehors et permettez-moi de leur dire exactement ce que les gens disent. J'ai rencontré un monsieur qui travaille au Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board. Ce monsieur là habite à Pailles*. He has got a disability and what his disability is? He cannot see very well. And he was placed under the National Skills Development Programme at the switchboard of the Ministry of Social Security on 23 August, 2010. We are in 2019.

This Government says: *le salaire minimal a été amené*. Rs8,000 or so, *salaire minimal*. This person is presently on National Skills Development Programme *depuis 2010, bientôt 10 ans*. He has no right to have a local leave; he has no right to have a sick leave. He has visual disability and what is really worse, he is working as a trainee telephone operator since 28 March, 2016 and he is drawing a monthly stipend of only Rs6,000 a month, transport included. This is a caring Government. This is an official letter from the Ministry, dated 28 May, 2019. This is how we are treating a disabled person who is working in the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board and who is being paid below minimum wage, transport included, for ten years and he has not been able to take any local leave and sick leave. So, I table this.

(Interruptions)

But that is not a question of comparison, for God's sake. Instead of accepting that they can try to sort out this issue, take cognizance of it and try to sort this problem out. This is the whole purpose of the budget, Madam Speaker, *venir en l'aide aux gens qui sont en train de souffrir, et au lieu de cela, on a un Deputy Prime Minister* who is trying to basically play on semantics. Please, let us try to come down from your ivory tower and I will take care of the issue of the Deputy Prime Minister in a few seconds.

And I have someone else. This is someone else who, basically, lives in my constituency. And it is only an example here because many people like this around the island suffer like this person. This person, on 30 April of this year, they talk about this caring Government, they are helping out people, everyone is happier with them. They are living in a

dream land, their dream, but for the rest of the people, it is a nightmare. This person has lost a leg. It has been amputated. And this person, now that he has lost his leg, that he suffers from various ailments and is in constant treatment, very poor health, has a discontinuation of his claim. For what? For pension! When he goes to see the doctor, the doctor tells him: no, but you can get better. What does the doctor of the Ministry of Social Security expect? That his leg is going to grow again. He expects that his diabetes is going to get better, that his open heart surgery problem will get better, that he would be able to see better, that his kidneys will get better. This is how people out there are suffering while this Government is so comfortable in its ivory tower. This is only one sample, Madam Speaker.

I have got limited time, I cannot go on about the hundreds who are suffering out there if not the thousands. I table this one as well. And I hope that they will not try to play politics on it, but try to simply sort out the problem. I can only hope.

Madam Speaker, there is a commonality between Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Pravind Jugnauth. All that was promised by Sir Anerood Jugnauth in his Vision 2030, he has never been able to keep his promises. He even promised, as I said, hundred thousand jobs, they have never been able to do it. No. But, do you know what the commenting is, even hon. Pravind Jugnauth, I was looking at his Budget of 2016-2017, and in one of the paragraphs there, paragraph 60, just to take a few examples. He says: we are opening our country to gold business. I don't know if he was referring to Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo, in the meantime has disappeared. Gold finger! It is a nice tune to that song, gold finger in the Bond movie. I don't know who was Bond there, but, at least, it was not them. But we got bonded and the poor people ended of being bonded.

So, we are opening our country to gold business that will encompass a wide spectrum of high valued added activities. *Mon Dieu, ce langage nous impressionne tous.* And he goes on ranging from refinery of gold, producing gold bars, setting up of top end jewellery processing units, vault facilities, trade in gold, bullions. *Mon Dieu, juste avec ça,* we become the new Qatar or the new Abu Dhabi or the new Switzerland. Our friends, the Swiss, with their gold little bullions and ask the Mauritians, trying to be good as them. Why not? But where are these gold bullions? Has it disappeared with Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo and the dream of this miracle that we were supposed to have? He should have been searched before he resigned. What about paragraph 61 of that same budget of 2016-2017? Indian delegation presently in Mauritius, has expressed an interest in setting up several manufacturing projects in Mauritius. *Et je me demandais: mais voilà, la promesse de notre cher Premier ministre,*

dynamique et vraiment qui garde ses promesses. Alors en 2016-2017, il a promis monts et merveilles, il a dit qu'il y a une délégation indienne à Maurice qui allait commercer des usines de production de bicyclettes et de motocyclettes. Il a dit, en 2016-2017, que ce projet va être pour l'exportation de ces produits vers l'Afrique et que cela va créer des milliers d'emplois. Where is the bicycle? Where is the motorcycle? Madam Speaker, laissons tomber les bicyclettes ou et les motocyclettes, not even one tyre, not even enn jante has been manufactured in Mauritius. Jante panne faire! So, when I think about it, where is it? Where? And what he goes on to say, at paragraph 62 –

“To further diversify our manufacturing sector.”

What does he say? He will diversify our manufacturing sector Pharmaceutical Village.

Mr Sinatambou: On a point of order! The hon. Member started very nicely and politely. I believe that one of the words he just used...

(Interruptions)

the pronunciation is insulting. I would ask him to withdraw that word.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: If he basically...

(Interruptions)

I don't know what he means. No.

Madam Speaker: I take the point of the hon. Minister. Let me say that...

(Interruptions)

Order, please. Let me say that freedom of speech is one of the most important privileges enjoyed by Members of Parliament. But, I believe that this freedom should be well utilised and that it should be within the decorum and the dignity of the House. You've used a word, the hon. Minister has raised a question or an objection on this word. I believe that you should withdraw that word.

Mr Mohamed: If this is the impression they got, I do apologise and I withdraw it, fair enough. So, to basically come back to the issue of bicycles never have been manufactured, motorcycles never have been manufactured, but we go on. What about the Pharmaceutical Village which would be set up in Rose Belle and the local markets. Nothing!

And for tourism sector, the Minister of Finance *en 2016-2017 a dit* that he is going to set up the world-class aquarium. Where is it the world-class aquarium? Not even a bassin! Where is the National Museum? Where is the new leisure attraction *pour encourager les touristes pour arriver à Maurice*. I, at some stage, saw our good Ministers who were, once upon a time, trying to emulate Baywatch on a beach. I don't know whether this was meant to be a tourist attraction or not, but it did not really work, and as far as the tourist industry is concerned, it is really suffering. So, what exactly is in this Budget?

Madam Speaker, I went to my constituency and met certain people, women, and since you are responsible and taking it at heart the issue of gender caucus, allow me to talk about me meeting a lot of women in my constituency, all of them mostly above the age of 60, a lot of them being widows and a lot of them who are living in very, very difficult situation, in rooms maybe 2 metres by 3 being their room.

I met some people who are disabled, who are *alités mais à l'âge de 65 ans*. But maybe the message goes to the hon. Minister of Social Security. People who are 65 years old do not get an allocation to buy adult nappies because they have to wait for the age of 70. You see, we learn things. You see, the hon. Minister believes he is helping people who are poor. Why is it that *les couches pour les adultes, les gens qui n'ont pas 70 ans ne pourront pas avoir une allocation pour acheter des couches pour adultes. Ils doivent attendre l'âge de 70 ans. And people who are under the age of 70, they can't afford it.*

This lady I am talking about, not only one, many of them, this is the situation. I contacted the Social Security Office. I spoke to the Social Security Commissioner and I spoke to them: "Help this lady." He said: 'Hon. Mohamed, I cannot do anything because the guidelines are very simple. Once upon a time it was 75, now it's 70, we cannot help. She will have to wait five years.' So, she will have to wait on NGOs to help her out, she will have to wait on the generosity of people. Thank God, they are around, the Mauritians, but Government is oblivious to the reality.

What about this Budget? Let us look at hon. Jhugroo, the Minister of Housing and Lands. What is in there with regard to helping people who cannot find an accommodation, those who are widows, whose husbands have died, they do not work, they live on a small pension, they have a rented accommodation. What is in there for them? They will say: 'Well, they are vulnerable people, supposedly they are supposed to be on a list where people help them.' But how come those whom I met are not even on any list? How come no one has

visited them? How come the Government has forgotten about them? And those are just a sample of the reality.

The Government comes here to talk about big figures, enjoy the figures, but in reality, in practice, *les gens, Madame la présidente, sont en train de souffrir, ils sont en train de souffrir de pauvreté, de difficulté. Les chiffres peuvent satisfaire le gouvernement, les chiffres peuvent satisfaire leur ego, mais la réalité est que les gens souffrent. Le prix des commodités a augmenté.* Prices of food have gone up, *les denrées alimentaires* have gone up. And people cannot really survive on what the Government is giving them – pittance - and this is what really hurts.

Today, why this Budget has not really been successful in the eyes of the public is because they expected more, not because they are greedy, *parce que le peuple a besoin de plus. Le peuple a besoin d'un gouvernement qui connaît les réalités et qui oublie, qui commence à descendre de leur tour d'ivoire et marcher avec le petit peuple.*

Madame la présidente, I would like to address an issue which I have seen in the Press, which is in *L'Express* of *mercredi le 19 juin 2013*. It is entitled: '*Refus des IPP de contribuer R 300 millions au Consolidated Fund*'. I have seen another document in '*Le Mauricien*' du 10 juin à 10h00 – '*Secteur économique en crise*'. That's the title in '*Le Mauricien*' : '*Le Sucre, un couteau à double tranchant*' and the sub-title is: '*Un War Chest de R 430 millions, dont R 320 millions du CEB, pour alimenter le Sugar Cane Sustainability Fund en faveur de petits planteurs.*' And it talks about Alteo Energy. So, this got me to become quite curious and in the Press of yesterday, a letter from Omnicane is referred to about the tension between the Government House and Alteo and the Sugar Sector, Terra or Omnicane and Alteo, 06 June 2019, *Le Mauricien* of yesterday makes reference to a letter that is written to the Prime Minister by the representatives of Omnicane, Terra and Alteo.

Yesterday, I was not here in this Assembly. I saw that my good friend, hon. Osman Mahomed tried to raise an issue at Adjournment Time, not contesting in any way what Madam Speaker said - we bow to your ruling that it was not appropriate to raise this at Adjournment Time. We have no issues with that, we are not at Adjournment Time, we are in debates now. I have in my possession, and it is a national issue of such national importance that I think that I cannot keep quiet on that, because I owe it to the people of this country, not to hide information that has come to my possession. A letter written on 19 February 2019 from the Central Electricity Board, signed by Mr Makoond, Ag. General Manager...

The Deputy Prime Minister: On a point of order. I assume that the hon. Gentleman is going to raise a matter which relates to a confidential document written by the CEB to some other person or authority relating to Alteo. If that is the case, let me just state, as a matter of principle that this, in my opinion, is out of order because it relates to a matter, to a commercial agreement which is still under discussion at the level of experts and committees in which I am not involved, and I would not be able to rebut or respond as these negotiations are strictly confidential. Whatever means he has resorted to, to obtain it, this is not our problem, but it cannot make a public disclosure of a confidential document.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, let me respond, with your permission, briefly to what he said. First of all, I have perused all the points of orders that exist in the Standing Orders and none of the Standing Orders, point of orders chapter makes reference to anything that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is referring to. Let me say something else, I do not understand why before even allowing me to continue, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is defending himself by saying he is not involved.

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Member, let me say that I concede that this is not a point of order. If you have got information and if you can table the information, well, I don't see why you shouldn't do it.

Mr Mohamed: I thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, Madam Speaker, I will table the information.

(Interruptions)

Now, you see, I am not giving way anymore, Madam Speaker. I am not giving way anymore.

Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I thank you for your ruling and I will follow your advice and table the document, which I believe, is sound advice

Madam Speaker, 19 February 2019, the Central Electricity Board writes a letter to the Chief Executive Officer of Alteo Energy Limited, 4th Floor, IBL House, Caudan Waterfront, Port Louis. And in that letter, he says, and I will table the letter, I have a copy here which I will table, and I have several copies. And now, that letter what does it say? It basically says that there was a meeting on 18 February 2019, not at the Central Electricity Board.

And now, I understand why the hon. Deputy Prime Minister stands up and tries to take a point of order. That's not a point of order.

The meeting that took place between Alteo Energy and the Central Electricity Board was not at the Central Electricity Board, it was not with the negotiating panel setup in the Power Purchase Agreement that the contracts says that there should be a negotiating panel, clearly with nominated members thereon, but it was. Where would the meeting take place?

I see hon. Soodhun starting to smile, maybe he is aware. At the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities!

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Member, I will ask you to assume responsibly for the facts that you are bringing forward, because I think that any hon. Member of this House should refrain from referring to rumours as you know that it does not render the House better-off. So, you will assume the full responsibility of the facts that you are bringing forward.

Mr Mohamed: Yes, Madam Speaker. I, once again, am in total agreement with what you just said; it is my responsibility to assume, full responsibility. And I do assume full responsibility, because those documents are genuine documents, signed by the Ag. General Manager, and this confirms that this meeting took place and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister cannot say he was not aware, because it took place at the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, in presence of CEB officers and representatives of Alteo Energy Limited on the above project. And it says therein, that it's already been agreed, and the Deputy Prime Minister says there is no agreement.

It says here -

“We wish to confirm the following.”

Look at this language. The CEB confirms the following that was already agreed at that meeting *au ministère* of Public Utilities and Energy.

Now it says –

“The granting a three-year extension with a minimum of 170 gigawatts with no excess energy.”

Paragraph one.

Paragraph two –

“Trash energy will be remunerated at 4.45 per kilowatt hour fixed during the three-year extension.”

Madam Speaker: Can I know from which document you are quoting?

Mr Mohamed: The one I just tabled.

Madam Speaker: So, if you are quoting from that document, then I will tell you that I will study that document before accepting whether it can be tabled or not, because if it is tabled, then it becomes public. So, I will later on give a ruling on that document as to whether it is acceptable.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: ...of course, of references to the documents.

Mr Mohamed: I'm sorry! I assume my responsibility. This is the role of parliamentarian and this is what - Madam Speaker, you are right, I assume responsibility totally and fully with what I am saying, here, today, because this is a document which is a genuine document.

If you, Madam Speaker, believe that I should not table it, I will bow to what your ruling is. But, I still will make reference to it and I can read through it, and I will continue because Parliamentary ...

The Deputy Prime Minister: I am taking a point of order.

Mr Mohamed: What is the point of order?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, wait for my point of order. I am taking a point of order. Since you, Madam Speaker, have reserved the ruling of that letter, he cannot now quote from that letter.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I will request both hon. Members to sit down.

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I have said that I reserve my ruling on the document that you have just tabled. Right? So, if you are making reference to that document, it becomes public. If you are reading from that document, it becomes public. But, if it is tabled, and I accept it, it will, of course, become public. But, you cannot refer to it, if I have reserved my ruling on it.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, let me go on.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister does not want the people of this country to know that trash energy has already been agreed upon by the Central Electricity

Board through meetings at his office, where he was present. What the hon. Deputy Prime Minister does not want us to know is that the Alteo has been promised Rs4.45...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! Please!

I have said that I will study that document, and then I will come with a ruling. Please! I would request you not to refer to that document for the time being.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I promise you, I will turn the document upside down and I will speak from memory. I will not refer to it. May I?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Non!* Please!

Hon. Mohamed, once again, I will request you not to refer to that document for the time being until I have given my ruling on that document.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, I hope that the Deputy Prime Minister will stop being jittery when I now refer to what he said, and so touchy, I wonder what he is trying to hide from us. I wonder! Let us all wonder what he does not want us to know.

(Interruptions)

And hon. Bashir Jahangeer, thank you very much. Thank you. By the way, hon. Bashir Jahangeer is someone whom I respect, because he is a man of conviction and also he is of the same opinion.

So, here, when we look at what was said in this particular document, which is Hansard of 18 June 2019 - in that document, when hon. Osman Mohamed put a question to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, what did he say? He said -

“What I know is that there are technical meetings which are being held, then everything will come to our Management Committee of the Ministry and, at that time, we will study and, of course, we will come to Cabinet.”

What I say, here, is that this was already decided upon, and behind the back the Cabinet. The Prime Minister is not even aware of it, I presume, and this was decided behind the back of Cabinet. And, what I ask myself...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Is it the suggestion that the agreement was made with my knowledge, or...

Mr Mohamed: Yes!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Well, then, I will ask the hon. Member to withdraw it, first of all, because there is no implication that I have been implicated in any agreement of that kind. I was not even aware of it, and I say it under the solemnity of this House. What he is suggesting is that what the General Manager of the CEB has written was that I am aware. No, he's got no right to do this.

Madam Speaker: This is a point of personal explanation. Alright? The hon. Deputy Prime Minister has raised a point of personal explanation.

Mr Mohamed: Which I never give way to.

Madam Speaker: But, you have given way, you sat down, right? So, be it.

Mr Mohamed: I go on. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

And what I am saying here is, what is going on is of utmost interest. What is interesting here is that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister objects to me producing a letter, and does not want the people of this country to know what is in the letter. He takes objection. I will wait for Madam Speaker's ruling on it.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, he has not objected.

Mr Mohamed: He has!

Madam Speaker: I have taken the letter in my possession so that I can give a ruling on it.

Mr Mohamed: Yes, but despite to that, Madam Speaker, he stood up on two occasions and objected. He did not want even me to make reference to what's in the letter. He does not want me to even make reference to the fact that this letter was copied to his Permanent Secretary, and he is telling us, today, let's forget about the letter for a minute. Can you imagine! You want to watch at my time, whether I have enough time to finish and continue nailing in your coffin? This is what you want to watch?

Madam Speaker, I cannot be gaged. This cannot be hidden. We cannot hide from the people what the truth is and this is what he is trying to do, a man sitting in a constitutional position. And what I would like to say about this is today, without even reference to the

document, I say it, that this Minister has agreed with Alteo with whom he has links from before.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Listen! It is incorrect! It is imputing motives to which I...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If that continues, then I will suspend the sitting and I will come back with my ruling.

(Interruptions)

So, I suspend the sitting for a few minutes.

At 8.22 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.14 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, an objection has been raised earlier in relation to the tabling of a letter emanating from the Ag. General Manager of the CEB addressed to the Chief Executive Officer of Alteo Energy Limited and copied to the Ag. Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities purporting to establish that, amongst others, an agreement has been reached on the price of trash energy.

I have perused the document and I have further taken note that the said document has already appeared in one of the dailies yesterday. In the circumstances, it does not serve any purpose to object to the tabling of the document.

Moreover, another issue to be decided is whether the statement made by the hon. Shakeel Mohamed to the effect that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is aware and has already agreed on the fixing of the price of trash energy on the basis of the said document.

According to the hon. Shakeel Mohamed, this contrasts with the assertions made by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister in a recent Parliamentary Question and earlier today that the fixing of the price of trash energy is still at negotiation stage and further, according to him, once negotiations have been concluded, the matter still needs to go through Cabinet before being finalised.

On the basis of the stand of the Deputy Prime Minister, it appears that there is a disconnect between the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the Ministry of Energy and Public

Utilities. In the circumstances, I hold that it would not be in order for the hon. Shakeel Mohamed to make the inference from the document which is being tabled that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is aware that the price of trash energy has already been fixed and that he is asserting the contrary.

Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I would invite you now to conclude your intervention inasmuch as the time allocation has already been exhausted.

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I bow to your ruling and I am not in any way challenging that.

If I may, with your permission, request on a lighter note some injury time of two minutes, and then I will conclude my speech. Just injury time of two minutes, we are not at all injured. Once again, if it pleases the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to believe that we are injured, so much if it pleases him. No problem.

Just to say that there are two issues, rapidly I would like to raise within the two minutes, and I am looking at it before 21.20. There is a document which is also rightly referred to by Madam Speaker. the 26 February 2019, the offer of Central Electricity Board is accepted by Alteo in a letter dated 26 February addressed to the same Ag. Manager and I table this document as well, which is already public anyway made in *Le Mauricien* of yesterday. So, the offer is made by CEB and is accepted. And what is even worse is that of the Rs4.45 per kWh, Rs1 only goes to the *ti-planters* and Rs3.45 goes to Alteo. Now, I am not going to make any remarks or conclusions on that. I will let the people judge.

Madam Speaker: I do not think it would be appropriate.

Mr Mohamed: Now, I finish on this.

Madam Speaker: After my ruling, you will not make any comment on this.

Mr Mohamed: Yes, I will not. To finish on this I just wanted to rapidly talk about the independence of the Bank of Mauritius. You will recall, Madam Speaker, I wanted to make reference to what the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius said with regard to the reserve. I believe that there is no independence anymore and it is a sad day for Mauritius that there is no longer an independence of the Bank of Mauritius. Let us not forget, and I will table two documents here of the Bank of Mauritius. Both of them, dated 02 April 2015 and on those dates, this is the same, now Governor of the Bank, were given a delay to Bramer Bank and on the same day, withdrew the delay. In my humble opinion, on the same date when you have

Mr Googoolye issuing two letters, and I table those two documents with regard to Bramer Bank, clearly forgetting about his independence and then getting a promotion and becoming Governor of the Bank, I let the people judge how there was political intervention in the BAI affair.

On this note, let me now conclude by saying that, Madam Speaker, I have managed to establish one fact, it is that whatever the Government says is only words but, in practice, they do something else altogether different. We believe in transparency. This Government has tried to hide information. I believe that a new day and a new dawn has come for there to be a real transparency in administration of Government.

Now I understand that what I have done today hurts Government but as long as it helps the people, our party stands by the people and we will always do that, that has been our history and that is our tradition and we will stick to that.

Long live Mauritius!

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 9.21 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.31 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gobin!

The Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms (Mr M. Gobin): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for allowing me to lend my voice in the context of Budget 2019-2020.

First of all, I wish, like my colleagues, to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for presenting the Budget and once again for bringing meaningful change in the lives of the citizens of our country.

I have heard, for the past days, the interventions of various hon. Members of the House and I have particularly heard the intervention of hon. Mohamed who spoke just before me tonight. I was also very pleased to see hon. Mohamed in the House today after a few sittings. I share the view of many hon. colleagues, and we were pleased to welcome him because we missed the gestures and we missed the usual theatrical arguments which we have been used to seeing for the number of years we have been here. Hon. Mohamed started by

giving the example of a number of countries. I recall him mentioning Singapore, I think, Georgia, and there was a third country, Rwanda.

(Interruptions)

Thank you, hon. Dr. Boolell. And he stated that he was quoting these three countries because these three countries favour meritocracy and that his Party was for *une politique de rupture*. Well, I welcome this kind of argument in this House and in the country, but my immediate reaction was: why not start with your own Party? If you favour meritocracy like the Singaporeans, like Georgians and Rwandans, then start with your own Party –

- Why is it that I don't see hon. Ramful, for example, on the Saturday *point de presse*?
- Why is it that I don't see hon. Dr. Boolell being the main speaker at the Saturday morning weekly Press briefing?
- Why do I not see hon. Osman Mahomed, who has been at the National University of Singapore, be the main speaker at the table on a Saturday morning weekly briefing?

Where is the *politique de rupture*?

(Interruptions)

You are not even the *chef de file*. So, it's good to hear these beautiful words of *politique de rupture*. This, I have to give credit to the Labour Party; you are very good at finding these slogans, beautiful. It reminds me of one, few years ago, “*mo pu chanz zot la vie dan 100 zours*”, with the usual hitting of the stomach, with a microphone nicely placed so that you could hear it, you know –

“*mwa mo pu chanz zot la vie.*”

(Interruptions)

Oh! Boeuf travay, Souval manger. Where do we see putting the same principles in practice? Where do we see that? This is the difference, and this is what I submit to the population tonight. This is the difference between acting and action.

(Interruptions)

Welcome back, hon. Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Yes, the Leader of the Party or the *chef de file*. It was a pleasure to hear hon. Mohamed for the hour or so that he was on his feet, but then he ended with the following words and he stated, I quote –

“We are for transparency.”

C’était la fausse note de l’intervention de mon honorable collègue. When the previous speaker said ‘we are for transparency’, I fail to see of what kind of transparency he is referring to, if he is referring to ‘we’ as being his Party. Because I have examples here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to show the exact contrary of transparency. When I say ‘we’, I mean on this side of the House. We did not know of the extent of the gangrene until we had access to Government records and Government files after being sworn in after the elections of December 2014.

We were horrified, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on seeing the records for the cases of Betamax, of CT Power and, just to name one more, the BAI Group. We had not even scratched the surface and we were horrified, again, to use the famous expression of my learned friend “but, then again”, when I hear the words ‘we are all for transparency’, it doesn’t go down very well for somebody sitting in the ranks of that Party to say such a thing in this august Assembly. We could not speak at length of the Betamax case until recently, and my constituents asked me –

“But why is it now that you are talking about Betamax?”

For a simple reason! We are respectful of the *sub judice* rule. When we have now the benefit of a judgement of the Supreme Court, we can explain to the population what is this Betamax case. One of my constituents asked me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir –

“Could you explain to me in very simple terms what it is about?”

Of course, he was talking to me in Creole and said –

“Mo pas trop compran ki ou p koz, explik mwa simple, simple. Ki ete sa zafer la, Betamax ?”

In simplified terms, I had to tell him a story.

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order, please, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do apologise that I have interrupted the hon. Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Wait! Can you take your seat, hon. Attorney General?

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, I do apologise, I will be very quick. Basing myself on what the hon. Attorney General has said, that he could not comment, at some stage, on the Betamax case because it was *sub judice* and it was before the Supreme Court, now, it is before the Privy Council and is still *sub judice*, therefore, according to his own argument. So, therefore, he cannot now say *sub judice* applies only to the Supreme Court but not to the Privy Council. On that basis, my point of order is: If it is *sub judice*, it is *sub judice*. Full stop! And it is before the Privy Council.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, I understand your point. The Attorney General being the Legal Adviser of Government, I think he knows what he is saying and he will assume his responsibility, I think so.

Mr Gobin: I feel relieved, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from having to rule on the point. Well, if a matter is *sub judice*, this does not prevent me from reading at length from the judgement now. Does it? So, let's go to the judgement then.

(Interruptions)

Fair enough, we shall see what the Privy Council will say, but a judgment of the Supreme Court can be quoted in the House. It has been quoted here before me by other hon. Members. Anyway, I am not going to reinvent the wheel here, but the attempt to silence me from talking about the Betamax case is understandable, fully understandable. *Vous savez ceux qui ont des squelettes dans les armoires !* I quote, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is what the three Judges of the Supreme Court of Mauritius say –

“We have absolutely no difficulty in holding that the public policy of Mauritius prohibits the recognition or enforcement of an award giving effect to such an illegal contract which shakes the very foundations of the public financial structure and administration of Mauritius in a manner which unquestionably violates the fundamental legal order of Mauritius.”

Such powerful words by three Judges of the Supreme Court are unseen before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There are many members of the Bar in this House, of many, many years standing. None of them has seen such pronouncements in the history of this country.

I was about to explain, in simple terms, to my constituent the other day, and this is what I had to tell him for him to understand what is this whole story. I had to tell him, ‘Imagine that there is a 15-tonne lorry on the taxi lorry stand in the village and you have to carry some construction materials, something, like let us say, *5 tonnes macadam or 10 tonnes*

macadam to bring to your house for some construction that you are doing.’ He said, ‘Yes, okay, I understand that, I can picture that.’ I told him, ‘Imagine that every time this lorry comes to your place and delivers, let us say *10 tonnes macadam*, how much will you pay him?’ He said, ‘Well, I will pay him for *10 tonnes macadam*.’ I told him, ‘Then, you are wrong, because according to the principles which they are still defending, according to the principles of the Leader of the Labour Party, you have to pay 15 tonnes.’ This is what it is. This is payment of 100% freight even if you have been given only 50% freight. Then, his jaws dropped down, he stopped asking me question, and I had to add something more and said, ‘It does not stop there.’ I said it is guaranteed for 15 years. I had to add something else and I said, ‘There is an escalation rate, it will increase. Every five years, it will increase. Even if the price goes down on the market at the taxi stand, you will have to pay more. This is the contract.’ And I had to add one more and I told him, ‘The owner of that lorry, *c’est le beau-frère de untel*.’ Then, he understood, he was ...

(Interruptions)

I am coming to that, do not worry!

The Deputy Speaker: You will have the floor later, hon. Rutnah, then you will say what you want to say. Not now.

Mr Gobin: I am saying so smilingly, but the hearts of Mauritians are bleeding when they hear what has been done. And then, my constituent, it dawned upon him and he responded by telling me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, ‘*Aster mo compren ki fer bonbonne gaz ti vine R 330*.’ And then, I had to ask him, ‘But why are you saying so? And then, he explained to me, ‘*Fodrai prix bonbonne la monter pu ki STC gagn kas pu paye sa kaliter contrat la*.’ This explains the hike in prices of the gas cylinder. Otherwise, where would the STC get the money to pay such kind of *largesse*?

Now, when I heard my colleague, hon. Gungah, say that when they compiled the figures, adding the dead freight which was paid over the years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the mathematics led to a mythical figure, legendary figure, something like Rs200 m. *Cela vous dit quelque chose, M. le président ? C’est le chiffre magique*. It is like looming everywhere, this figure.

(Interruptions)

No, I am not referring to the coffers, but it strangely resembles the same figure, being the figure paid for dead freight. So, in the beginning of 2015, this Government was faced with

the very hard facts and had to make a very tough decision; whether to continue with such kind of illegal payments or to take the bold decision and stop it. This reminds me of what hon. Jhuboo said the other day. He repeated what he had stated way back in 2015 for his maiden speech, and I remember him saying that. He said that he loved his country and he wished us, in Government, *bonne chance*. I remember that. I was sitting over there. I think we had the luck, *la bonne chance, la bonne étoile* of seeing these hard facts on the files and taking this tough decision, and today, after such long years, seeing the verdict given by the three Judges of the Supreme Court.

Now, the people understand what was going on in that regime which, today, claims will bring a *politique de rupture* and which, today, say they are all for transparency. How ironical! *C'est vraiment prendre le peuple de ce pays pour des imbéciles*. During all this time that the case was pending judicial institutions, the Opposition, *tout parti confondu*, but more particularly the Labour Party, was banging on all the doors that they could and say that Government is going to pay something like Rs4 billion damages, as if *les oiseaux de mauvais augure*, praying that Government will be condemned to pay such kind of money. I am sure *certaines se frottaient déjà les mains*, to say that we will be paying such kind of money. What kind of a patriot in this country makes such a wish, that public funds will have to be used to pay Rs4 billion? What kind of a patriot says that? Even if you are in the Opposition, do you wish for such a thing to happen or do you wish the best for the citizens of this country?

The same thing was being said for CT Power case, that we are going to pay another Rs4 billion or Rs5 billion, *priant pour le malheur de ce pays!* Who, in his right mind, does that, as a true patriot for this country, ayant à coeur l'intérêt public? This is once again the judgement of CT Power given by the Judicial Committee. It sets the record straight as to what was happening in that regime, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the third case, the BAI, the same thing was being said and is still being said, indeed, that we are going to lose the arbitration, it was an open and shut case, Government had nothing to say, we were simply going to be ordered to pay such huge sums that they were claiming we would be paying. None of all this happened. What is the meaning of all this when you look at it from afar?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what I submit to the citizens, through this august Assembly. It is that Government is on the right track of setting things straight in this country, of cleaning up the mess which they left after being in Government for 14 years. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we shall not stop here. I reassure the citizens that we will continue to clean up

and mop the mess which they have created. We will relentlessly clean up and give a better place to live in this country to our citizens. This is what we had pledged in December 2014.

During the debates on the Budget, it has been submitted to the House that *c'est la fin du mandat, c'est le dernier budget du quinquennat*, and we ought to be doing the *bilan* of Government. Well, I agree; I totally agree. I think all my colleagues have been doing *bilans* of their respective Ministries or constituencies, and we shall continue to do so. We have a lot to explain and we will continue to do so, even outside the House, especially outside the House. But there is an elephant in the House and nobody sees that elephant. And I put the question: How about this legislature, 2014-2019, how about the *bilan* of the Opposition? Nobody talks of the *bilan* of the Opposition! Yes, it is true that we have lost Members on this side of the House; they have resigned, some have stepped down. It is all facts. My good friend, hon. Baloomoody mentioned at length those examples, calling some names, 'gold finger' or I don't know what finger.

(Interruptions)

Yes, there were some changes on the way. The former Deputy Prime Minister is now sitting as Leader of the Opposition. Yes, it is a fact. You were four, you are now five. Hon. Dr. Boolell has joined us. These are changes. This is the *bilan*, but there is an elephant in the room, and I look at hon. Ganoo, my learned friend, learned senior at the Bar. There is an elephant here and nobody sees that elephant. When we started in December 2014, there was another Leader of the Opposition. There was a very strong Party here, I think almost 12 Members. And just six months down the road, do you know what happened, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? What is more shocking - I hope your tears will not roll down your cheeks, but we have seen a partnership, I don't want to use the word 'friendship', but a partnership of more than 30 years being sacrificed, *un partenariat de plus de 30 ans s'écraser sur la pierre de l'égoïsme...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Gobin:... and poor hon. Ganoo had to leave a Party he has served for more than 30 years and sit there where he is. This is the *bilan*!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Gobin: This is the *bilan* of the Opposition in this Legislature. I am not talking about before 2014; I am talking of this Legislature.

(Interruptions)

We will hear you later on, hon. Ganoo, I am sure. He was supposed to be the one responsible for the *désastre*, for *l'alliance contre nature*. This is also to be mentioned as a *bilan* for this Legislature. *Ça veut tout dire*. The other *bilan* of this Legislature, I think the hon. Leader of the Opposition should reflect upon that and all the Members of his Party: Were you elected to sit over there or were you elected to bring change in this country?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Gobin: Now, this takes me to what my colleague, hon. Roopun, was saying earlier during the day. Having been in Government before, he did not know, *comme on dit en français, sur quel pied danser*. At some point, *il a supplié pour ne pas rompre le contrat*. At some other point, *c'était un ouf de soulagement*. At some point, he did not participate in the Inter-Ministerial Committee, he did not even recommend the signature of the contract, but then, the contract was somehow signed, implemented, payments made; payments for dead freight over so many years. And then, coming today to say *c'est un ouf de soulagement*. I repeat what I have said publicly. It's an *ouf de soulagement*, I think, for the hon. Leader of the Opposition himself. It is *un ouf de soulagement* because we no longer - I mean, we, the people of this country - no longer have to effect payments under this illegal contract. This is the sort of regime which was in place prior to 2014. And we had pledged to clean up the mess, and we are continuing to do so. I say this, because it is good to remind the people of this country where we were and where we have reached. And we have been doing so, year after year, Budget after Budget, relentlessly, bringing change in the lives of the ordinary citizens of this country. And when I talk about the case of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, this reminds me of what was happening before, on the other case I have mentioned early, the case of the BAI Group. I don't want to go back to the IMF report, which has been the subject matter of so many Parliamentary Questions.

I want to go back to what happened on 17 June - that would be this Monday - when the hon. Leader of the Opposition had set a PNQ to the hon. Prime Minister on the Bank of Mauritius and the Special Reserve Fund. In one of the supplementary questions, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, do you know what the hon. Leader of the Opposition says? He says, and I quote Hansard of 17 June –

“Mr X. L. Duval: ...this Special Reserve Fund, as everybody understands, includes a lot of paper profits, and these paper profits are not allowed to be distributed to the shareholder, the Government, by a Central Bank. *Il mélange ça avec* other accounting issues. BAI, etc., went bankrupt because of the same thing. We are not talking about companies. We are talking about Central Banks.”

Let me underline that. He says, “BAI, etc., went bankrupt because of the same thing.” So, he knows what was going on in BAI. Is he suggesting that BAI was doing some creative accounting? That’s his question, and that question is pregnant with meaning. “BAI, etc., went bankrupt because of the same thing.” Which same thing? He was talking of paper profits. “*Il mélange ça avec* other accounting issues.” That was the question.

(Interruptions)

Later on, another supplementary question.

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order. I am not trying to hide any information. It is just that I would like the hon. Attorney General to tell us whether he was Legal Adviser of Bramer Assets full time and received a salary from them and if that would not be conflictual. Maybe, he should declare his interest.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: This is not a point of order. I understand that the Attorney General is making reference to the PNQ and the reply given by the Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gobin: *Ça fait mal*, honorable Mohamed. *Ça fait mal !* Yes, I have nothing to hide.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: There is another point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: You have another point of order?

Mr Mohamed: Yes, another point of order! The hon. Attorney General is aware, since his office itself is mentioned in a document which dates in January of this year “*La République de l’île Maurice représentée par la présente procédure par son Attorney General*,

Maneesh Gobin and le Conseil, c'est Françoise Lefèvre of Linklaters, contre M. Dawood Rawat.” So, this is a matter which is still pending before *Le Tribunal de Première Instance de Francophonie de Bruxelles*. So, once again, if he does not mind transgressing the rules of being *sub judice*, let him do.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. That’s what I have told you earlier. He is the Legal Adviser of Government; he takes full responsibility of what he is saying.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

Mr Gobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not giving way this time. This is an abuse of the point of order. I am not giving way!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: He may decide...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: He is not taking any decision.

Mr Gobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no *sub judice* rule in this case. So, hon. Mohamed has to sit down and listen patiently like we all did when he was on his feet!

(Interruptions)

So, hush, hush and hush, and listen to what I have to say! I quote from Hansard.

(Interruptions)

Those who live in glass houses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Attorney General, I said you can develop your arguments, but be moderate in your remarks, please.

Mr Gobin: Yes, certainly, especially at this time. Yes, I will do exactly like hon. Mohamed did earlier and I will bow to your ruling. So, I was quoting...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Not from a sitting position.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gobin: Come on Shakeel! *Comme dirait l'autre*, keep cool!

So, let me quote from the Hansard of the same sitting of 17th, which is Monday last. So, hon. Duval sets another supplementary question, part of which I quote –

“Mr X. L. Duval: That the Prime Minister is totally confused between foreign exchange assets of a bank, which represents Rs240 billion, (...)”.

And the part I wish to underline is as follows, I quote –

“And I maintain that the majority of the Special Reserve Fund, as said by Mr Basant Roi, this morning, are paper profits, and is going to do, Madam Speaker, a BAI - then there were some interruptions and he continues - equivalent to BAI in the accounts of (...)”.

Once again, at these two instances, on the 17th, on Monday, the hon. Leader of the Opposition suggests - this is my interpretation and I take responsibility for that. This is my interpretation of these questions, which I say are pregnant with meaning. Is he suggesting that he knows of some sort of shady business in the accounting of BAI? I am asking a question.

(Interruptions)

If no, fair enough! I’ll accept that. But, if yes, he knew and he knows, but then the question is: since when?

Mr Abbas Mamode: On a point of order.

Mr Gobin: *Quatrième là!*

Mr Abbas Mamode: He is imputing motives that the Leader of the Opposition was aware, and so he has to remove, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, I have listened carefully to the orator. He isn’t imputing motives. Otherwise, I would have stopped him. He is putting the question.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Gobin: There is this other issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me move on to another issue. I know there are other orators after me. On the question of the Chagos case, we have said it time and again and we will continue to say it. When the hon. Prime Minister, not only on Budget day, but even before, each and every time there was a statement in this House about the Chagos case, none of the Members of the Opposition lent their support. And

we all know, in this House, the tradition of giving support is to hit the table, and they never did, they never lent support at any time, not only on Budget day, but on any other occasion when there was a statement in this House, be it a statement by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, whether when he was Prime Minister or Minister Mentor, or the current Prime Minister. Some of the Members of the Opposition want us now, during their speech, to believe that they have always been supportive of Government's efforts in this case? You know, whatever happens in this country can easily be retrieved on the Internet and social media. We just have to look at all the Saturday morning Press briefings of all the Opposition Parties to see what they had said; *dossiers mal gérés, amateurisme, pa koner ki pou fer*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Gobin: Even the Hansard speaks volumes about the words being used on this case. My hon. colleague draws my attention to words like '*incompétence et amateurisme*' being used in this House in Hansard when questions on Chagos were being put. So, now, after the fact, they are wise, after the event, after the ruling of the ICJ, after the vote not only once, but twice at the General Assembly. This is an example of demagogy. This is the difference – and I say it the second time tonight – between acting and action.

They want us to believe that this Government does not care for the poor. They want us to believe that we do not care about those who are towards the end of the ladder.

(Interruptions)

Inshallah, we shall go to Chagos. *Un régime qui voulait changer la vie des gens en cent jours, avec pour résultat*, when we came into office and we had access to records, what was the situation? Let us remind the population: *une économie en décroissance*. This is so typical of Members of that Party.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Gobin: *Aucune capacité d'écoute, aucune capacité de compréhension! Drum vide, bater bis, fer tapage*. What was the situation in December 2014? *Un taux de chômage en pente ascendante, 3.2% et 7.8% respectivement, M. le président. A peine plus de six mois de réserve en devises étrangères. On a oublié la défunte Mauritius Post and Cooperative*

Bank. *On a oublié les dettes de la Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation.* My records tell me that the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation had Rs1.2 billion of debt.

La Banque de développement, M. le président, R 538 millions de déficit. En voulant changer la vie des gens en cent jours, voilà ce qui se passe. *And the famous phenomenon of 'doubler'.* Le projet qui coûte un million ou un milliard devient deux millions ou deux milliards - standard partout.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I do tolerate a degree of crosstalking, but please do not abuse of that. Let him to continue with his speech.

Mr Gobin: The number of points of order, Mr Deputy Speaker, the number of interruptions are very encouraging for me. I will keep some of my arguments for later because I know there are some motions coming very soon.

Let me conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Where they have failed, we have been successful. We are not here to fix the price of the gas cylinder at Rs330. Do you know what, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I have to remind the House. In 2004 - I think my hon. colleague Seeruttun said that earlier, but it is good to remind the House - the price of the gas cylinder was at Rs214. In 2005, by some mishap, there was a change in regime and, in December 2014, the price had reached Rs330.

Ce gouvernement, M. le président, a à cœur et une reconnaissance aussi pour les aînés, la classe des travailleurs et son peuple. Nous ne pouvons que nous sentir soulagés d'avoir réussi dans notre mission de rétablir un équilibre social et surtout un assainissement de notre système. Nous avons remis le pays sur la voix du développement. Les rails que vous voyez en train d'être installés ne sont pas seulement les rails du métro express, M. le président. Nous sommes en train de remettre le pays sur les rails.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Gobin: Donc, M. le président, au Premier et ministre des Finances, je dirai mes sincères félicitations pour l'effort et les sacrifices soutenus pendant ces dernières années afin de redresser le pays. Je lui dis 'bravo' pour les quatre derniers budgets. Surtout au *Mentor Minister*, je lui dis merci encore une fois pour avoir sauvé ce pays en collaboration avec le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Collendavelloo.

To my colleagues, the Parliamentary Private Secretaries, all of them, as the Deputy Prime Minister says, often times, they are the engines of Government. They bring development to every nook and corner of our country. To them, I say *bonne continuation*.

A tous mes collègues de la Chambre, à mes collègues ministres et députés, à tout le monde, je vous dis le meilleur reste à venir, redoublons d'efforts.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Gobin: *Last but not least, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, aux athlètes et à ceux qui représenteront le quadricolore pour les jeux des îles de l'océan Indien, je leur dis : 'Nous sommes tous avec vous. Allez Maurice!'*

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rampertab!

(11.20 p.m.)

Mr R. Rampertab (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with immense pleasure and humility that I am addressing this august Assembly tonight and the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance should be heartily congratulated for delivering another remarkably, inspiring, balanced and positive national Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when our Government took the reins of power in December 2014, the economy and moral of the population were in dire need of a new impetus.

Under the primeministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, now the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, urgent national decisions were taken to restore confidence in the population.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the primeministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the same decisions have been successfully implemented and our citizens and economy have been revitalised. The spirit of gloom and defeatism that had prevailed during the previous Government's reign has now dissipated as a result of the relentless efforts of our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country has been successful in emerging from crying economic conditions. The national statistics speak for themselves. For instance, our country

now enjoys one of the lowest inflation rates which is currently at 1.5%. And the lowest rate of unemployment for the last seven years is currently at 6.9%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very optimistic that through the impetus steered from the Budget 2019-2020, this forecasted economic fundamentals will strengthen further. And more importantly, given the feel good factor created, the population, especially youngsters, will have more incentives to enjoy educational and training opportunities to ultimately pave the successful career path.

Our citizens should also reap the benefits of the economic progress of the country and this is exactly the philosophy of this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to pay tribute to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. In fact, this budget fully reflects its personal philosophy of an inclusive and balanced social development of the economy. Through his significant, personal contribution and indefatigable industry, he has strived towards achieving a sound and balanced economy and a healthy, productive and optimistic population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after nearly five years of managing the affairs of the country, this budget has proven that the great people of Mauritius are wise enough to remember the difference and approve of the good health of the country. Never, ever has Mauritius seen such a transformation over a period of only a few years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I very much welcome the threshing out of the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. Indeed, during my intervention in the debates around the Bill, I stressed on the fact that research and development investment, as a percentage of the GDP, was a mere 0.18% in 2012. The previous Government is guilty of completely ignoring research development and innovation investment and thus severely harmed our capacity to generate faster economic progress. This situation is a legacy we were bequeathed with, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With this budget, the National Innovation and Research Fund will be funded with a starting capital of Rs10 m. and, in addition, new masters and skills development courses in artificial intelligence and robotics would be offered by our local universities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such a massive investment will undoubtedly pave the way for faster economic development of our island. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, road safety is a national emergency and needs our utmost attention in order to reduce the number of fatal and non fatal accidents. During each of my interventions on the amendment to the Road Traffic

Act, I fully welcome the bold, new initiatives being introduced by the Government and following the Budget 2019-2020, I welcome the additional measures and funding for safer infrastructure and facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, a topic that I previously discussed on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, given my legal background, I also very much welcome the budgetary provisions for a modern, computerised revenue collection system to allow online payment of fines and other fees, as we discussed during the debates around the Judicial and Legal Provisions Bill. Indeed, it is with much satisfaction that this measure will couple with the new Supreme Court to be inaugurated later this year, funded by the Government of India.

Undeniably, the Judiciary will undergo the much needed, unprecedented transformation through our Government's efforts. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also note with a lot of satisfaction the budgetary provision to operationalise the Special Education Needs Authority. Having worked as a teacher with students before in the UK, I fully supported the setting up of the new authority during the debates around the Bill and welcome the operation of this new authority.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget is a historic one. As the 11,000 families registered under the social register of Mauritius will benefit from a broadband connection, and undeniably, this measure will significantly contribute to bridging the digital divide with the internet being the single most powerful tool for education and instruction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thousands of children will benefit from the free broadband service and open the doors to achieving a successful career. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am proud to have such a leader who is undergoing to share le *gâteau* national so that everyone benefits. On this side of the House, we believe that every citizen is empowered that the nation can be successful. Hence, I am extremely happy that this budget continues to take up the challenge for providing quality education with renewed energy.

We must be thankful again to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for coming up with the academy for teachers and education hub at Côte d'Or. The new campus for the MIE at Côte d'Or shows focus on the continuous professional development of teachers like any other professional. The teachers are the main actors in the teaching and learning process and we need to ensure that they are fully empowered so that they can help our children to move to greater heights.

The historic measure of free tertiary education is allowing thousands of students to pursue tertiary education and we all know the value of a graduate, the importance of a degree

in boosting the career of a person can no more be disputed. There are several studies by the World Bank to prove that a degree holder helps to boost both personal income as well as the socio-economic status of the country. If we do not have sufficient number of graduates, we will not be able to attract investors in the high-end sectors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I also welcome the Leader-in-Me programme stated in the budget which aims to lay the foundation of a vibrant entrepreneurial nation. To become a high-income country, we need a significant number of entrepreneurs, innovators and leaders. We need skilled people who think differently. We need people who can help Mauritius to demarcate itself as a miracle in the world of the Nobel Prize Laureate, Joseph Eugene Stiglitz. It needs a visionary leader like our Prime Minister to invest in such a laudable project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are also thankful to the Prime Minister for the setting up of the Skills Development Authority, the technical and vocational education and training centre is called upon to play an even more important role in the economic development of the country. Therefore, such a regulator will not only ensure that we reap the benefits from every cent we spend, but also that there are no mismatch in the demand and supply of labour. Our human resources remain our key assets. Therefore, we have to ensure that they receive quality training that will allow them to make significant contribution to the development of the various sectors of the economy.

The new MITD Modern Training Centre to be constructed in Beau Vallon in the South at the cost of Rs290 m. can only rejoice the employers who are continuously looking for skilled labour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world is leaving no stones unturned in the quest to embrace new technology as well as to ensure that citizens are fully empowered to use technology to further improve what they do. The tablet project is a commendable one as it ensures that the children become technology savvy. We are indeed thankful to our leader for making the extra effort of extending it to grade IV and such a project will definitely contribute in reducing the digital divide.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as I can recall, no one has ever placed inclusiveness in the field of education so high on the agenda. Children with special education needs, as well as those from vulnerable families, continue to be highly privileged, because on this side of the House, we don't want any child to be left behind. We want everyone to have the same

learning experience, irrespective of his or her disabilities and social background. The 45 Learning Environment Schools is, indeed, a giant leap in supporting the children from deprived areas. Here, I urge the NGOs to work hard and with sincerity so that the children shine as citizens of the Republic of Mauritius. This caring Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not only focussed on the academic development of the child, but also on its overall development so that he or she can eventually contribute positively in all aspects of the progress of our nation. This Budget has earmarked funds for the construction of six multi-purpose halls and four playfields, amongst others. A sound mind reliance in a sound body is the mantra that the Prime Minister has been promoting regularly. He is even often on the playground to set the right example. I am personally extremely happy to see that such accentuated focus on non-academic support that is so vital to the success of our children. This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, makes provision for consolidating the team supporting the children. We never had so many educational psychologists, educational social workers and discipline masters before. The Drug Use Prevention Programme will now be in all secondary schools. After Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Pravind Jugnauth has taken the challenge of freeing our country of drugs and no one in power has ever invested so much in the fight against the drug abuse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am happy that this Budget is investing massively in our children who are the future of this nation, and tomorrow they will be the administrators of our country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through this Government's efforts and funding from the hon. Minister of Finance, today, I can say that the district of Flacq - and my constituency - is probably becoming the hub of the East. Indeed, our Government is making history by, firstly, building a new Flacq Teaching Hospital for the benefit of the whole country, not only for the East. And, secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of the East will no longer have to travel to Port Louis or Curepipe to undertake the practical driving test. Flacq, now, will have a New Driving Licence and Test Centre, a project which will reap countless benefits for the economy of the East, its inhabitants and further alleviate the decongestion of Port Louis.

Thirdly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very proud to announce that the Flacq one-stop shop, which is in great demand by all my colleagues PPPs, which I spearheaded, with the support of my two colleagues, hon. Roopun and hon. Dayal, and which the hon. Prime Minister inaugurated last year, will now host a third National Identity Card Unit of the island,

after Port Louis and Rose Hill. I am reliably informed that new equipment are being tested and that the Unit will be launched, probably, in a couple of months or maybe earlier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, henceforth, people from the East will no longer have to wait for hours to travel to Port Louis and Rose Hill for the ID issuance or replacement. After more than a year of operation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Flacq one-stop shop is a great success and is even running out of space, as another Government agency, namely the NTA has recently opened its office after the ones in Cassis and Curepipe. And only lately, the Ministry of Arts and Culture is the latest tenant to use the facility and the one-stop shop. I also set up a library for the use the locals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only this Government has truly invested in the decentralisation of essential services and is now reading the rolling out of online services, such as the delivery of free copies of birth and marriage certificate, the searching of information of land titles and registering of vehicles. I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his blessing with these initiatives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is also with immense pleasure that I welcome the several infrastructure land drainage and water sector projects in my constituencies, namely No. 8 and No. 9. In fact, the NDU has spent over Rs200 m. out of the Rs2 billion disbursed by the NDU island-wise in both the constituencies No. 8 and No. 9 over the last four and a half years.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has ensured that all constituencies received a fair amount of the NDU funds, contrary to the incorrect use as reported by the Press. Let me announce that over hundred projects in each constituency, namely No. 8 and No.9 have been implemented by NDU and also 30 more projects are being attended by the Ministry of Environment in both constituencies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very soon, both Moka and Quartier Militaire will also benefit from pipe replacements project, in line with this Government's plan to replace old and defective pipes across the island. And moreover, in Flacq, in Residence Hibiscus, and in Poste de Flacq, they will benefit from drainage work to mitigate flooding and the beach of Belle Mare will be embellished and cleaned.

In terms of sports facilities, both Flacq and Providence will benefit the construction of Multi-user Game Areas (MOGA). Providence will have its own gymnasium whereas

Quartier Militaire will have its own mediclinic and L'Esperance/Moka will have its own health centre.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a friendly note, as a former soccer player myself, I was immensely proud of the announcement to construct the 30th Global and African Branch of the Liverpool Football Academy in Côte d'Or. I salute the Prime Minister and my good friend, the Minister of Youth and Sports, hon. Toussaint, for that initiative. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the benefits of thousands of local's Manchester United fans, like myself, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor and a few others, we feel a bit sort of neglected as Liverpool is our good friend, like we say. Well, I hope the Prime Minister and the Minister of Sports will consider some starts from Manchester United, namely inviting Sir Alex Ferguson, a legend from Manchester United, who knows very well how to train youngsters and win trophies, especially the Premiere League.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, due to time constraint, I will have to cut my speech. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as Chairman of the PPPs Council, I would also like to heartily thank all my colleagues PPPs who have worked relentlessly in their constituencies, all the RDOs, the CAB organisers, the WPOs, the CSU staffs and all retired employers, especially the former Permanent Secretary, who all worked non-stop to ensure that the NDU projects are initiated, monitored and implemented.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a meeting, only a few weeks ago, the same group of staff have shared with us that they have never seen so much work being undertaken in only four and a half years. Our Government has contracted so much work that we are now short of contractors; unbelievably, but it is true. And since our Government came into power in December 2014, we repaid a large amount of Rs1.4 billion of debt left by the last Government, and over and above, the debt repayment, we have, through the blessings of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, invested over Rs2 billion in the NDU infrastructure projects across the island, including Rodrigues. The pivotal role of the CSU, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also needs to be highlighted here, as they have been addressing thousands of queries and complaints raised by our fellow inhabitants.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in December 2014, our Government has entrusted a sacred mission by an overwhelming majority of Mauritians. We have only been able to steer back our country on the right tracks, through firm and disciplined leadership and the blood and sweat of this Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody can claim that this

Government has a magic wand to solve all the issues of the country. Unfortunately, the country lags behind so much in every aspect of Government affairs management, so there is still a lot of room to achieve further socio-economic progress. However, over the last four years, we have had a visionary leadership who cared about the country and its people, and which was unflinchingly focussed on delivering tangible results

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget will go down in history as one which has silenced the Opposition.

Actually, they are in a state of disarray as they are desperately looking for imaginaries, arguments to try and pin down this Budget. May they rest assured that their attempts are futile.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the Opposition is running out of things to throw at us, let it be clear that hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth single-handedly silenced the critics on the other side of the House and opened the doors for our population to enjoy a new era of selfless, dedicated and focused leadership.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Prime Minister means business for each and every citizen of the country and for many years to come.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

(11.42 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member Savanne & Black River): M. le président, je me vois dans l'obligation de commencer mon discours avec les mêmes propos que j'avais utilisés l'année dernière, en prononçant mon discours sur le budget, en disant que c'est fort dommage, que malgré la présentation du budget par le ministre des Finances le 10 juin de cette année-ci fut traduite en créole par les radios privées et notre télévision nationale pour permettre un plus grand nombre de mauriciens de comprendre les tenants et aboutissants de cet exercice crucial, il est dommage que nous n'ayons toujours pas amendé les *Standing Orders* de l'Assemblée et les autres textes de loi, afin de permettre aux députés de la Chambre, qui veulent le faire de s'exprimer en créole mauricien, afin de permettre à l'ensemble de notre population de suivre d'une autre façon plus efficace les débats parlementaires.

Quand j'avais moi-même soulevé la question récemment, le vice-Premier ministre remplaçait le Premier ministre qui était absent du pays, et dans le passé aussi, aux plusieurs questions que j'avais soulevées, la réponse a été que la langue créole, pour être adoptée à l'intérieur de l'hémicycle, il fallait d'abord régler des dispositions, des contraintes d'ordre technique au préalable.

Je me demande où en sommes-nous, M. le président. Le temps passe, les choses ne sont pas avancées. Nous sommes à la veille des élections générales, et je trouve tout cela dommage et attristant, parce que s'il est nécessaire de traduire le budget en créole lors de sa présentation, il n'en est pas moins nécessaire de donner le choix à la population de suivre les débats en créole. Mais passons ! Je préfère ne pas m'attarder sur ma déception, parce que, pour moi, je suis convaincu, pour nous, au Mouvement Patriotique, que la retransmission des débats parlementaires en créole aurait été une grande avancée pour notre démocratie.

M. le président, comme les années précédentes, l'honorable ministre des Finances nous a proposé un budget qui n'offre aucune réflexion stratégique pour aider le pays à faire face aux nombreux défis auxquels il est confronté, aucune mesure face aux menaces pesantes sur les principaux secteurs de l'économie et pour relever la croissance.

Donc, rien de sérieux pour la croissance, pour redresser le déficit du commerce extérieur, résultats des équilibres grandissants entre les exportations et les importations qui menacent la stabilité, notre avenir économique. Par contre, un déficit record de la balance commerciale de R 115 milliards, des exportations en net recul, presque pas de création de nouveaux emplois, 5,400 seulement depuis 2016 contre 20,000 promis par an.

L'investissement entre dégringolade, le *FDI* seulement R 16,5 milliards par an depuis 2015 contre un objectif de R 28 milliards l'an. Le tourisme dans la tourmente, 10.6% de baisse de recette pour le premier trimestre 2019. De janvier à mai 2019, un pourcent de baisse des arrivées. Mai 2019, 4.3% de baisse comparé à mai 2018. Absence de vision pour *re-engineer destination Mauritius*. En fait, tous nos principaux réservoirs touristiques sont en baisse. Le déclin du secteur manufacturier. En effet, M. le président, *indeed in Vision 2030 manufacturing was targeted to reach 25% of our GDP, but today it is barely 12%*. New sectors that were promised to spearhead economic growth, such as the Educational Hub, the Medical Hub, Pharmaceutical Hub, the Green Economy and the Ocean Economy have never emerged. Specific and clear measures to address the problem of youth and female unemployment, income inequality and climate change are inexistent. The fundamental

problems facing the SME Sector which contributes to the democratisation of the Mauritian economy have not been meaningfully rest. The simplistic measures under the SME Financing Scheme do nothing to address the structural problems of the sector.

La robotique, l'*Artificial Intelligence*, *Blockchain* et *FinTech* restent au stade de vœux pieux, pour ne pas dire des slogans vides. Un tableau peu reluisant du paysage économique, vous en conviendrez, M. le président.

Compte tenu que ce dernier budget de l'honorable ministre des Finances est présenté dans un contexte électoral, le ministre des Finances propose à la population toute une série de mesures qui se veulent être sociales et populaires. J'admets, que certaines de ces mesures, qui ont pour but de cibler et de plaire plusieurs segments de la population, ont soulagé plusieurs de leurs bénéficiaires, même s'ils n'ont eu l'effet électoral attendu.

A few weeks preceding the Budget Speech, Members of the Government and the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance built great expectations in the public. Based on the Prime Minister's many speeches during various ceremonies, including one in Triolet, for instance, the MBC harped continually on the expected feats of the Government, quoting selective IMF extracts and other reports to paint in glowing terms the supposedly achievements of the Government.

Les mesures en question n'ont pas créé l'impact recherché pour deux raisons principales. Primo, le peuple a compris que beaucoup de ces mesures auraient pu être annoncées avant le budget et qu'elles ne constituent nullement une stratégie ou une politique réelle de changement.

Deuxièmement, les mesures annoncées sont insuffisantes et incomplètes, comme dans ce cas de l'augmentation de R 30 du *bad weather allowance* concernant les pêcheurs, comme dans le cas de la baisse des produits pétroliers de R 3 seulement par litre, comme l'augmentation de la pension des veuves et des personnes âgées de R 500, comme le *free Medical Insurance Scheme* pour les fonctionnaires *earning less than Rs10,000*.

En vérité, how many of these public officers will benefit from this scheme? I have done some homework, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A few hundreds in the grade of General Worker, the lowest in the civil service, with a starting salary of Rs8,000. And if the scheme is implemented as from January 2020, these officers will not be qualified as they will draw a salary of Rs10,200, which is higher than the ceiling of the prescribed Rs10,000 announced in the Budget.

En vérité, l'agenda du ministre des Finances était de présenter un budget électoraliste à bon marché, sans faire les dépenses en proportion aux mesures avancées. Un budget électoraliste, je répète, à bon marché, sans faire les dépenses en proportion aux mesures avancées. On peut comprendre cette stratégie parce qu'en vérité ce budget ne contient pas les mesures concrètes qui favoriseront la création de la richesse au court, moyen et long terme. Même *Business Mauritius* est perplexe face à l'ambition du gouvernement d'atteindre une croissance de 3.9% en 2020 avec le budget présenté. Il serait intéressant, M. le président, de savoir quel est l'élément magique de ce budget qui va promouvoir la croissance et ceci en prenant en considération car nous savons tous que la stratégie de distribuer des subsides accordés aux différents secteurs en difficulté ne boosteront pas la croissance. Les subsides restent des subsides et ne constituent pas de nouveaux investissements, M. le président.

The payment of Rs25,000 per metric tonne of sugar accrued will definitely give some relief to planters in this very difficult market situation. The subsidies will amount to about Rs4 billion based on the 330,000 tonnes of sugar forecast to be produced this year and at a subsidy of Rs12,000 per tonne of sugar. However, it should be noted that 80% of this amount, that is, Rs3.2 billion, will go to the big sugar producers who are already benefitting several billions by converting land under sugarcane production into smart cities or securing juicy deals with the CEB, as we have just heard a few minutes ago in the case of Alteo. The remaining Rs800 m. will be distributed among 11,000 small planters who will obtain an average of Rs72,000 per planter, compared to Rs800 m. per sugar estate. *C'est pourquoi, à mon sens, M. le président*, this 2019-2020 Budget creates an illusion that every layer of the population has something to be satisfied of, *le résultat de cette tentative de présenter un tel budget* which has no philosophy and which does not address the economic problems prevailing in the economy. Instead of defining a clear vision of the future, this Budget is unfortunately myopic and focuses exclusively on the vote maximising objective of the Government. No measures have been identified to address the systemic problems that lie today at the heart of each sector of the Mauritian economy; structural problems in the agriculture, manufacturing, tourism and financial services sectors have all been ignored. Specific and clear measures to address the problems of youth and female unemployment, income inequality and climate change are almost inexistent. For instance, in an area of global warming and climate change, there is no clear timeline that will help to accelerate the energy transition in our country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a look at the macroeconomic fundamentals leads to the conclusion that this Government has shown little flare for efficient economic management and sound leadership. Its economic performance has placed our country on brittle pillars and weak foundations. Some of the sectors will weaken further at the least shock; agriculture, particularly sugar, is vulnerable and is constantly contracting both in terms of job and output. So is tourism, and harping on the difficult global economic outlook is no defence. We are all aware of the economic achievements of our neighbouring African States. In 1983, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, global challenges were far more formidable. Mauritius was still in the infancy of development, with not only a narrow resource base, but a poor resource base in terms of quality and efficiency. Yet, at that time, I have to admit it, Sir Anerood Jugnauth displayed unusual stamina. Mauritius took a path of sustained and sustainable growth over a decade, and we have not looked back ever since.

Today, global conditions are significantly much less straining. We, as a nation, have stronger, firmer limbs to be more resourceful. Hiding behind the trade wars is a fake argument. The trade wars between China and the US can be transformed into a valuable asset in building a more aggressive strategy to penetrate Africa. With already strong links with China, we can create a more enabling environment to act as stringboard. Several bridges have already been built. We need to accelerate the work and build the traffic. Ghana is the fastest growing country in the world with a 8.9%. We have started various projects. China has identified Mauritius as one of its potential zones. The ball, in fact, is in our court, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

With much diffidence I have to say that the hon. Minister of Finance has missed a golden opportunity to bring economic reforms and be remembered as a game changer. Instead, this Government will bequeath to the nation, an image of a team who left a legacy of an economy with weak growth prospects and major structural problems, because it chose to earn popularity through an arsenal of social measures, many of which we have to find laudable, but to the detriment of solid, robust growth. Distributing before producing is not sensible even if it is a good electoral strategy. The Prime Minister would have heard greater applause had he made the pie go bigger before distributing. In the introductory pages, the Minister of Finance not only paints a rosy picture of the economy but, importantly, does not say the whole truth. For instance the Budget calculates the annual average rate at 3% against a real average rate of a mere 3.5%. The Budget shrewdly and skilfully conceals the extra deficit through the creation of Special Purpose Vehicles. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even a rate

of 3.7% is clearly insufficient to lift the country into the league of high-income nations. For serious observers, this is below the country's potential growth. The Minister has introduced a perfect blend of social measures and prestige projects that stifles production and further plunges the economy into the middle-income trap because of the potential danger of clouding out effect. And we remember how Members of Government and on the majority side, without looking at the figures, continued clapping their hands and banging the table. Even with this weak economic growth, even before producing the necessary output, the Minister embarks on extravagant expenditure that swells public debt and the real fiscal deficit. The Budget only keeps the illusion of low deficits, as I said, through indecent creation of funds, Special Purpose Vehicles and rearrangement of loans to be contracted by Government sponsored private companies.

But referring to other economic indicators also, we must say that the savings, for example, and the investment variables have not been particularly impressive. The relationship between savings and investment is well documented in the economic empirical and their impact on economic growth. In 2018, Gross Domestic Savings, as a ratio to GDP at market prices, plunged to 9.1%. Statistics Mauritius estimates this ratio to hover around 9.7% in 2019. This has meant, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, depending on foreign savings through JBC to finance investment, which, in turn, implies a drastic change in wealth ownership in Mauritius in favour of foreigners. It is the savings by one category of people which become investment by another group of people. This explains why our growth under this Government has never exceeded 4% and is condemned to this figure because the measures and policies introduced by Government are not adequate and appropriate. We have also seen the growing trade deficits and now with tourism continuously declining during the first five months of 2019 by more than 4.5%, foreign earnings would clearly fall. This means another adverse impact on the current account which is likely to jeopardise the external equilibrium.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government takes credit that the country has built international foreign exchange reserve to the equivalent of 11.7 months of import cover, but we should ask the Minister of Industry, for example –

- if this trend is an achievement, the country should take pride of;
- what happens to export and our international competitiveness, and
- how do we finance our imports if the whole manufacturing sector continues to contract as it has done under this Government?

Mauritius does not need 11.7 months of import cover. Is there anything in this ratio to be proud of? An average 6 months of reserve to cover imports is more than enough. Excessive foreign exchange reserves have adverse implication on certain variables. As foreign exchange reserves build up, there is growing pressure on the economic currency which becomes scarcer and more expensive relative to foreign currencies. As the demand for foreign currency increases, the domestic currency appreciates in relation to the foreign currency and this currency appreciation, Mr Deputy Speaker, due to a rise in exchange rate, decreases the competitiveness of our products.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, panic-stricken by the swelling debts and the high ratio. The Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Government sought help from the Bank of Mauritius. As in other cases, a great danger is lurking in the horizon. There are signs of an incestuous relationship developing between Government, between the Prime Minister's Office and the Bank of Mauritius which is twisting the independence of the Central Bank. The mission of the Central Bank is to focus on three important segments of the economy –

- monetary policy;
- employment, and
- price stability.

These are the jobs of the Federal Reserve Bank, the Bank of England or the Reserve Bank of India. The independence of the Bank of Mauritius is under threat, if not already threatened. The representatives of the Ministry of Finance on the Monetary Policy Committee and on the weekly auctioning of the Treasury Bills are clear independence that the independence of the Bank of Mauritius has been seriously undermined. It is a priority measure to restore its full independence for monetary policy and fiscal policy to be effective.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have not seen any mention of any new potential pillar to diversify the economy in this budget, to sustain growth or to replace ailing sector or even create the substantial linkage with an existing thriving sector. But, more dangerously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, some of our sectors are in crisis. I have one case in point, our global business sector, Mr Deputy Speaker. I think nothing has been done in this budget to address the difficulties and the risk facing the global business sector. I say that because I have just received very disquieting information.

Mr Deputy Speaker, after the major amendment to the DTA between Mauritius and India which has severely impacted on this sector, I now understand that the Double Tax

Treaty with Senegal is about to be reviewed to the detriment of Mauritius. The President of Senegal, hon. Macky Sall announced yesterday that they are considering terminating the DTA or making amendments to the DTA which will be to the detriment of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this was one of the best DTAs that the Government has achieved and this will, for sure, have an implication on our Africa strategy, especially with Senegal. A few years ago, in 2014, you will remember the Mauritius-Africa Fund was launched and Senegal was earmarked as one of the prime jurisdiction for investment. I have in my hand a copy of a PQ of 07 May of this year put by hon. Uteem on the Mauritius-Africa Fund and this is what the Prime Minister said –

“Madam Speaker, since we took office in December 2014, this Government has adopted a completely new approach to our Africa strategy which aims at having bigger impact on facilitation of Mauritian Private Sector Investment in Africa. The mandate of the Mauritius-Africa Fund was, therefore, reviewed to focus on the development of integrated projects in Africa under Government to Government framework.”

And listen to this –

“In the execution of this new mandate, the Mauritius-Africa Fund has successfully negotiated and signed five MoUs to develop special economic zones, namely in –

- (1) Senegal;
- (2) Cote D'ivoire;
- (3) Ghana;
- (4) Madagascar, and
- (5) Kenya.”

And the hon. Prime Minister goes on –

“In Senegal, the Mauritius-Africa Fund has invested 51 m. franc CFA, amounting to Rs3,800,000 - I'm rounding the figure on Mauritian rupees - for 51% shares in *Société des Infrastructures d’Affaires Atlantique* incorporated in Senegal. The special purpose vehicle will manage 53 hectares of land near Dakar. More than 31,000 m² of building facilities were constructed during Phase I on 13 hectares of land in the industrial park of Jamia Jo. Phase 1 became operational in early 2018 and achieved 100% occupancy within a three-month period

and Phase II will entail the construction of facilities of 250,000 m² on the remaining 40 hectares of land.” So, the question I am asking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is when on 27 January 2017, Mauritius and Senegal signed an *accord de développement conjoint*, the Africa Fund currently holds 51% of the special purpose vehicle implemented in the Special Economic Zone Project. What will happen now to this project and investment? Is this a sign of the Africa strategy falling flat? And what will be the strategy of the hon. Finance Minister to address this issue?

The Senegal President - and this is what is more worrying - spoke about a loss of revenue of billions of dollars as a result of the treaty Senegal signed with Mauritius and, of course, we must ask the other question what will be the impact on the FDI as a consequence of this, Mr Deputy Speaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposal made in the budget concerning – I am now coming to FinTech tends to indicate that FinTech will be used for online betting only. I might be wrong but this is what I understood. This Government has missed the point on the FinTech subsector. The current regulation issued by the Financial Services Commission on FinTech tends to give an advantage to the existing traditional players of the Stock Exchange of Mauritius and big banks only. Starts up with a mix of traditional training and innovative digital tokens are being requested to set up an exchange on the same basis as the existing traditional stock exchange. Whereas they should be issued with a regulatory sand box license in order to facilitate the emergence of digital bonds.

Therefore, to sum up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget does not show a coherent and well thought out plan for the Mauritian Economy to adopt industry 4.0 which is the next wave, as we all know, of development where companies like Microsoft will be dwarfed by trillion dollar businesses that will result out of this wave. Some measures such as the dispensing of a Masters in Robotics and Artificial Intelligence mentioned in the budget are welcome, but this is not enough. A National Master plan needs to be chartered out with the collaboration of the public sector, the private sector and international experts in this field in order to gear up Mauritius on the highway of industry 4.0. This is where the future of Mauritius lies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come to another sector, the ocean economy.

Year in and year out, we hear the same failure to develop an industry which is one of our biggest resources. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister does not have the faintest idea of the potential of ocean economy and contends himself with fishing and agriculture. Yet, he has

one of the most proficient research institutions under his umbrella, he decimally fails to provide leadership and the Ministry has no drive. The World Bank has produced a report outlining the potential of this sector, but the contents elude most of the officers in Government and EDB. The potential for extracting energy is immense. Strong lobbies, complacent officers and lack of political leadership are combining to create a formidable force to construe a renewable energy development. The ocean economy can bring in valuable environmentally friendly projects with even export potentials, metal extraction and the creation of a thriving pharmaceutical industry, this sector has come to a hold. Again, we are not inventing the wheel, other countries have already set up floating windmills far, I mean, the US, Europe, Japan. The UK operates five floating windmill farms. Norway, Denmark, Portugal and France are all operating windmill farms. Costs of project have shrunk and private firms are not requesting Government subsidies, Mr Deputy Speaker. Some island economies like Iceland, Barbados and Bahamas are implementing similar projects. Why can't we do the same? Are we to sit on our past laurels, Mr Deputy Speaker?

In the Government Programme 2015-2019 presented in January 2015, it was announced that the present Government would develop new pillars for economic growth such as the Ocean Economy, I quote –

“Government is committed to making Ocean economy an important industry to sustain economic diversification, job creation and wealth generation.”

What do we have in this year's Budget to support this economic pillar? The first measure to be announced is an increase of Rs30 for the daily Bad Weather Allowance of fishermen as if this will have a major impact on ocean economy.

The second measure is a fish auction market which has been lying idle for nearly a decade now. We are also informed that now the fisheries department will carry out a stock assessment of lobsters, squids and fish but what have we been doing all this time? What have we been managing if we never carried out any stock assessment before how could we manage the fisheries sector all these years. The items concerning the ocean economy in the Budget Speech look more like a quick submission from the Ministry concerned because it had to submit a few paragraphs to the Ministry of Finance. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, it is with no *gaité de coeur* that I have to say it. There is no vision, no long term or medium term plan. In fact, the Ministry of Ocean Economy does not have any strategic plan at all. It has no target, no benchmark, nothing at all. It is just drifting, Mr Deputy Speaker.

In the past Budget, mention was regularly made about Ocean Economy and its tremendous potential in terms of boosting exports and creating employment opportunities but what do we see when we look at the figures provided by Statistic Mauritius. According to the Digest of Agricultural Statistics 2017, domestic export of fish and fish preparations which brought in Rs11,336 m. in 2013 only brought in Rs9,494 m. in 2013, that is, a drop of 16%. 2016 and 2017 figures have been consistently lower than the 2013 figures, but what has been increasing, on the other hand is our import of fish and fish preparation from Rs11,880 m. in 2013 to Rs12,634 m. in 2017. All this, Mr Deputy Speaker, tend to confirm that, unfortunately, the Ministry of Ocean Economy is drifting without any set target and without any plan or policy. What was presented as a pillar of the economy is a total failure. There is a total lack of leadership at all levels in the Ministry and there is nothing happening there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we have wasted four and a half years with a stagnant Ministry of Ocean Economy, let us hope for a change.

I would now like to highlight some of the measures on which we are in full agreement with the Budget and the hon. Minister of Finance deserves our applause: improving workers' rights through the introduction of a new legislation, setting up of a Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund, the Wage Guarantee Fund, raising the Basic Retirement Pension, increase of the bad weather allowance, setting up of a Land Division and a Special Fund.

J'aborde ce volet des mesures sociales, M. le président, parce que, au Mouvement Patriotique, mes amis et moi, nous sommes particulièrement heureux que le ministre des Finances ait retenu certaines de nos propositions que nous avons faites à l'intérieur et à l'extérieur de l'Assemblée nationale. A maintes reprises, au cours de nos conférences de presse et au sein de l'hémicycle, nous avons attiré l'attention du gouvernement sur l'urgence de légiférer afin de revoir le texte de loi concernant la fermeture des entreprises et les licenciements sauvages et injustes dont sont victimes ceux qui produisent la richesse de ce pays, la classe ouvrière. Dans le sillage de l'affaire de Palmar, plus précisément, le 19 janvier de cette année, au cours d'une conférence de presse du mouvement patriotique - si le texte est là, je peux vous le montrer, M. le président - j'avais moi-même soulevé en premier les lacunes dans nos textes de loi permettant une situation d'injustice vis-à-vis de ces innombrables hommes et femmes qui ont travaillé pendant 30 ans et qui ont été jetés sur le pavé après que les entreprises aient mis la clé sous le paillason. J'avais évoqué ce jour, M. le président, la possibilité d'amender le *Insolvency Act*. J'avais parlé du *Insolvency Act*, j'avais demandé aux autorités du pays de s'inspirer du *Insolvency Act* de la Grande-Bretagne, où

existe un fonds qui vient en aide aux licenciés après une fermeture pour cause de faillite ou autre raison et j'avais évoqué la possibilité de revoir notre Code civil pour permettre aux travailleurs de pouvoir bénéficier d'une protection en cas de liquidation et de changer leur position en terme de *ranking* pour pouvoir jouir de cette protection en cas de liquidation, M. le président.

En ce qui concerne le *Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund*, nous avons évoqué ce sujet dans un forum débat, je me souviens, avec le syndicaliste Reaz Chuttoo et Jane Rago. Au Parlement aussi, j'avais soulevé la question et dans la dernière conférence de presse, précédant la présentation du budget, j'avais proposé que cette mesure soit incluse dans les propositions budgétaires et que subséquemment, la loi soit amendée pour permettre la mise sur pied de ce fonds. Évidemment, nous accueillons cette démarche du ministre et nous accueillons également ce *new Workers' Rights Bill* qui viendra combler un vide juridique dans le domaine de notre droit industriel. Mais comme avait dit l'honorable Baloomoody, nous déplorons que les associations syndicales et les travailleurs de ce pays attendent toujours les amendements promis par le gouvernement dans son manifeste électoral, dans son programme électoral à être apportés aux deux textes de loi, notamment le *Employment Right Act* et le *Employment Relations Act*.

M. le président, ce *new Workers' Rights Bill* constitue une bouée de sauvetage jetée aux travailleurs de ce pays et j'espère que ce projet de loi sera inclus sur le *Order Paper* de l'Assemblée aussitôt les débats budgétaires terminés. J'espère que ce projet de loi sera introduit et adopté par l'Assemblée. Parce que, M. le président, l'idée que les salariés ne doivent pas supporter le risque de l'insolvabilité de l'entreprise dépasse toute autre issue. L'idée que les salariés ne doivent pas supporter le risque de l'insolvabilité d'une entreprise, c'est pourquoi, donc, ce *new Workers Rights Bill* est tant attendu par toutes les associations syndicales de ce pays.

Je viens sur le *Land Division* et le *Special Fund*, M. le président. C'est dommage qu'il ait fallu une grève de la faim, où, le gouvernement avait pris 14 jours pour réagir. Mais nous reconnaissons que le gouvernement a tenu parole, quoique tardivement. Pendant la grève de la faim, nous étions nous-mêmes partie prenante, nous avons aidé les grévistes. J'étais dans le comité qui avait rencontré l'honorable ministre de la Justice. Donc, l'annonce de la mise sur pied de ce *Land Division*, ce fonds spécial pour les victimes de spoliation et un *Land Research Unit* sont, bien sûr, accueillis. J'avais, moi-même soulevé ce problème. Ecoutez-moi bien. En 2005, 14 ans de cela - j'ai l'intervention que j'avais faite *at*

Adjournment Time - à travers une intervention à l'ajournement, et une question parlementaire pour demander au gouvernement d'alors - c'était le ministre Dulull qui avait répondu à la question - de mettre sur pied un mécanisme pour venir en aide à ces centaine de familles victimes de spoliation de leur terre et de leur propriété. Récemment, j'avais moi-même déposé une motion privée qui a été circulée, qui est toujours dans le bureau du Clerk de l'Assemblée. J'ai une copie avec moi. Donc, une motion privée à l'Assemblée nationale pour demander exactement ce que le gouvernement a proposé aujourd'hui. Tant mieux! Mais il y a plus d'un an que ce rapport du *Law Reform Commission* a été rendu public, proposant ce mécanisme tant attendu par les victimes. Il nous faut, aujourd'hui, M. le président, saluer tous ceux et celles qui ont contribué à ce combat, notamment, Clency Harmon, l'Association Justice et Vérité, l'Eglise Catholique, nos amis Alain Laridon et Jack Bizlall et, bien sûr, le comité ministériel qui a travaillé sur les propositions proposées dans le Discours du Budget.

Concernant le *Bad Weather Allowance*, M. le président, j'avais moi-même, interpellé le ministre Koonjoo sur ce problème il y a quelques semaines avant le Budget. J'avais fait un appel au gouvernement d'augmenter le *Bad Weather Allowance* qui était de R 310. Dans nos conférences de presse aussi, mon camarade Jean-Claude Barbier et moi-même, avons régulièrement fait appel aux autorités, aux ministres en question, de réfléchir sur l'opportunité d'augmenter ce *Bad Weather Allowance*. Les pêcheurs de ma circonscription m'ont parlé de leur difficulté, de l'insuffisance de cette allocation pour faire bouillir la marmite pendant les jours de mauvais temps, où ils ne pouvaient pas aller en mer. Le gouvernement a augmenté cette allocation de R 30, M. le président. Vous comprenez, et vous serez d'accord avec ces pêcheurs, qui ne sont pas satisfaits avec ce montant de R 30. C'est vrai, c'est de 10%, c'est la règle, c'est le barème qui a été servi pour toutes les augmentations dans ce Budget - c'est ce que j'ai pu comprendre. Mais le ministre de la Pêche, qui a répondu lors de son discours, en disant qu'il ne comprend pas ceux qui ne sont pas d'accord avec la proposition de R 30, et qu'ils ne comprennent pas la valeur de R 30. Bien au contraire, M. le président, on sait comment c'est difficile pour les familles des pêcheurs de se débrouiller avec cette somme. Nous avons fait une demande pour que cette allocation s'aligne sur le salaire minimum, et comme l'a dit tout à l'heure quelqu'un avant moi, selon nos calculs, cette allocation aurait dû être autour de R 380 par jour. Comprenez-nous bien, M. le président, les R 30 d'augmentation représentent 9% d'augmentation, c'est vrai, mais nous ne *parlons* pas d'une simple augmentation. C'est aussi un ajustement qui doit être fait,

compte tenu de toute l'évolution de la situation à Maurice, le *climate change*, les différentes prestations sociales qui ont augmenté, le *minimum wage*, qui maintenant est une réalité mauricienne. Nous avons demandé un ajustement, pas seulement une augmentation, et c'est une bonne chose. Par exemple, j'ai vu dans le cas des *tea pluckers*, que le gouvernement a doublé les allocations de ces pauvres citoyens de l'île Maurice. C'est très bien que leurs *allowances* ont été doublés dans le cas des *tea growers* et les *tea pluckers*. Tant mieux ! Donc, c'est un ajustement qui a été fait dans ce cas, et c'est pourquoi il ne faut pas dire, ah, nous avons donné 9% comme dans tous les cas, donc, R 30 suffisent.

M. le président, je passerai maintenant à un autre thème, le grand absent de ce Budget, et c'est un secteur qui mérite toute notre considération. Il s'agit, M. le président, d'une urgence nationale et une question de santé publique. Je me réfère au problème de l'addiction aux drogues et la consommation problématique des drogues. L'année dernière, lors de son Budget, le ministre des Finances avait introduit des centres d'addictologies, et avait prévu le recrutement de plusieurs addictologues. Nous avons acclamé cette mesure. Les centres de réhabilitations ouverts aux mineurs ! Le Mouvement Patriotique, je crois, était le seul parti à féliciter le ministre de la Santé pour cette mesure, ouvrir des centres de réhabilitation pour les mineurs, ce qui n'était pas le cas avant. Mais, malheureusement, la situation ne s'est guère améliorée à Maurice. Nous le savons tous. M. le président, la drogue synthétique *pas gett figure* aujourd'hui, ville, village, campagne, cité, la côte, partout ! Nous, comme hommes publics, députés sur le terrain, nous pouvons évaluer les dégâts de ce fléau de la drogue synthétique. Il y a même eu des écoles qui ont fait un appel à l'aide, parce qu'elles ne pouvaient contenir le problème de la consommation de drogues parmi les adolescents, M. le président. Étonnamment, cette fois-ci dans le Budget, rien sur l'encadrement des consommateurs de drogues. Le silence peut prêter à confusion et donner l'impression que ce problème a été résolu, alors que nous constatons tous que le problème reste une urgence nationale. Le gouvernement avait demandé d'attendre le rapport de la Commission sur la drogue pour qu'il lance le *National Drug Control Master Plan*, le schéma directeur. Un *draft* de ce rapport est prêt depuis août 2017. Dans ce Budget, nous ne voyons absolument rien sur le sujet, aucune trace de *Drug Control Master Plan* dans le Budget. Deux ans se sont écoulés, M. le président, et rien. Et, en parcourant les quelques lignes allouées aux problèmes de la drogue dans ce Budget, nous décelons l'attitude du gouvernement vis-à-vis de toute la problématique de drogues. Pour le gouvernement, il est clair que toute la question de drogues est limitée à la répression et l'absence totale d'une

politique de réhabilitation et de réinsertion. Pendant son discours sur la question, le Premier ministre a abondamment parlé de *combatting*, de *fight*, de *war*, de *combat*, de *battle*. Tous ces cinq mots-là sont dans le Discours du Budget. Allez vérifier ! Pour lui, donc, la terminologie, c'est de *combat*, c'est de *fight*, c'est de *war*, c'est le *battle*. Mais, M. le président, nous le savons tous, les Nations Unies ont eux-mêmes reconnu que *the war against drug is a lost battle*, et que la répression à elle seule ne peut mettre un frein aux problèmes associés à ce fléau. C'est pourquoi, il est déplorable qu'aucune allusion a été faite aux diverses propositions contenues and le rapport Lam Shang Leen, ayant trait à toute la question de traitement et de réhabilitation. Le rapport a préconisé, je vous rappelle, de convertir la prison de Petit Verger en un centre national de réhabilitation et toute une panoplie de mesures allant dans la même direction que je n'aurai pas le temps d'élaborer, M. le président. Les propos de l'honorable ministre sur la problématique de drogues pour le discours de ce budget sont une preuve s'il en fallait une, M. le président, que le rapport Lam Shang Leen a eu droit à un enterrement de première classe. Fini ! On a bel et bien enterré le rapport Lam Shang Leen sinon pourquoi toutes ces propositions valables et sensées, alors que la situation se dégrade, n'ont pas été utilisées.

Je vais aborder un autre sujet, M. le président. C'est la question qui m'est très chère, la question des énergies renouvelables. *According to Statistics Mauritius*, en 2018, M. le président, primary energy requirement obtained from local renewable accounted for around 12.9% of the total primary energy requirement and constituted of hydro, wind, landfill, gas, photovoltaic, bagasse and fuel wood. Bagasse remained the main source of energy supply and contributed to around 88.1% of the local renewable sources while hydro, wind, photovoltaic, fuel wood accounted seulement for the remaining 11.9%. Furthermore, total energy products from local renewable sources decreased by 5.1% in 2017 to 2018.

M. le président, ce qui est plus grave, de 2017 à 2018 the import bill of petroleum products and coal increased by 27.7% from Rs406 m. to nearly Rs38 m. and accounted for around 19.5% of the total import bill compared to 16 in 2017. This is an alarming situation. We must revisit our renewable energy policy and strategy and set up a clear and non-ambiguous roadmap for the renewable sector.

Technology in the renewable energy sector has been evolving very fast and with the economy of scales, the price of producing one megawatt has been declining for all modes of renewable sources. We must be careful, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The measures implemented in this sector shall not support a small elite once again while the many are maintained to

subsistence level. Let me explain myself! This Government announced a Solar PV Scheme for Small Cane Planters two years ago and this has remained *un effet d'annonce*. There is no medium or long-term strategy for small cane planters with regard to renewable energy. The lifting of restrictions for the MSDG sector without any provisions or quota for small operators will largely benefit large groups. Shopping malls have access to financial resources and lower unit costs through large volumes. There should have been a quota for small MSDG producers below 50 kW per capacity. CEB Central procurement of solar kits for its Roof Top Schemes leads to a single large operator with large procurement volumes from global operations to be selected. Installation of these kits are also centralised at the level of the single supplier which is a missed opportunity for nurturing the growth of micro enterprises in the Solar PV and Energy Services Sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to crown it all, the management of energy efficiency measures in industry has been delegated to Business Mauritius and is geared to assisting medium and large enterprises which already have the means to tap into expertise and green loan facilities. This is why I say it is high time that we review our policy, we get our priority right in order to build an inclusive society and promote a sustainable environment for our future generation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will conclude in a few minutes. I will say a few words on environment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this budget has not, unfortunately, on this question of environment - our approach to me leaves a very bleak future. The Ministry has overlooked major issues associated with global warning. We know how critical the situation is today. Flash floods, coastal erosions, fear of searise, deforestation, different patterns in our *pluviométrie*, our corals and marine ecosystem, river banks neglected, mountain slope erosions are not only potential environmental threats but the real daily experience. Again, it is time to review our policies giving prime place to real monitoring and prevention. We have already caused much damage through poor planning and ineffective control. The RES, the IRS, the PDS, the Smart Cities as well as the manner of encroaching on prime lands to transform them into commercial malls are questionable. For an exiguous country like Mauritius with mountainous topography, is it rational to build over such large expanse of land and transform lands into a concrete jungle? I understand that built up areas in Mauritius have exceeded 25% of our surface area. This compares in modern industrial countries to around 8%, quick profit, short financial gains have taken precedence over our environmental preservation, biodiversity, risk aversion and long-term economic growth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no doubt the attempts to clean beaches are laudable, as announced by the hon. Minister, but they are inadequate to promote environmental stability, eliminate surplus emission of carbon dioxide and gradual elimination of dependence on fossil fuel, the conversion of the tons of plastic waste and deterring the use of hazardous material through environmentally friendly substitute. Does the budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, contain the necessary ambition required to deal with the threat of climate change? Unfortunately, the three pillars of the national reform agenda, enunciated in the budget together with its continued emphasis on infrastructure development and increase private investment in physical development, will only succeed in enhancing our vulnerability rather than reducing it.

The business as usual approach to development is contradictory, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the larger objective of securing sustainable development because of the simple fact that many of our environmental and vulnerability problems are a consequence of the intensive infrastructural developments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nous sommes tous attentifs à cette situation de développement durable et l'écologie. Il y a quelques jours les scientifiques ont mis en garde contre un effondrement catastrophique des écosystèmes naturels. M. le président, en 30 ans, près de 80% des insectes auraient disparu en Europe. A Maurice, nous savons tous, nous occupons la 14^{ème} place dans le classement des pays les plus à risque. Nous sommes aussi classés septième sur la liste des pays qui ont été les plus exposés aux catastrophes naturelles.

M. le président, la question qui se pose ici c'est non seulement si nous prenons les mesures et précautions nécessaires pour adapter à cette nouvelle situation climatique mais notre tendance à laisser le secteur privé dicter le plan et l'organisation de notre développement physique désoriente toute la situation et constitue un dysfonctionnement. C'est à cause de cela que je voudrais, moi, lancer une réflexion dans cet auguste Assemblée aujourd'hui et me référer à l'Inde...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, you have one minute left to conclude your speech.

Mr Ganoo: Okay. I will finish in two minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: I give you one extra minute.

Mr Ganoo: ...et d'inspirer de ce qui s'est passé en Inde où la constitution dit: *'it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to protect and improve the national environment*

including forests, lakes, rivers, etc. Malheureusement, je ne peux aller plus loin sur ce sujet, M. le président. Ce que les indiens appellent le *judicial activism*, ce qu'ils ont fait en Inde, ils ont converti en de *legal personalities* la nature, la rivière du Gange etc. Comme vous le savez, ils ont été déclarés par the *High Court of India* comme ayant un statut de *legal personality* et la rivière du Gange a les mêmes droits, devoirs et responsabilités, M. le président.

Je m'arrêterai là et je vais conclure, si vous le permettez pour la dernière minute qu'il me reste, M. le président, j'avais tellement à dire sur ma circonscription mais avant de finir, l'honorable Uteem avait dit la dernière fois qu'en 1982, la Constitution fut amendée pour permettre les élections d'avoir lieu tous les cinq ans. A l'époque, c'était vrai. C'était le premier mandat de Sir Anerood comme Premier ministre et le MMM et le PSM étaient au pouvoir. C'est vrai mais cela date de 37 ans de cela, M. le président. Il nous faut aller plus loin. La démocratie a toujours la possibilité de s'améliorer. On eut toujours élargir l'espace démocratique. En Angleterre, ils ont adopté une loi qui s'appelle le *Fixed Term Parliament Act* de 2011. Et c'est prévu dans cette loi que les élections auront lieu automatiquement tous les cinq ans à une date fixée par la loi. C'est encore un nouveau saut en terme de démocratie, M. le président. Je souhaite qu'un jour le prochain gouvernement pourrait, pour améliorer la démocratie, élargir l'espace démocratique, s'inspirer de ce qui s'est passé en Angleterre pour venir avec un *Fixed Term Parliament Act* de 2011.

M. le président, le budget est sans doute un exercice très important. Nous avons donné tous nos commentaires sur ce budget mais le meilleur budget, la meilleure équipe, le meilleur gouvernement ne valent rien si un pays ne jouit pas dans le cas de notre société plurielle d'une stabilité et d'une unité sans failles et d'une harmonie indéniable. Dans le sillage de toute cette controverse concernant la pratique de crime d'honneur, M. le président, nous avons témoigné des réactions d'une part et d'autre, des graffitis déplorables sur les lieux de culte, etc. On ne saura jamais qui en est l'auteur mais ce que je veux dire, il est maintenant une pratique que chaque fois que s'urge un conflit lié à un sujet d'ethnie ou de religion, des pyromanes, des provocateurs entrent en scène pour enflammer la situation. Ces dérives doivent être dénoncées et c'est à ceux que profite le crime. Le peuple de l'île Maurice dans son ensemble, M. le président, est un peuple imbu de valeurs de tolérances et de paix. Il ne se laissera jamais entrainer par les appels de haine et de division. Il est de notre devoir de condamner tous ces politiciens, hommes religieux, dirigeants des organisations culturelles et autres opinion leaders qui mettent en péril notre tissu social et l'unité nationale.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, I gave you two minutes.

Mr Ganoo: Voilà, je termine. C'est pourquoi pour moi, il est de notre devoir aujourd'hui de continuer à promouvoir ce sens d'appartenance à notre pays. La République de l'île Maurice est à la croisée des chemins. Elle a besoin des hommes et des femmes inspirés par des valeurs progressistes, humanistes, patriotiques, socialistes pour instaurer un nouvel ordre dans ce pays et construire une île Maurice juste, unie, libre, sans discrimination et sans corruption. J'en ai terminé.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Madam Speaker will now resume her seat.

At this stage, Madam Speaker took the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Wong Yen Cheong!

(00.48 a.m.)

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Madam Speaker, allow me to join my colleagues to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his fourth Budget having as a main theme "Embracing a brighter future together as a nation" for a continued development and transformation of our Mauritian economy.

First, Madam Speaker, I just heard a few Members of this Assembly and one of the remarks I have to make is that I noticed that hon. Shakeel Mohamed came forward to excuse himself about a few things that he said on hon. Ravi Rutnah, and we have to congratulate him. When somebody knows that he made a mistake, c'est toujours honorable de venir dire: 'Oui, j'ai fait une erreur, je retire ce que j'ai dit'. Sur la même lancée, je dirai maintenant que j'ai eu l'occasion d'entendre l'honorable Armance parler de ce qu'il a fait et qu'il est venu s'enfoncer encore plus alors qu'il avait tort. D'ailleurs, quand j'ai pris connaissance de ce qu'il avait dit à l'époque, que c'était en 2014 que Faith a été fondé et qu'il n'a plus rien à faire, et puis quand il a pu vérifier, il est revenu dire que non, c'est en 2018 qu'il n'est plus là. J'ai apporté les preuves, Madame la présidente, sur les dates où toutes les fois où se il proclame être le président de Faith. Il s'enfoncé et finit par enfoncer tout son parti avec lui. Voilà comment on est quand on est un poids lourd, on enfonce son parti avec. Enfin, dommage ! J'ai même entendu – je n'étais pas là. Désolé, parce que vu mon état, j'avais

rendez-vous avec mon physio et j'étais parti. Et lui, il a profité pour proférer toutes sortes d'allégations à mon encontre. Lui, où est-ce qu'il est à présent? Il n'est pas là !

(Interruptions)

Il n'est pas là. Je vais le mettre. Alors il ne faut pas s'enfoncer. Je sais même qu'il y a beaucoup de personnes, même des membres du PMSD qui sont venus me féliciter pour ce que je dis à propos de cela.

(Interruptions)

Pas moi, li sa ! C'est pas grave ! Vous savez très bien qu'il y en a. I will table all the documents, all the proof. Ceci dit, je ne vais pas m'attarder dessus. J'espère que les enquêtes se feront là où ils se feront, ou il viendra s'excuser s'il faut s'excuser ou bien c'est la justice qui fera l'état des choses. Parce que je viendrai dire que même quand il vient annoncer, tout fier, politicien et membre de cette Assemblée, se servant de l'argent d'une ONG pour faire de la politique! Est-ce cela que nous voulons, alors que le leader de l'opposition, lui-même, a dit qu'il y a certains qui doivent avoir accès à cet argent pour faire quelque chose?

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I think there is no quorum and the hon. Minister will have to stop his speech until we get the appropriate quorum.

Madam Speaker: Yes. I think so, because I was just trying to see whether we have a quorum. Let me check.

(Interruptions)

No, we have. Hon. Minister, please proceed!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Ce n'est pas grave. A l'heure qu'il est, on arrive à se tromper. Ce n'est pas grave. Il y a même l'autre qui est sorti pour ...

(Interruptions)

Je viendrai au fur et à mesure de tous ces démentis qu'il y a eu, même quand il a parlé de la circonscription. Nous sommes cinq députés dans cette circonscription. Il n'y a qu'un seul au gouvernement. J'ai aussi l'aide du PPS Monty qui est là afin de pouvoir construire cette circonscription comme il se doit. C'était la volonté même des mandants. Quand les gens vont voter, ils vont voter pour que quelqu'un soit au gouvernement. Nous avons été au gouvernement et nous sommes fiers d'être restés au gouvernement afin de pouvoir continuer le travail des autres qui n'ont pas pu le faire.

(Interruptions)

J'ai compris parce que je fréquentais la politique. Ceux qui étaient dans l'opposition, j'ai eu des amis qui m'ont souvent dit : *mo la main en bas roche, nous pas dans gouvernement* et je ne peux pas le faire. Que ce soit l'honorable Baloomoody, l'honorable Barbier, ou l'autre qui vient me demander de faire quelque chose de bien pour la circonscription, je le fais avec plaisir. Je le fais parce qu'il faut le faire. Il ne faut pas regarder les couleurs, il ne faut pas regarder l'appartenance, je le fais pour tous. Voilà comment ce gouvernement fonctionne. Voilà comment mon leader aujourd'hui, l'honorable Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, vient nous éduquer comment se comporter. Voilà comment on doit le faire...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, please do not interrupt. It is very late now and, I think, you would lose the time of the House if you start by interrupting the hon. Member.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: *I never mentioned the others. I said this is how we are on this side of the House.* Donc, si vous voulez apprendre. Et autre chose que la dernière fois j'ai discuté avec mon collègue, l'honorable Toussaint, c'est qu'on critique, aujourd'hui, quand certains arrivent à faire des fautes de grammaire, de verbe.

Madam Speaker: Excuse me. I have said several times that there should not be crosstalking and I see that this is continuing. If that continues, it is not only one hon. Member who will be asked to go out, both of you will have to go out.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Donc, je disais, j'ai cru entendre ces derniers temps - effectivement c'est même l'humain - quand on entend quelqu'un faire une faute, on essaye de se moquer, on se moque de l'accent, on se moque des verbes. Ce n'est pas notre langue. L'honorable Madame Perraud l'a bien mentionné, nous sommes comme des funambules quand nous essayons de maîtriser une langue qui n'est pas maternelle. Voilà comment c'est. La dernière fois, quand l'honorable Baboo est venu dire : on a laissé ça au calendrier grec, je me suis esclaffer et je m'excuse pour l'avoir dit et l'avoir rappelé que c'est 'calendes grecques' et non pas 'calendrier grec' qu'on dit.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo ! If hon. Members ...

(Interruptions)

Please, sit down! Sit down when I am on my feet! If hon. Members cannot contain themselves, I will have to take sanction. This is my ruling and there is no debate on my ruling.

(Interruptions)

Please resume your seat! You cannot usurp the functions of the Chair.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Merci, Madame la présidente. Je suis tout simplement en train de m'excuser pour ce que j'ai fait. Si l'honorable membre n'aime pas mes excuses d'avoir mentionné plutôt calendes grecques que le 'calendrier grec', cela n'est pas ma faute. Laissez-moi continuer un peu sur le budget.

The people of this country have given a strong mandate to this Government and today, under the visionary leadership of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, we stand as the most decisive and stable Government that has worked towards major reforms to transform the economy into a thriving and prosperous one.

We have reversed the policy paralysis engulfing the country under the previous reign and have restored the image of Mauritius. The major achievement of this Government is that we have strived our utmost to change the mindset and ignited the self-confidence of the nation.

On this, I am sure that all my colleagues of this august Assembly will stand by me to congratulate both the hon. Prime Minister and the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor for their vision and dedication to reconstruct the economy, secure social justice and provide Mauritius with a new beginning.

They have spared no effort to put the country on a transformative journey and we feel proud today that Mauritius is solidly back on track and marching towards growth and prosperity.

They have prepared the foundation for sustainable growth, progress and better quality of life for all our people.

Madam Speaker, the last five years have seen Mauritius being recognised as a bright spot of the region. The country witnessed its best phase of economic stability during that period. But when we listened to all the speeches - of course, the Leader of the Opposition himself *a mentionné: je suis payé pour dire ce qui ne va pas. Donc, il a fini de s'excuser, parce qu'il doit le faire, parce qu'il est payé en tant que Leader de l'Opposition.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Donc, nous aussi, bien sûr, nous reconnaissons qu'il y a énormément à faire dans ce pays. D'ailleurs, nous ne finirons jamais mais nous sommes en train de faire tout ce qui est possible de faire. C'est en reconnaissant ses faiblesses qu'on arrive à devenir plus fort. C'est cela que nous apprenons et que nous montrons aussi aux jeunes.

In the same breath, all previous budgets under this Government have enabled Mauritius to make major strides towards realising its vision of a modern and inclusive high-income country.

The macroeconomic fundamentals of the country have improved which have led to significant advances in human development.

Madam Speaker, We are moving towards realising a 'New Mauritius', a Mauritius which is socially, economically and environmentally healthy and where everybody, youth, women and elderly, would get greater opportunities to fulfil their dreams.

Madam Speaker, Let me now come to the Budget 2019-2020. The budget spells out the need to maintain the momentum of progress while addressing new challenges both internationally and locally.

Madame la présidente, lorsque nous parlons de prospérité, nous pensons surtout aux plus vulnérables, les plus nécessiteux, notamment ceux qui vivent dans la pauvreté absolue.

Comme le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances l'a souligné dans son discours, et je cite: *«Gouvernement has always deeply believed that economic progress must be paired with the upliftment of the less fortunate of our country»*. Il a aussi fait ressortir qu'il ne ménagerait aucun effort dans sa mission pour résoudre le problème de la pauvreté.

Madame la présidente, deux ans de cela on m'avait confié la responsabilité de servir le ministère de l'Intégration Sociale et de l'autonomisation économique et de travailler sur la mise en œuvre du Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté. Le *«Marshall Plan against Poverty»* est un projet hautement ambitieux et innovateur qui a été lancé lors du discours du budget 2016/2017. Le Plan Marshall reste à la base, un document de travail important pour la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Contrairement à ce qui a été dit par certains plus tôt, le Plan Marshall est une stratégie nationale visant à assurer la réalisation du «*Government Programme 2015-2019*», «*Government Vision 2030*», «*the African Union's Agenda 2063*» and «*the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* », *principally the Goal 1 : End Poverty in all its forms everywhere.*

Madame la présidente, le Plan Marshall est unique de par sa conception, son ambition et sa profondeur. Seuls quelques pays émergents ont osé mettre en place des programmes similaires ayant pour objectif –

- (i) d'éliminer la pauvreté absolue, et
- (ii) d'encourager le changement parmi les groupes vulnérables et les prestataires de services.

Dans son ensemble, le Plan Marshall vient encourager l'autonomisation économique, l'inclusion sociale, tout en assurant le bien-être des groupes défavorisés. Mon ministère s'est efforcé de mettre en place de nombreuses mesures, structures et mécanismes pour la mise en œuvre des diverses recommandations issues du Plan Marshall, visant à éliminer la pauvreté et l'exclusion, à promouvoir une croissance inclusive et à faciliter le progrès social.

Madame la présidente, le gouvernement s'est engagé à créer un nouveau modèle économique et mon ministère n'a ménagé aucun effort pour apporter les changements nécessaires afin de répondre aux aspirations sociales de nos citoyens vulnérables. Il est donc important de noter que, pour permettre l'exécution du Plan Marshall, le gouvernement a adopté the *Social Integration and Empowerment Act 2016*.

Une première du genre, cette loi prévoit la mise en place de programmes d'autonomisation destinés aux personnes qui se trouvent dans l'extrême pauvreté afin de faciliter leur intégration dans la société tout en améliorant leur qualité de vie de manière durable. En même temps, cette réforme vise à réorganiser le système des subventions sociales afin de le rendre plus efficace et plus favorable aux personnes les plus vulnérables en introduisant le *Social Registry of Mauritius*, connu comme le *SRM*.

Depuis 2016, mon ministère a travaillé sans relâche pour atteindre les familles vulnérables pour qu'elles soient finalement inscrites sur le *SRM* afin de bénéficier aux diverses subventions et supports. Aujourd'hui, environ 11,000 familles bénéficient de nombreuses «*income support*» et «*empowerment support*» à travers un contrat social.

Madame la présidente, ce budget va encore plus loin pour accueillir et intégrer dans le Plan Marshall quelque 5,000 familles, bénéficiaires d'une aide sociale. Cette transition leur

permettra sans aucun doute de devenir des bénéficiaires du *SRM*, de manière à pouvoir bénéficier d'un soutien nettement supérieur et à renforcer leur capacité à sortir de la pauvreté. Il est également intéressant de noter ici que le plan Marshall cible les familles vivant dans la pauvreté absolue et dont l'éligibilité est déterminée par un «*Proxy Means Test*» qui évalue le niveau de vie des ménages enregistrés dans le *SRM*.

Cette approche nous permet de considérer les divers caractéristiques démographiques et socio-économiques des ménages, par exemple, l'âge, la composition de la famille, le nombre d'enfants, d'adultes, personnes âgées, ainsi que leurs conditions de vie et de logement.

Dans le même élan, en 2016, le gouvernement a instauré de nouveaux seuils de pauvreté absolue fondés sur un seuil minimal de R 2,720 et un maximal de R 9,520 par adulte. Ces seuils de pauvreté ont été calculés à 40% au-dessus du seuil de la pauvreté internationale. Il est important de souligner que ce gouvernement a adopté une approche plus humaine et a osé aller au-delà du niveau prescrit par la Banque Mondiale qui est de R 1,938 par personne - par mois pour les pays en voie de développement.

En vue d'améliorer les conditions de vie et l'environnement des familles vulnérables qui vivent dans la pauvreté absolue et d'éliminer l'exclusion sociale, mon ministère a proposé la mise en œuvre d'une série de programmes d'autonomisation à la fois pour Maurice et Rodrigues.

Madame la présidente, lorsque le revenu d'un ménage a été jugé inférieur par rapport au seuil de pauvreté respectif, la différence est versée en termes d'indemnité mensuelle, le «*monthly subsistence allowance*». A ce jour, environ 11,000 familles du *SRM* sont éligibles sous ce programme.

L'objectif de cette allocation est de répondre aux besoins de base des personnes vivant dans la pauvreté absolue. En adoptant tout simplement une telle mesure, Madame la présidente, nous pouvons dire avec fierté que nous éliminons la pauvreté absolue. Depuis décembre 2016, mon ministère a décaissé des fonds à hauteur de R 558 millions en termes d'allocation de subsistance en faveur des 11,000 familles qui se trouvent au bas de l'échelle, notamment les bénéficiaires éligibles du registre social.

Madame la présidente, Nelson Mandela avait raison de dire, et je cite: «*Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world*».

Le Plan Marshall met l'accent sur l'autonomisation économique et éducative des personnes vivant dans l'extrême pauvreté. Une scolarisation irrégulière et la faible performance académique sont les caractéristiques prédominantes de nos enfants issus des familles vulnérables. Nous sommes conscients que bon nombre de familles sont victimes de multiples manquements tels qu'un faible niveau éducatif des parents, familles nombreuses, emploi précaire et des fléaux sociaux tels que l'alcoolisme et la toxicomanie.

Madame la présidente, sous le «*Child Allowance Scheme*» nous avons mis en place un système informatique fiable avec le soutien du ministère de l'Éducation pour un suivi de taux de présence de nos bénéficiaires.

Ce gouvernement est pleinement conscient que l'éducation est la clé de la lutte contre la pauvreté. Dans le cadre de ce programme, un paiement mensuel est effectué en faveur des enfants scolarisés âgés de trois et pas plus de 23 ans, qui ont atteint au moins 90% de présence scolaire. Ce programme encourage les familles éligibles à envoyer les enfants à l'école pour qu'ils puissent compléter leurs études et améliorer leurs perspectives d'embauche.

Depuis janvier 2017, l'allocation mensuelle aux enfants scolarisés a augmenté progressivement, passant de R 862 à R 893 en 2018 et finalement à R 929 en 2019. Depuis janvier 2017, quelques R 214 millions ont été versés à environ 12,000 enfants de bénéficiaires de *SRM*.

Madame la présidente, le «*School Premium Scheme*» introduit par mon ministère en 2017 est attribué aux étudiants qui ont réussi leur SC ou HSC, avec une récompense financière de R 25,000 et de R 35,000 respectivement. L'objectif de ce plan consiste essentiellement à améliorer leurs résultats et à compléter leurs cycles scolaires afin de les encourager à atteindre un niveau d'éducation supérieur.

Cette prime a été calculée de telle sorte qu'elle soit suffisamment attrayante pour favoriser l'achèvement des études secondaires ou supérieures et pour fournir aux bénéficiaires de ressources suffisantes pour investir dans des activités indépendantes ou dans les PME. Pour la période 2016-2018, un montant total de R 20 millions a été versé en faveur de plus de 700 étudiants dans le cadre de ce programme.

Les honorables membres de cette Assemblée voudront peut-être noter que, à partir de l'année prochaine, le programme sera étendu aux élèves qui termineront avec succès leur *Nine-Year Schooling*. De ce fait, ils auront droit à une récompense de R 15,000. Dans le

cadre de ce budget, le gouvernement va encore plus loin en proposant une récompense de R 40,000 aux étudiants qui termineront avec succès leurs études supérieures.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère a également mis en œuvre la «*Free Examination Fees Scheme*» avec succès depuis 2017. Ce programme offre une deuxième chance aux étudiants qui veulent améliorer leurs résultats scolaires.

Pour les années académiques 2017 et 2018, un montant de R 3 millions a été alloué à 531 étudiants sous ce programme.

Dans le même ordre d'idées, Madame la présidente, mon ministère continue de fournir un soutien éducatif sous forme de matériel scolaire, comprenant des cartables, deux ensembles d'uniformes, des chaussures, des cahiers, des chaussettes et d'autres accessoires aux enfants du préscolaire, primaire, secondaire et à ceux du pré-voc, afin de les encourager à aller à l'école.

Jusqu'ici, autour de R 36 millions et R 44 millions ont été versés à environ 18,000 bénéficiaires pour les années académiques 2018 et 2019 respectivement.

Pour la prochaine année scolaire, dans un souci de confort des élèves, mon ministère envisage d'enrichir la liste du matériel scolaire. Nous prévoyons des articles supplémentaires, tels qu'une paire de chaussures et ensembles d'uniformes additionnels afin de faire face aux conditions climatiques instables.

Ce qui est important de souligner, c'est que nous avons introduit un élément de parité parmi les enfants appartenant aux diverses classes sociales.

Madame la présidente, le «*Crèche Scheme*» mis en place en février 2017 vise à permettre aux mères d'enfants de 3 mois à 3 ans de les placer dans des crèches dûment enregistrées, leur permettant ainsi d'entreprendre un emploi ou une formation en vue de leur autonomisation.

Dans le cadre de ce programme, les familles monoparentales et les jeunes mamans éligibles peuvent bénéficier indirectement d'un montant maximal de R 2000 par mois, qui sont payés directement aux crèches en faveur de chaque enfant admis.

Il est bon de faire ressortir que ce programme a une incidence importante sur la vie des mères célibataires qui luttent pour gagner leur vie et élever leurs bébés dans un environnement approprié.

Madame la présidente, en bref, avec ce plan Marshall le gouvernement a abandonné le modèle traditionnel fondé uniquement sur le « *Cash Transfer* » en faveur d'une approche centrée autour de la famille en fonction de leurs besoins.

La somme totale des fonds versés pour tous les différents types de soutien est passée de R 198 millions en 2016/17 à R 336 millions en 2017/18 pour finalement atteindre la somme de R 387 millions en 2018/19.

C'est une indication claire de notre dévouement de servir les plus méritants afin qu'ils sortent de la pauvreté et s'intègrent la société d'une manière durable. Nous avons en exécution un assortiment de solutions pratiques pour résoudre les divers défis qui se posent aujourd'hui et une approche cohérente permettant de s'attaquer aux défis évolutifs du futur.

Une telle approche a introduit une notion de responsabilité des deux côtés. Alors que les bénéficiaires s'engagent à changer leur comportement actuel, le gouvernement s'engage à leur fournir les moyens de le faire.

Dans ce modèle, les bénéficiaires deviennent des collaborateurs actifs qui cherchent à être indépendants et à mener une vie productive.

Madame la présidente, *over and above*, toute une gamme de services en matière de formation professionnelle, d'emploi, de santé et de programmes d'épanouissement de la famille est également proposée par les principaux ministères aux familles bénéficiaires afin de les mener vers une autonomisation.

La formation et l'emploi sont des éléments essentiels pour lesquels, nous en sommes convaincus, pourraient jouer un rôle important dans l'autonomisation des familles vulnérables.

Nos bénéficiaires sans emploi sont référés au ministère du Travail pour être enregistrés comme chômeurs et se voit proposer de la formation et du placement appropriés.

Par ailleurs, le « *Mauritius Institute of Training and Development* » offre des possibilités de formation aux bénéficiaires dans divers domaines tels que les installations électriques, la plomberie et le ménage domestique.

Une allocation mensuelle de R 5,000 et une indemnité de déplacement de R 1,000 durant la formation sont offertes. De plus, une boîte à outils leur est également fournie pour leur permettre de créer leur propre entreprise.

Madame la présidente, dans la même foulée, 21 *job fairs* ont été organisés pour cette année financière pour regrouper les employeurs potentiels et les bénéficiaires en vue de possibilités d'emploi et de formation.

La tenue de ces *job fairs* à travers l'île est un outil important pour créer des opportunités pour les demandeurs d'emploi. Jusqu'à présent, quelque 3,461 bénéficiaires ont assisté aux forums et ont été référés à des employeurs potentiels. Récemment, je pense encore une fois au député Armance qui est venu dire que nous faisons du *fancy fair*, nous faisons des toboggans pour les enfants. Et voilà, les chiffres en parlent, 3,461 bénéficiaires ont assisté à ces forums et ont été réfères à des employeurs potentiels.

Une formation dans les domaines générateurs de revenus est dispensée aux bénéficiaires dans les domaines de l'apiculture, la coiffure, des soins de beauté, de la fabrication de sacs écologiques, de l'élevage de volailles et du jardinage.

Grâce au *MITD* ou d'autres prestataires de formation, notamment le « *National Cooperative College* », quelque 1,236 bénéficiaires ont été formés dans les domaines suivants : la pâtisserie, la fabrication de chaussures, le nettoyage domestique, l'apiculture, la production d'œufs de caille, le projet avicole, le projet de jardinage, l'agriculture, les soins de beauté et application de henné et la fabrication de sacs écologiques.

Madame la présidente, il est important de reconnaître que la formation pour la fabrication de sacs écologiques attire de nombreuses femmes. Plus de 350 bénéficiaires ont été formés dans ce domaine. Mon ministère encourage les stagiaires à opérer par le biais de coopératives et envisage de leur fournir les kits de démarrage nécessaires pour lancer leurs activités.

Madame la présidente, conformément à cet « engouement artisanal » pour la fabrication de sacs écologiques, la *National Empowerment Foundation* a obtenu une somme de plus de R 500,000 du Fonds du Haut-Commissariat de la Nouvelle-Zélande pour la mise en œuvre du projet «Autonomisation des femmes vulnérables grâce à l'esprit d'entreprise - Initiatives de renforcement des capacités » pour la période allant de juillet 2019 à juin 2020.

Le projet consiste à dispenser une formation avancée à la fabrication de sacs écologiques à quelque 70 familles dont la chef de ménage est une femme.

A la fin de leur formation terminée, elles recevront des machines à coudre et éventuellement elles seront référées aux institutions compétentes pour l'enregistrement de leur permis d'opération.

Madame la présidente, les activités récréatives et de loisirs, la formation « *Life Skills* » forment aussi du processus d'autonomisation de nos bénéficiaires.

A ce jour, plus de 2000 enfants ont participé à des activités récréatives et sportives, notamment au concours *Unveiling Talents* en 2018 – merci l'honorable Toussaint - qui a mis en vedette de jeunes artistes talentueux.

Afin de renforcer l'autonomisation des enfants des familles vulnérables grâce à des activités de loisirs, mon ministère a aussi mis en place le programme « *Boot Camp* ».

Le concept de *Boot Camp* est un camp d'apprentissage et de loisirs, destiné aux enfants âgés de 12 à 15 ans et pour lequel mon ministère bénéficie entièrement du soutien de la police, de la *SMF* et du *Mauritius Scouts Association*.

La première édition du projet '*Boot Camp*' s'est tenue durant le premier weekend du mois de juin où 45 enfants ont passé trois jours à Pointe Jérôme Youth Training Centre à Mahébourg.

L'objectif est d'inculquer un sens de responsabilités, de promouvoir l'estime de soi, et la confiance chez les enfants issus de familles difficiles ou brisées ou qui affichent des comportements anti-sociaux. Plusieurs *Boot Camps* seront organisés dans les mois à venir.

Madame la présidente, personnellement, depuis 2017, j'ai accompagné, à chaque fois, une trentaine d'enfants à faire le tour de l'île Maurice à pied et ceci des fois dans les situations difficiles. C'était pour consolider, de créer ce *team spirit*, l'expérience a été tellement enrichissante et valorisante. Ce n'est pas seulement les enfants qui ont changé mais le comportement des parents ont considérablement changé.

Le « *Life Enhancement Education Programme* » (LEEP) est un autre outil qui contribue à changer et à transformer la mentalité des bénéficiaires en vue d'un avenir meilleur.

Jusqu'à présent, quelque 450 bénéficiaires ont suivi une formation *Life Skills* sous le LEEP à travers la République de Maurice et quelque 1,600 bénéficiaires seront formés durant la prochaine année financière.

Plus de 2,000 bénéficiaires ont participé à des exercices de dépistage de santé à travers l'île et de nombreux bénéficiaires ont reçu du matériel médical, tels que des kits de premiers soins et des lunettes, entre autres.

Environ 1,000 bénéficiaires ont obtenu des aides de mon ministère, telles que des produits alimentaires, des appareils électriques, des matelas et des meubles. Je me souviens même une fois qu'on était en train de donner des matelas, l'honorable Armance est allé se mettre debout pour prendre des photos, à distribuer mes matelas. Tant mieux!

Madame la présidente, il est important de noter qu'avec la mise en œuvre du Plan Marshall, mon ministère s'est engagé dans l'implémentation du concept de *Case Management*. Cette approche nous permet de promouvoir le suivi et l'accompagnement nécessaire de nos bénéficiaires, contrairement à une approche d'assistanat et vise aussi à éliminer la pauvreté intergénérationnelle.

Madame la présidente, le lancement du concept «*Community Working Group*», dans tous les districts de Maurice et à Rodrigues, est une nouvelle approche offrant une excellente plateforme pour regrouper des partenaires des secteurs privés et publics, des représentants des ONG et de la société civile. Cette plateforme nous permet de mieux utiliser nos ressources sur le terrain pour l'avancement de la communauté.

Madame la présidente, le budget 2019-2020 fait la part belle à l'innovation et à la technologie. Conformément à la vision du gouvernement, mon ministère s'est déjà lancé dans deux grands projets visant à améliorer la communication et la prestation des services aux plus démunis.

Selon les recommandations du Plan Marshall, mon ministère a mis au point un système de «*SMS Mobile System et Citizens Reporting Mechanism*» qui permet de mieux communiquer avec les familles les plus exclus. La mise en place d'un tel mécanisme permettra également à mon ministère d'évaluer l'impact des services publics offerts aux familles vulnérables. Le coût estimé du projet est de Rs 3,5 millions et devrait être opérationnel d'ici la fin de juin.

Pour assurer l'innovation, je suis ravi d'apprendre que le présent budget prévoit un accès totalement gratuit à Internet haut débit pour les 11,000 familles du *SRM*. Ce sera un grand pas conséquent vers une île Maurice plus connectée. Un projet qui sera financé conjointement par le gouvernement et la Mauritius Telecom.

Un autre projet innovateur est la création d'un *Integrated Management Information System* à la NEF. Une recommandation qui figure également dans le Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté. Cela permettra de rendre la *NEF* plus efficace et efficient dans ses opérations et

d'améliorer et de renforcer son système de back-office. Le coût du projet est estimé à R 25 millions et la date prévue pour son lancement est 1^{er} juillet 2019.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère a également œuvré dans la création d'une unité technique et au recrutement du personnel approprié pour la gestion des programmes d'autonomisation du Plan Marshall et à la réalisation d'un suivi et d'une évaluation des bénéficiaires. Dans le même ordre d'idée, la *NEF* a été complètement restructurée en 2018, exercice qui se faisait attendre depuis longtemps et qui a stimulé le dynamisme et l'enthousiasme de ses employés.

Comme l'a déclaré l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, un logement décent pour chaque famille figure en bonne place à l'ordre du jour de ce gouvernement. A cet égard, mon ministère prévoit un logement aux familles les plus vulnérables afin qu'ils puissent vivre dans des conditions décentes. Nous conviendrons tous qu'un logement décent est une condition préalable à la réussite d'une famille dans la lutte contre la pauvreté et à la restauration de sa dignité. Nous ne voulons pas que les familles vulnérables restent dans la pauvreté de génération en génération. Autant que je me souvienne, quand le *leader* de l'Opposition était au ministère de l'Intégration sociale, il avait fait construire quelque 1,000 maisons en tôle, bois, sans toilettes, sans cuisine. Bon, nous avons appris des erreurs et nous faisons mieux aujourd'hui. Il faut absolument que nous aidons ces familles et c'est sur la bonne voie.

Donc, ces logements que nous construisons sont entièrement en béton, d'une superficie maximale de 50 m² en faveur de familles propriétaires d'un terrain, mais n'ayant pas les moyens de construire une maison. Cette politique leur permet de bénéficier d'un coût subventionné de l'État de 75% et de ne rembourser que 25% du coût total d'une unité de logement sur une période de 15 à 20 ans. A ce jour, nous avons déjà construit et livré une centaine de logements entièrement en béton. Je dis bien une centaine de logements entièrement en béton.

En 2018-2019, nous avons également lancé quatre autres projets de logement dans l'île, pour un montant total estimé à R 133 millions. De nouveaux appels d'offres seront lancés au début du prochain exercice financier. Une provision de R 80 millions a été prévue dans ce sens. Je dois avouer que la construction des maisons entièrement en béton pour les bénéficiaires, propriétaires de terrain, n'a pas été une tâche facile. Chaque site a ses propres

spécificités et de nombreuses manœuvres ont dû être effectuées avant que leurs maisons sortent de terre.

En vue de venir en aide aux bénéficiaires qui ne possèdent pas de terrain, et qui souhaitent avoir une maison, le gouvernement a mis au point une politique visant à mettre à la disposition 10% de toutes les maisons construites par la *NHDC* aux familles éligibles sous le *SRM* afin de faciliter leur intégration dans la société.

Dans le cadre de ce programme, mon ministère a déjà acquis 34 unités de logement *NHDC*. D'ici décembre 2019, 210 logements entièrement construits en béton, dont 67 logements relevant de la *NHDC*, seront fournis aux familles qui sont sur la liste *SRM*. D'ici décembre 2020, nous atteindrons un total de 512 unités de logement entièrement en béton, dont 188 unités de logement supplémentaires de la *NHDC*.

Dans le cadre de ce budget, je suis heureux d'apprendre que 6,000 logements dotés de toutes les facilités nécessaires seront construits par la *NHDC* pour répondre aux besoins des familles à faible revenu. Ceux-ci seront situés dans les immeubles à pas plus de six étages et seront construits sur 16 sites à travers le pays au cours des trois prochaines années.

Madame la présidente, mon ministère s'emploie également à moderniser les logements existants des bénéficiaires de *SRM* jusqu'à une valeur R 85,000 pour les travaux de rénovation mineure, tels que la fourniture d'accessoires sanitaires des salles de bains, le remplacement du toit, l'extension, la réparation des maisons en tôle et le carrelage, l'accès à l'eau potable, à l'électricité et au système de tout-à-l'égout sont également une priorité. Nous prévoyons aussi une autre intervention concernant l'amélioration du cadre de vie de nos bénéficiaires. Par conséquent, le Plan Marshall introduit par ce gouvernement prévoit un ensemble intégré d'initiatives comprenant l'éducation, la santé, la protection sociale, l'emploi et le logement social en vue de sortir les citoyens les plus vulnérables de la pauvreté extrême. Le Plan Marshall met l'accent sur l'éducation et la formation pour permettre aux femmes, aux hommes, aux jeunes et aux enfants d'acquérir les compétences dont ils ont besoin pour tirer parti de nouveaux débouchés économiques.

Le Plan Marshall donne l'importance à l'amélioration des zones défavorisées, notamment les infrastructures, les installations, les services et la gouvernance. Il est aussi vital de donner aux familles faisant face aux multiples difficultés, les moyens de gérer les risques et de réduire ceux auxquels ils sont confrontés.

En outre, il est toujours nécessaire de renforcer les capacités collectives locales et de nos institutions qui donneront à ces familles confiance, sécurité et pouvoir - autant d'atouts précieux pour sortir de la pauvreté. Une intégrité sans compromis, une rigueur implacable et une communication précise sont à la base de toutes nos activités. Nous sommes méticuleux avec chaque programme, chaque politique, chaque projet que nous sommes chargés d'exécuter.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de vous donner un aperçu de quelques mesures mises en œuvre récemment par le gouvernement et qui ont entraîné des changements significatifs dans la vie de nos citoyens. Il y a eu le programme de *Negative Income Tax* dont on a longuement parlé et j'en passe. Bien sûr, il y a eu le salaire minimum pour quelques 120,000 travailleurs

Madam Speaker, the multidimensional and complex problem of poverty cannot be addressed by Government alone. With a view to promoting an enabling environment for public, private and civil society partnerships as a means of supporting the poor and vulnerable groups, the Minister of Finance had, in his Budget Speech 2016/2017, announced a new CSR framework.

The National CSR Foundation was set up under the aegis of my Ministry in December 2016 to ensure greater transparency in the use of CSR funds and better social outcomes. The advent of the National CSR Foundation has also provided a breathing space for NGOs involved in delivering service targeting the poor and vulnerable segments of the population in complementarity with public services. As at date, the National CSR Foundation has approved 510 projects and programmes of NGOs for an amount of Rs517 m.

Madam Speaker, another bold measure that was announced in the Budget 2018-2019 was the introduction of a coordinated approach with regard to disbursement of funds to NGOs where the National CSR Foundation (NCSR) was entrusted with the role of central body to receive and allocate public funds to NGOs. The aim of this measure was to -

- ensure to a better integration of social services and programme provided by NGOs;
- eliminate duplication and fragmentation;
- provide better control, monitoring and evaluation of funds allocated to NGO services and programmes, and
- ensure better outcomes for disadvantaged individuals and families.

This measure has been successfully implemented since January 2019. As at date, the NCSR Foundation has disbursed an amount of Rs146 m. to NGOs under the centrally managed initiative.

Madam Speaker, other measures that were announced in the Budget 2018-2019 concerned the amendments that were brought to the Income Tax Act in respect of the CSR contribution to be made by companies and the approval by the Foundation of CSR programmes of companies to enable them to retain the amount representing 25% of CSR funds to be remitted to the MRA effective from 01 January 2019. This measure has also been successfully implemented in January 2019 after consultations with the private companies. As at date, the National CSR Foundation has approved an amount of Rs8.9 m. for 28 CSR projects from 24 private companies.

Madam Speaker, in its further consolidation of the social institutional framework to drive a national agenda for inclusive human and social development as a means to tackling the deep-rooted causes of poverty and vulnerability that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has announced the transformation of the National CSR Foundation into a National Social Inclusion Foundation. This will give a new orientation to the Foundation in terms of National Programmes aligned to Government strategies and actions and ensure better social actions. The National Social Inclusion Foundation will also support the professionalisation of NGOs and enable the development of a strong, vibrant and sustainable NGO sector as requested by NGOs themselves during pre-budget consultations. This process is taking shape with the classification of NGOs as Community-based organisations and the “*Utilités Publiques*”.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the fight against poverty can only be successful with the contribution of the public and private sectors, including the civil society. This Budget places considerable emphasis on the social aspects, including promoting the health of Mauritians, raising their purchasing power, widening opportunities for SMEs, creating prospects for higher and better education, enhancing gender equality and assistance to senior citizens. All these sectoral measures and programmes are paving the way, in one way or the other, to help towards alleviating poverty and increasing social justice. The wide array of measures, as laid down in the Budget, have crosscutting benefits for our beneficiaries as well as the public at large and contribute towards sustained socio-economic development and progress.

Madam Speaker, investments in social and human capital have always been key fundamentals for human development and I personally applaud the proposal made by the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to provide free tertiary education which is yet another crucial step to democratise access to higher studies for the vulnerable groups.

To better support vulnerable children and raise their performance standards, the Budget makes provision for the setting up a fortified learning environment unit. Such a proposal will no doubt expand access to learning points and services to children of low-income household in deprived regions with the aim of improving their school readiness and performance.

I am confident that students under SRM will benefit from opportunities in the vocational field and training as well as in the extended programme. Added to this, provision has been made for a total amount of Rs138 m. to be allocated to NGOs running Special Education Needs Schools.

Madam Speaker, today the old age pension stands at Rs6,210 compared to only Rs3,623 in 2014. This has made a significantly positive difference in the lives of thousands of our elderly. And, it is in the same spirit that this Government has announced a further increase of Rs500 on the monthly old age as from January 2010 to bring the old age pension to Rs6,710 per month. This increase in the old age pension will certainly improve the life of all our senior citizens.

Je vais bientôt terminer. Madame la présidente, permettez-moi d'aborder la situation au niveau de ma circonscription, Port Louis Nord/Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest.

(Interruptions)

On dira ce qu'on veut, mais personne ne peut nier le fait que durant 20 ans, peut-être un peu plus, la circonscription No.1 était dans un état d'abandon. Allez-y n'importe où vous verrez ce que diront les gens. Pendant 20 ans, pas un seul projet de développement n'avait été vraiment initié pour améliorer les conditions de vie des habitants. Depuis 20 ans, cette circonscription n'a eu aucune considération, ni une oreille attentive au sein du gouvernement. Je l'ai mentionné parce que nous sommes dans l'Opposition. *Nou la main enbas roche.*

(Interruptions)

Exactement!

Depuis 20 ans, cette circonscription, donc, comme je dis, la situation était telle qu'on pouvait voir des *eyesores* à chaque coin de rue. N'est-ce pas ?

Les habitants de Canal Dayot vivaient de façon permanente dans un cauchemar. Leur maison était inondée à chaque fois qu'il y avait des grosses averses. Aujourd'hui au moins ils savent que nous sommes là à n'importe quelle situation de détresse. Nous organisons régulièrement des équipes de secours.

Savez-vous, Madame la présidente, que la circonscription No.1 est entourée de neuf plages? C'est la seule ville de l'île Maurice où il y a neuf plages, mais personne ne s'en rendait compte parce que ces plages été abandonnées. Elles étaient dans un état déplorable. Il y avait des arbres et on ne pouvait même pas voir les plages ; elles étaient dépourvues de toutes les facilités, telles que toilettes publiques et éclairage. Je me suis fait un devoir personnellement et depuis décembre 2014 la situation a changé. Ce n'est plus la même. Le visage de la circonscription No. 1 a drastiquement changé par le biais d'un développement soutenu à différents niveaux. Aujourd'hui, tous ceux et celles qui connaissent cette région vous diront que le train de développement est enfin passé par la circonscription No. 1. D'ailleurs, si vous allez sur les *websites*, sur des *sites* vous verrez le nombre de maisons, des IRS qui sont en train d'être construites, en vente dans la région de Pointe aux Sables. C'est une bonne indication et c'est cela même que j'avais promis, que la situation économique allait s'améliorer. Je suis venu dans cette circonscription pour améliorer la situation économique. Voilà ce que nous sommes en train de faire.

(Interruptions)

Mais non, il le sait ! Parce que quand j'ai été faire la campagne électorale, en 2014, je me souviens – avec l'honorable Patrice Armance bien sûr - qu'il m'avait interdit de venir dans les cités. Il m'a dit, *fer attention gagn coupé. Pas marche tousel*. Il m'avait réclamé même une somme énorme que j'avais présentée à mon leader d'alors, R 300,000 pour ma sécurité. Alors, je lui ai dit: *donn moi R 150,000, je vais t'assurer la sécurité si tu veux*. Je lui ai toujours dit...

(Interruptions)

Je l'ai présenté à l'époque, il ne faut pas le nier. On est là, c'est de bonne guerre. Il faut savoir. C'est la vérité, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, please don't engage in conversation with any other hon. Member.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: En quatre ans, chaque quartier que compose cette circonscription, on peut dire qu'il y a eu une amélioration pour changer la vie de ces habitants. Dans cette même ordre d'idée, des gros projets ont été lancés avec l'aide du gouvernement, la NDU, la municipalité de Port Louis et le soutien de toutes les agences gouvernementales. Je me souviens même – là, je vois mon collègue qui est à côté de moi - que nous avons organisé des journées sportives, ce qui a été extraordinaire et il y a eu un succès magnifique. A titre d'exemple, Madame, les neuf plages de ma circonscription sont devenues un lieu de rendez-vous pour les habitants. Surtout durant les weekends et même pendant l'été. Cela me fait tellement plaisir de voir les gens traversant le chemin avec leur petite table, allant sur la plage. Maintenant, je suis confronté à un autre problème avec les habitants. Ils me font des reproches. Vous savez pourquoi? Parce que les plages sont devenues tellement belles que les gens sortent des autres endroits et viennent à la plage devant chez eux.

(Interruptions)

Je suis en train de trouver d'autres alternatives, et grâce au ministre Seeruttun que nous avons approché, nous sommes en train de découvrir d'autres endroits qui peuvent être des lieux de récréations extraordinaires.

(Interruptions)

Vous savez, Madame la présidente, nous sommes en train de faire le projet de la Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest, un lieu magique, un lieu historique avec ces ponts, ces pierres. Demain, ce sera un lieu où les familles pourront aller faire du kayak, pourront aller faire des pédalos, ils pourront faire du pique-nique, il y aura même une scène permanente, il y aura des toilettes et voilà, nous allons...

(Interruptions)

Non seulement les plages, à l'intérieur de Maurice, elle possède des trésors qui a été ignorés. Heureusement, aujourd'hui avec le ministre Seeruttun, le Premier ministre, nous avons à cœur de voir les mauriciens trouver des espaces de loisirs, de l'espace pour pouvoir faire des activités physiques, c'est cela que nous voulons, que notre peuple soient des citoyens responsables, des citoyens en bonne santé, c'est pour cela que nous investissons énormément sur le sport, l'éducation, le loisir, l'*outdoor*.

Les habitants de Canal Dayot sont désormais rassurés et peuvent dormir sur leurs deux oreilles, puisque le drainage de la rivière St Louis se fait d'une façon régulière parce que le

contrat par le ministre de l'Environnement est fait et nous suivons le contracteur afin que ça se fait.

Le jardin Les Salines, qui ne s'en souvient pas ! Moi si, durant mon enfance, Madame la présidente, et je suis sûr que vous aussi et d'autres encore ont connu Les Salines magiques, avec ces canons, nous prenons même des photos ; j'ai même de vieilles photos. Quand je suis arrivé en 2014, c'était une horreur. Les gens qui habitaient à 50 mètres ne voulaient même pas s'aventurer pour aller près de France Martin, tellement c'est indescriptible. Allez-y aujourd'hui, dès vendredi soir à dimanche soir, vous n'avez pas de place.

(Interruptions)

Bien sûr, parce que c'est propre maintenant, Madame la présidente. C'est tellement joli, tellement propre, nous avons refait le jardin alors que j'étais ministre de l'Environnement ; j'ai fait nettoyer les canaux, couper les arbres et montrer comment élaguer les arbres. Maintenant c'est un lieu agréable et ça nous fait plaisir encore une fois de voir toute cette famille de Pailles qui viennent vers Les Salines.

On a parlé de la piscine de Les Salines. Nous savons très bien que cette piscine est en état de rénovation à la demande des clubs qui sont là. Ils sont venus me féliciter avec les photos à l'appui, peut-être que j'ai là avec moi, le club de Sharks et tout le reste. Ce sont les anciens nageurs qui étaient avec moi à l'époque, ils savent de quoi on parle quand on veut améliorer le système.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, as far as I can recall, you have already taken the floor. Right! You had the opportunity to say whatever you wished. Now, it is time for the hon. Minister to intervene and please do not interrupt him!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Madame la présidente, on vient de me donner un papier et j'ai deux minutes. Pouvez-vous me donner deux heures, s'il vous plaît, parce que j'ai tellement...

Madam Speaker : Deux heures ?

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Oui, parce que j'ai tellement de projets qui sont là...

(Interruptions)

Mais je ne peux pas, comment...

Madam Speaker: I am sorry, you have one hour, I believe, you should respect the time allocated.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Yes, but it is not...

Madam Speaker: I can give you one additional minute.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Unfortunately, I can't table these actions that I have made. There are so many things that we have done there.

Madam Speaker: One additional minute! I won't be able to give you more than that.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Okay, then let me end up with two little things. I heard hon. Ganoo saying about the bad weather allocation of Rs30 for the fishermen which is not enough. Of course, we understand. When we look at Rs30 by itself, it's really a mere sum of what you can do with that *mais quand nous réalisons, qu'avec les R 340 et ajoutant, donc ca devient maintenant à R 340, Madame la présidente, pour le bad weather allocation par jour. Et si nous le multiplions par 30, cela nous fait R 10,200 par mois parce qu'un pêcheur ne peut pas travailler, il recevra Rs10,200 par mois et quel est le seuil du minimum wage ? R 8,500 !* Donc c'est au-delà de ce que nous voyons. Moi tout ce que j'ai à dire c'est qu'il y a certaines personnes qui devraient descendre de leur tour d'ivoire et de venir voir les choses telles qu'elles sont. Madame la présidente, vous avez demandé d'éviter de parler de la visite de Sa Sainteté Nous nous réjouissons de cette visite parce que cela va nous apporter beaucoup pour le peuple mauricien. Nous souhaitons qu'à la venue de Sa Sainteté Le Pape, il va enfin canoniser notre Bienheureux Jacques Désiré Laval. Nous savons très bien qu'il y a énormément de gens de toutes les religions, et d'autres regions tels que Madagascar, Les Seychelles, La Réunion qui viennent à Maurice pour prier. Bien sûr, nous allons bénéficier de tout cela, de la venue du Pape et nous prions pour cela.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I had given a ruling earlier to say that this has been sufficiently canvassed, it has been debated. All hon. Members had the opportunity to say something about that, but out of respect for His Holiness, I don't think we should bring this in debate again.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: *Mes excuses*, Madam Speaker. Last but not least, I will say something about the Chagossians. Je ne sais pas si les membres de cette Assemblée se souviennent de ce qui s'est passé le 16 novembre 2016. Le gouvernement Britannique avait offert une compensation de £40 millions.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I am really sorry! It is very late; you have had ample time to talk. I gave you one additional minute, instead now you have started another speech. I don't think you will be able to do with that. I would ask you to wind up your speech to make your concluding remarks.

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Okay. I thank this Assembly for allowing me to do my speech. Thank you very much.

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

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 21 June 2019 at 3.00 p.m.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 1.49 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 21 June 2019 at 3.00 p.m.