



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 06 MARCH 2020

CONTENTS

PAPERS LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTIONS

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

ADJOURNMENT

THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

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

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

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 07 of 2020

Sitting of Friday 06 March 2020

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis, at 3.00 p.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table.

A. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Government for the Financial year 2018-19.
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Accounts of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for the Financial Year 2018-19.
- (c) The Certificate of the Director of Audit on the Annual Statements of Government for Financial Year 2018-19.
- (d) The Certificate of the Director of Audit on the Annual Statements of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for Financial Year 2018-19.
- (e) The Annual Reports of the Gambling Regulatory Authority for the year ended 31 December 2015 and for the period 01 January 2016 to 30 June 2017.

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

- (a) The Legal Fees and Costs (Amendment) Rules 2020. (Government Notice No. 40 of 2020)
- (b) The Supreme Court (Jury Lists and Panels) (Amendment) Rules 2020. (Government Notice No. 41 of 2020)

C. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Reports of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Morris Legacy Fund for the period 01 January 2015 to 30 June 2016 and for the year ended 30 June 2017.

D. Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Wellness

Eighth Periodic Report submitted by Mauritius under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), to the CEDAW Committee and its Concluding Observation. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**COVID-19 (N CORONAVIRUS) - HEALTH & ECONOMIC RISKS - PANDEMIC
ACTION PLAN**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity whether, in the likely event of a pandemic of COVID-19 (N Coronavirus), he will state if Government has adopted a proportionate approach to the health and economic risks from the virus and, if so, indicate if the details of a Pandemic Action Plan have been announced and circulated.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole country and the entire population are aware of the various actions taken by Government in the face of an outbreak of COVID-19.

I am informed that, as at this morning, there were some 98,429 reported confirmed cases of Coronavirus across the world with 3,387 deaths and 55,641 recovered from the infection according to statistics from the World Health Organisation. There are currently some 40,000 active cases spread across 90 countries worldwide.

Mr Speaker, Sir, WHO has been monitoring the evolution of the COVID-19 since 31 December 2019 once it had been informed by the Chinese Authorities of some cases of pneumonia of unknown origin in Wuhan city and, on 07 January 2020, the Chinese Authorities informed the WHO that they had identified a new Coronavirus as the causative agent.

The House will recall that on 22 January 2020, WHO had assessed the risk of the event to be very high in China, high at regional level and high at global level. On 28 February 2020, WHO assessed the risk of the event to be very high in China and very high at regional and global levels.

Subsequently, as from 22 January 2020, WHO has called upon all Member States to have a preparedness plan to deal with the threats posed by the novel Coronavirus. Accordingly, the Government of Mauritius acted promptly on the call of the WHO and expediently reinforced surveillance at the port and airport in order to ensure that the virus does not enter the Mauritian territory.

Consequently, an Operational Plan on COVID-19 was prepared and circulated to all stakeholders inclusive of the media, private sector, ministries and departments, in particular the port and the airport. The plan comprises –

- (i) a policy response framework;
- (ii) coordination, monitoring and assessment;
- (iii) prevention and containment;
- (iv) health service response, and
- (v) communications.

It presents a collection of protocols to be used by all stakeholders involved in controlling the disease. The Operational Plan, which has been endorsed by the WHO, will also be applicable in case of a pandemic.

With regard to coordination, an inter-sectoral committee chaired by the Minister of Health and Wellness has been established, and the first meeting was held on 28 January 2020. Moreover, a management committee chaired by the Director Health Services, Public Health, has been set up at the same Ministry to monitor the daily activities pertaining to the Operational Plan and effect coordination between the different stakeholders to review the situation and issue interim guidelines and standard operating procedures.

My colleague, the Minister of Health and Wellness, has already, in his reply to Private Notice Question of 03 February 2020, highlighted various measures taken by Government as a direct response to the global threat. Some of the main measures include surveillance at SSR International Airport and at the Seaport and putting on the alert a multi-Sectoral Team and a Rapid Response Team.

I need not over-emphasise the surveillance, vigilance and logistics that are fully operational, and which form an integral part of the Operational Plan established by the Ministry of Health and Wellness on novel Coronavirus (COVID-19).

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have myself so far chaired four meetings of the High Level Committee on COVID-19 to review the situation pertaining to the outbreak of the disease and measures taken by the different concerned authorities. A number of policy decisions was taken to restrict trade and travel from a number of high risk countries such as China, South Korea, Italy and Iran.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the economic risks from the virus, there is already a negative impact on the country, the magnitude of which will depend on the duration and the depth of the crisis.

Globally, the main international institutions have already indicated that growth will be affected. On 02 March 2020, the OECD lowered its growth forecast by 0.5 percentage points and further stated that a “longer-lasting and more intensive Coronavirus outbreak” could slash growth by a further one per cent in 2020.

The IMF has indicated that global economic growth will drop by at least 0.1 per cent. The President of the World Bank, Mr David Malpass, has equally expressed concerns about the impact on global growth.

The IMF and the World Bank have sent out a joint statement on Wednesday 04 March 2020, announcing that they stand ready to help member countries to address the economic challenge posed by the COVID-19 virus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the domestic front, we have been monitoring the impact on the economy. All sectors would be impacted and the most vulnerable ones will be Tourism, Manufacturing, Trade, Financial Sector and Construction.

The Economic Development Board has conducted an economic impact assessment of COVID-19 based on a Computable General Equilibrium model under different scenarios.

Under the baseline scenario, which takes into consideration current travel and trade restrictions that have already been imposed by Government, the negative impact of COVID-19 on GDP growth is estimated to be at least 0.9 percentage points for 2020, of course, depending on the duration and the depth of the crisis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has set up a Working Group, since the first week of February, comprising the Bank of Mauritius, Business Mauritius, MCCI, AHRIM, MEXA, AMM, concerned Ministries as well as other Public Sector Bodies such as the EDB and the MTPA to assess the impact on the various sectors of the economy and come up with a package of mitigating measures.

The Working Group is meeting on a weekly basis since 03 February 2020 under the chairmanship of the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development. Moreover, a core team of specialists from the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the EDB, Statistics Mauritius, MRA and the Bank of Mauritius are working together on a daily basis to monitor the situation.

The Working Group is finalising a series of measures that can help mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning public expenditure, Government has already provided additional funds to the Ministry of Health and Wellness to acquire necessary equipment and medical accessories to cope with COVID-19. This will not compromise Government policy to exercise strict control on budgetary allocation. As regards overseas mission, Government will significantly reduce expenditure under that vote item.

Moreover, Ministries and Public Sector Bodies are expected to achieve efficiency gains of at least 10 per cent on their recurrent expenditure. As I have already announced, the expenditure relating to the National Day Celebrations has been significantly reduced. The expenditure relating to my Office, for example, has been reduced from Rs12 m. to Rs2 m.

In my Press Conference of Wednesday 04 March 2020, I gave a chronology of events that emphasised our vigilance and our preparedness in the face of a threatening epidemic.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the House, and the population at large, that the Government has taken all the necessary measures to strengthen our level of preparedness and response to the Coronavirus threat. We have adopted a collective, coordinated and comprehensive approach, engaging all stakeholders.

We are acting with foresight and speed. We are educating our population so that they know the symptoms and how to protect themselves and others. We have increased our testing capacity. We have prepared our hospital services so that they are able to cope effectively with the threat. We have addressed the issues of essential supplies and training and protection of our health workers and we are monitoring the situation on a daily basis.

Government will spare no effort in preventing the entry of the virus in the country and, if ever it does, we will act aggressively to isolate and contain its spread.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate, as I stated in my Press Conference, that as at now there is no reported case of COVID-19 in the Republic of Mauritius.

Dr. Boolell: Let me thank the hon. Prime Minister for his lengthy reply. I take it for granted, Mr Speaker, Sir, that time will be allotted to all of us to put relevant questions.

And also, right from the outset, I make it quite clear that this is a national challenge, and safety is an overriding priority. Let me reiterate what I have stated outside, that we, on the Opposition, we are willing to be partner in the fight which is being waged on this scourge Coronavirus.

So, can I inform the Prime Minister, since he made an appeal to the Opposition, that we are willing partner and this is a cross-cutting issue, it's a national issue, it's a challenge and, as a nation, we have to live up to this challenge.

The Prime Minister: Yes. I mean, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is always nice to hear what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying in this House, but one must, first of all, be serious, genuine also in the intention that is being expressed.

Why I say this? I do not want to go into details but, look, I was present when the Minister of Health was asked the question on Coronavirus. On two occasions, the hon. Leader of the Opposition asserted that Coronavirus is already in Mauritius. Now, we should not frighten people when this is so far not the case. We never know what can happen tomorrow, but, so far, there is no Coronavirus. And I would ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition, if he has any reliable information - not listening to some Tom, Dick and Harry saying that this is already in Mauritius - and if he is serious, since the time he asked the Minister and made such an assertion, I would have expected him to have communicated this information at least to the Minister or to me so that we could, at least check, and I say this as a patriot.

As patriots, we know what kind of threat is lurking on us because when we can imagine that 90 countries are affected today; 90! And I have said on numerous occasions that we are very vulnerable. There is no such thing as 100% protection. It does not exist, but we are doing whatever we can, and I hope we get the support of everybody on that issue.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I certainly don't want to take the Prime Minister to task, but let remind him that I was the first to flag this issue, and can I remind him that, a week prior to the matter being raised here, I called the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs to remind him of students who were stranded in Wuhan and in other parts of China.

Can I ask him, and I hope that he understands the gravity of the situation; can I impress upon the Prime Minister that, under the circumstances, we have to prepare for the worse and hope for the best, and I would like to know whether, in the Action Plan, all considerations are taken onboard, first all, in respect of stockpiling of medicines and relevant equipment.

The Prime Minister: As regards the first part, it is not a question, it is an assertion again that the...

(Interruptions)

He is stating that...

(Interruptions)

But let me reply! When he was talking, I remained quiet.

(Interruptions)

This is unwarranted from the Leader of the Opposition, but let me state the truth and the fact.

The Leader of the Opposition is saying that he is the first one who has alerted the people and Government. No, not at all!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned - I do not want to repeat so as not to waste the time of the House. On 22 January, WHO had assessed the risk and had called upon all Member States to have a preparedness plan. We acted immediately. I do not want to mention all the dates and what we have been doing. We acted immediately: surveillance at the airport, at the port, and we monitored the situation in order to see what was happening in China initially and then when it started to spread. I have chaired, and it is not only that we chair committee and we fix it as and when it is required, we call upon Ministers and officers together with the representatives of WHO and we meet. In fact, it was already planned. It is not because of this question. A meeting was already planned for this afternoon at five o'clock together with the WHO and so on. So, we are acting.

Now, the Leader of the Opposition is saying: are we prepared? As I say again, we, first of all, draw from the advice that is given by the World Health Organisation. They make recommendations because they know the exact situation, how it is unfolding throughout the world. We also draw from our own experience, because I think we can all remember that we had the former AH1N1 in 2009-2010 and we faced this challenge at that time.

We are lucky to have a number of our officers who are experienced and who have been dealing with such cases, and I must take this opportunity to really thank all those who are working day and night, especially from the Ministry of Health - not only Health, but particularly Health - Customs and at the airport, working day and night, being very vigilant so that we do not have one case in Mauritius.

So, the Minister had replied before to mention the state of preparedness of the country. As I say, there has not been any country anywhere where it can be said to be 100% protected. It is good that maybe I compare and I mention one example. We always mention Singapore as a model; Singapore has done this, Singapore has done that. But Singapore has

so many cases now, and yet they are taking whatever measures they can. But to show that it is impossible to be 100% foolproof, but we are doing whatever needs to be done so that we do not have one case here.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked a specific question and I expected a specific reply from the hon. Prime Minister. I asked whether we have strategic, stockpile of the most important medicines and protective equipment, because I listened to a statement made by the Minister and by the Prime Minister that we do not have more than 30,000 masks. We do not even know whether it is the N95 mask, which is protective, or other masks which can allow bolus of infection and, therefore, we know what the consequences are. So, can I have this reply from the Prime Minister?

The Prime Minister: In terms of medicine, I know we have, presently, a stock from six to nine months of essential drugs. I have been informed that there are further orders that are expected in the months to come. With regard to equipment, we have at present what we call the personal protective equipment for those who are going to deal with such cases; coverall head to ankle, we have 5,400 available right now; we have nitrile gloves; surgical masks; surgical gown; re-usable goggles - it is a bit like the astronaut, you have to cover your head - 300; re-usable face shields, 500.

So, we have a number of those equipment right now, and with regard to masks, there are 20,000 in stock and 10,000 additional are being procured right now. So, we shall be having around 30,000.

Dr. Boolell: Before we move on the economic issue, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister, in respect of contact tracing and follow-up - and this is where there is a loophole - once a case is detected, whether we use the tried and tested procedure for rapid tracing, monitoring and isolation of close contacts, with the aim of preventing further spread? Can I ask him whether this is followed to the strict letter of the application of the protocol? Before I sit, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have here the Action Plan of UK and I would ask the hon. Prime Minister to obtain a copy of this Action Plan to understand fully the merits of taking all measures in respect of surveillance and monitoring.

The Prime Minister: Well, maybe I am more Mauritian. So, I have the Action Plan of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

I can lay it! I shall lay it, of course! This is the Operational Plan and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been validated by the WHO. We learn a lot when we are faced with such threats and challenges. I am told that as the situation will evolve and as there will probably be new, more understanding of this virus, of course, this is not something that is cast stone and probably it will have to be reviewed also, depending on new situation. So, I shall obviously ask - not myself - technical people to have a look at the Operational Plan of the UK. Surely, there must be a lot of very good things in that plan. The question was about....

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: The question was on contact tracing and follow-up.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was also very keen on knowing that we have, in fact, a very effective and efficient system in Mauritius. Even before we have such kind of threats - and I must say, even international institutions have shown and have admired our system here, where people who have travelled from countries where there are, for example, Malaria and other diseases, we have a follow-up and we have them checked to see whether there is any illness. Of course, this is reinforced now in regard to cases where, probably, if we find that there is somebody who has fever at the airport and is coming from a country which is a high-risk, he is immediately quarantined. Somebody who has fever but who is coming from a country which is not a high-risk country, of course, there is this follow-up by officers of the Ministry of Health. And we have been monitoring a number of cases, I am advised, and, so far, there has been no confirmed case yet.

Dr. Boolell: May I inform the hon. Prime Minister that there are many loopholes in relation to monitoring, follow-up and contact tracing. Let me remind him, if I have to give names, I will submit names to the hon. Minister and to him. Can I ask him whether Government has taken onboard the worst-case scenario, where there is the risk that - if there is a worst-case scenario, as I say, we have to prepare for the worst and hope for the best - where 80% of the population can be infected, with a mortality rate of 2%? And this is what UK is doing and other European countries; looking at the worst-case scenario. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether adequate resources have been disbursed to ensure that our regional hospitals or general hospitals are equipped to deal with the problem? Because the consequences are that there may be bunching of patients and there may be battalion of patients going to hospital.

The Prime Minister: Obviously, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are looking at worst-case scenario, that is, if this virus enters our territory and people are infected generally. I must say that, recently, there has been request from the Ministry of Health and Wellness for acquisition of a number of equipment and health accessories. I do not want to give the list because it will take the time of the House, but I can say their estimated total cost is around Rs108 m. So, you can imagine how we are acting and we are not trying to economise on here and there when there is the need, for example, to buy ventilators, masks, portable X-ray machines, infrared thermometers, personal protective equipment, and so on. So, we are putting the necessary resources at the disposal of the Ministry in order to be able to cope with the situation. The Leader of the Opposition should know because - I hope I am not wrong - I think he effected a site visit at New Souillac Hospital. So, this is also planned. Now it is used in order to quarantine a number of people, but in the event that we have the virus and we have to treat patients, it will be converted into a hospital that will cater for such patients. And then, we have other places where we have made provision to quarantine people at Anse-La-Raie and Pointe Jérôme, and I am going to visit the refugee centre at Quatre Soeurs also. At least, we are getting it ready in order to cope with the situation in case there is a worst-case scenario.

They have also mentioned to me that there has been ongoing training of officers with regard to case management and with regard to infection and control programmes.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, although economists are saying that recession is unlikely under the circumstances but not impossible, and the Prime Minister has chaired several committees, can I ask him what are the measures that are going to be allocated to entrepreneurs, knowing perfectly well that they are not able to procure raw materials, that the whole supply chain is disrupted and whatever they have will not last them for long? Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister what are the financial measures that are going to be disbursed to help those who are facing undue difficulties?

The Prime Minister: Well, there is a committee which is chaired by the Minister of Finance, including, of course, the private sector. They have gone through and made an analysis of the situation, as it stands today, of the different sectors that are being impacted. I mentioned the most direct ones, of course, the tourism sector and so on. They are looking at different measures and there will be recommendations made to Government given the situation today. I have a list of recommendations that might probably be made. Government will, of course, look at them and ultimately take a decision.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether banks will be willing to give concessionary loan or whether the loan taken by economic operators will be extended? So, if he can be more precise in respect of facilities that are going to be extended to entrepreneurs because they are facing undue difficulties, and they would like to know and hear from the Prime Minister, in specific terms, what are the measures going to be announced to enable them to face the undue difficulties and hardship?

The Prime Minister: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, the House will understand that the situation as it is today, is not only not clear, but there is also no visibility even in the very near future; what will happen, how long this virus is going to threaten the whole world, what is going to be the impact on the world economy and on Mauritius also. So, in this committee, as I say, we work very well with the private sector. They will be coming up with a number of recommendations. They have made their proposals. There are proposals that probably will come. With regard to whether the banks will be called upon to give concessionary finance, it is difficult for me to answer now whether if there is any request, it will be taken into consideration. There must be discussions with the Bankers Association and, ultimately, what is important is that everybody is aware of the seriousness of the situation, of how it has continued and is going to continue to impact on the different sectors of the economy and, of course, measures will be taken, but I cannot say, right now, what are the specific measures that will be taken. I have said, from Government side, we have already instructed all Ministries to cut down on current expenditure and, of course, should the situation require that we take further measures to cut down further, we shall do so, because we shall be acting responsibly.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister - but you know, in every cloud, there is a silver lining - whether private and public sector and NGOs and trade unions are coming together to address the problem and to come up with new measures so that we are able to ward off threats and, as we say, when the weather gets better, we can have an early harvest and later on a bumper crop? Can I ask him whether all these are being addressed and looked into to ensure that the ease of doing business becomes more easier?

The Prime Minister: Well, we are still - I do not know whether I can term it that way - in the beginning of this, what I call a turmoil in the world. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is talking about early harvest. I mean, we are very, very far from anything in terms of harvest. In fact, *il faut serrer la ceinture, M. le président . C'est clair. Il n'y a pas de choix, parce que l'économie va être affectée. Tout le monde le sait.* So, I see the insistence of

the hon. Leader of the Opposition on knowing what measures we are going to take. As I said, as it is today, it is difficult for me to answer, because we shall need to get the proposals that have been made to that committee. And then the Ministry of Finance will obviously study those proposals and see also what is the impact on budget, on finance, on deficit, public debt and so on and, of course, will make recommendations to Government. Government then will have to take decisions. But I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I believe we all do understand the actual situation, how it is unfolding and what will happen, we are not talking even about years, but about months to come. We shall have to see how everything unfolds and then act accordingly.

Dr. Boolell: The forecast is that it will reach its peak in June. So, that's why I say we have to look at our level of preparedness. Can I, finally, ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there are lessons to be learned and no responsible Government should act irresponsibly and go on a spending spree, with the consequences that we find it hard to wage war on a scourge which is facing us? But, as I say, we are willing to be a willing partner, so it's up to Government to accept what we are proposing.

The Prime Minister: We are not going on a spending spree. On the contrary, Mr Speaker, Sir, we...

(Interruptions)

No! Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say I am really surprised. These are the few measures that we have taken: we are cutting down expenditure on the celebration of the Independence Day - the Republic Day; we are cutting down on the expenditure of all Ministries and parastatals, and we have already requested them to do so. Obviously, as I say, we shall look at Government expenditure in weeks to come, in months to come, and depending on how this situation is, if it is even more serious, if it impacts more negatively on our economy and the world economy. Obviously, can you imagine now, what is... We had taken a decision with regard to Italy. Look what is happening to France, now. They are thinking of going to the third level of seriousness, let us say. Now, how this is going to impact on the Mauritian economy? We all know it will have a negative impact; how much, how far, how deep? So, all this has to be monitored. We shall have to see and then we shall have to act accordingly. Let me also say that, of course, we are a small economy, and we have limited resources and there is so much also that we can do. Even though we want to help also, there is so much that we can do to help. So, we must bear all that in mind.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, would you give way, one question to hon. Uteem?

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister is aware that all the experts are predicting that if the virus continues to spread to pandemic levels, there would be many countries which would stop exporting their foodstuffs and keep them for themselves, and this can have an impact on Mauritius, which is dependent on our basic food supply from external sources. So, may I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether he has approached our friendly countries to find out, Government to Government level, that if ever there is a blockage, Mauritius would be exempted so that we can have sufficient amount of basic foodstuff in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: Well, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not know what is going to happen in the future. We cannot know right now whether we shall be short of which commodity, for example. I agree that we do import a lot of our food requirements, for example, those which are essential. Now, we have good relationship with a number of countries, but, again, we must bear in mind, those countries are themselves going to face difficulties. So, whether we can - eventually, should there be a shortage of one commodity, of course, we shall do whatever is necessary in order not to be short of supply. But then, we must also be able to look at alternatives, substitutes also, and then there are certain things. Well, we must face it. When one product is not available on the market, unless it is not the essential product, a necessity by itself, I think we can just try to mend our way of living and we can try to cope, provided we do not starve. So, let me also say that we are promoting, with my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture, a number of initiatives that have been taken in the past, fortunately, but that will need to be taken again, and especially in the light of this situation, to promote local production, and that is also being looked into very actively by my colleague, the Minister of Agriculture.

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

Dr. Boolell: Well, let me start on a sweet note. Can I then ask one and all whether we are washing our hands properly, staying away from people, not kissing, no thumb ...

(Interruptions)

...no thumb fisting? I am not saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have to adopt social distancing policy, but can I impress upon Government to sensitise the population at large on how to contain, to mitigate and to delay this virus? Thank you.

The Prime Minister: What the Leader of the Opposition is saying is also very important because the Ministry of Health has, since quite some time, been sensitising people with flyers, with a number of talks at schools everywhere. So, I do not think I need to go into all that. But I think we should lead by example ourselves, and I perfectly agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we should show example by not, for example, shaking hand, and kissing, I do not know...

(Interruptions)

...but surely, others. But to be serious also, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are small things, but yet they can prevent us from catching the virus. In fact, what I am told, you have flu in Mauritius already and if you have those good habits, it will go a long way to prevent you even from catching flu. So, let us be ready - we can join hands...

(Interruptions)

Let us be ready on that and sensitise people generally about those good habits.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(3.49 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

CAMBRIDGE SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATIONS 2019 - CAMBRIDGE O LEVEL HINDUISM SUBJECT - GRADE THRESHOLD

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I propose to make a statement on the issue of the Grade Threshold for the subject Hinduism at

the Cambridge School Certificate Examinations 2019, which was raised by the Second Member for Grand'Baie and Poudre d'Or on Monday 24 February 2020 at Adjournment.

The matter had been referred on 27 January 2020 to the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate, which has contacted the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE). The latter has informed the MES that Grade thresholds are set by it for each syllabus in each examination session.

According to CAIE, grades reflect a consistent level of achievement between different syllabuses within the O Level qualification and in different years. Each exam paper is unique and the difficulty of exam may vary from year to year. These slight variations require the different grade thresholds may need to be set each year to ensure that everyone gets the grade that reflects their level of achievement. Exam papers are never absolutely comparable within a subject across years, thus the grade threshold will inevitably vary from year to year.

CAIE has further informed that grade thresholds are set by using arithmetic calculation and not by using norm referencing. According to CAIE, professional judgement and statistical evidence are used when deciding on key grade thresholds. Statistical and technical information include marks distribution information (mean mark and standard deviation for current exam series and previous ones) as well. Archived scripts from previous years are also used to ensure that grades being set each year are comparable and fair.

CAIE has informed that they have followed all the procedures for the determination of grade thresholds for Cambridge O Level Hinduism.

The relevant stakeholders who have made representations would be informed by the MES of the above process as explained by CAIE.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(15.51 p.m.)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the Fourth Member for Belle Rose and Quatre Bornes (Mrs M. A. T. Diolle).

“That an Address be presented to the President of the Republic of Mauritius in the following terms –

“We, the Members of the Mauritius National Assembly, here assembled, beg leave to offer our thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for the Presentation of the Government Programme 2020-2024 on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Seventh National Assembly.””

Question again proposed.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Sawmynaden!

The Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with a sense of pride and honour that I stand as Member of this august Assembly for the second time to add my voice to the debates following the President’s Address highlighting the salient features of the Government Programme 2020-2024.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to express my deep appreciation and thanks to the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who believes in me and, who for the second time has made me the honour of being a candidate alongside him and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun in Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire/Moka, and also a Minister in his Cabinet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Constituency No. 8 has a dream team led by the Prime Minister towards enhancing the quality of life of all the inhabitants. The hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and myself have at heart the interests of the Constituency and its people. We have been constant in our actions and we are honouring our promises.

Nous ne sommes pas des marchands de rêves comme certains qui nous ont précédés ou qui ont, jusqu’à novembre 2019, fait miroiter les habitants de la Circonscription No. 8. Nous réalisons les rêves de ces habitants et nous allons beaucoup plus loin. Jusqu’ici nous avons respecté nos engagements. Parole donnée, parole sacrée. Et nous ne comptons pas nous arrêter en si bon chemin.

M. le président, permettez-moi de faire un flash-back en arrière, en 2014, car c’était ma première fois à l’Assemblée nationale comme député et comme ministre. À l’issue des élections du 10 décembre 2014, les membres de l’Opposition, principalement le MMM, qui sont d’ailleurs toujours dans l’opposition, affirmaient que le peuple avait voté contre Navin Ramgoolam, et pas en faveur de *l’Alliance Lepep*, pour eux c’était un accident de parcours.

En fait, il n'a pas fallu plus de 48 heures après la proclamation des résultats des élections de 2014 pour que l'honorable Paul Bérenger vienne affirmer, je cite –

« *Ce n'était pas un vote d'adhésion à l'Alliance Lepep, mais un vote sanction contre Ramgoolam.* »

Jetant ainsi le blâme sur le leader du Parti travailliste. Nous sommes certes au courant de ses frasques et de la manière dont il dirigeait le pays, mais jeter tous les blâmes sur lui démontre la solidité de cette alliance PTR/MMM.

Et maintenant, M. le président, imaginez si par malheur l'alliance PTR/MMM avait remporté les élections en 2014. Quel aurait été le sort de ce peuple en 2020 ? Mais une chose est certaine, le MMM allait être buté hors de ce gouvernement très, très tôt.

En 2014, nous avons donc eu droit au fameux scénario '*pas moi ça, li ça*'. La population n'est pas dupe. L'honorable Bérenger tentait tout simplement de justifier la défaite ; une excuse qui dure plus de 15 ans.

S'en sont suivi les prédictions habituelles mais qui ne se concrétisent jamais : « *Les élections sont derrière la porte* », « *ce gouvernement ne tiendra pas longtemps* », et j'en passe.

Cependant, M. le président, nous sommes là pour un deuxième mandat, et n'en déplaise à l'Opposition, ce gouvernement va durer encore.

Nous assumerons nos responsabilités vis-à-vis du peuple et nous travaillerons pour l'avancement de ce pays. C'est dans l'ADN du MSM, M. le président, de travailler pour le progrès du pays et du peuple mauricien. Et ce n'est nullement un hasard que c'est sous le règne du MSM que le pays a connu d'énormes progrès, que ce soit au niveau économique et social que la vie des Mauriciens a vraiment changé. Et cela n'a rien à voir avec le mirage du slogan du Parti travailliste '*dans 100 jours nous change ou la vie*'.

Ce slogan du Parti travailliste s'appliquait certainement aux copains, mais surtout aux copines. Et que n'a-t-on pas entendu quand, en janvier 2017, Sir Anerood Jugnauth avait cédé son fauteuil de Premier ministre à l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth ! '*Premier ministre l'imposte*', '*Premier ministre illégitime*', '*deal papa-piti*', '*Premier ministre menottes dans la main*', avec des gestes démonstratifs dans cette auguste Assemblée ! A en croire ces insinuations et les déclarations empreintes d'amertume de certains, on aurait pensé

que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth n'avait aucune chance de se faire élire et encore moins de devenir Premier ministre. Mais le Premier ministre est un patriote, il avait un seul objectif en tête : assumer ses responsabilités envers le peuple et travailler pour moderniser davantage le pays, et cela sans se laisser distraire par les remarques infondées de l'Opposition.

L'histoire retiendra que les prophètes de malheur ont été pris à leur propre piège et qu'ils se sont lourdement trompés dans leurs prédictions. La réalité est ce qu'elle est, et personne ne pourra la changer. Les urnes ont livré leur verdict le 08 novembre 2019. L'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth a, une fois de plus, accédé au poste de Premier ministre et cela a certainement contraint certains - qui, par pure jalousie, avaient sous-estimé l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et son équipe - à ravalier leur venin et à aller se terrer dans l'ombre. Je le dis bien, M. le président, 'dans l'ombre', car au sein de cet hémicycle nous avons quatre leaders des partis. Parmi eux, un Premier ministre légitime, un adjoint au Premier ministre, deux autres leaders à qui un chef de file fait l'ombre en occupant le poste de leader de l'Opposition. J'espère qu'on pourra au moins les entendre - avec des propositions valables - de temps en temps.

Aujourd'hui, M. le président, toute la population adhère au MSM. Les jeunes, les moins jeunes, les personnes âgées sont conscients et convaincus que l'avenir c'est avec le MSM. Les faits sont là. Les trois plus vieux partis politiques du pays se retrouvent dans l'opposition. En face d'eux, ils ont la plus jeune alliance au pouvoir et dirigée par un jeune Premier ministre qui, à travers son programme, bâtit l'avenir des jeunes et assure la sécurité des personnes âgées.

Nos aînés, comme toute la population d'ailleurs, se sentent de plus en plus en sécurité aujourd'hui, notamment avec la mise en application du *Safe City Project*. Depuis la mise en opération de ces cameras, de nombreux suspects ont été arrêtés suite à des cas de vols et d'agressions. La police a pu faire la lumière concernant plusieurs accidents de la route, mais surtout, M. le président, le kidnapping d'une fillette de dix ans à St. Pierre, plus précisément à la Résidence Ste Catherine - surtout que le suspect avait feint d'aider aux recherches. Les caméras du *Safe City* ont permis de voir plus clair dans toute cette affaire qui aurait pu avoir des conséquences dramatiques. Les exemples sont multiples, M. le président. Et dire que dans son programme électoral, le PTR et le PMSD prévoyaient d'enlever ces caméras de sécurité. Pensent-ils à la sécurité de la population ? Je ne le crois pas. Ils ont tout simplement peur que leurs frasques soient découvertes.

M. le président, *Vox Populi Vox Dei*, la voix du peuple est la voix de Dieu. La démocratie a primé et c'est tout à l'honneur de la population qui a su faire un choix clair, et surtout intelligent. Le peuple a réitéré sa confiance en notre Premier ministre. Il a voté pour la continuité, pour le progrès, réduisant ainsi les détracteurs de ce gouvernement à leur juste proportion. Mais il est malheureux, M. le président, pour ne pas dire que cela fait pitié, que cette décision du peuple soit restée en travers de la gorge de certains. Il est dommage que des membres de l'Opposition se fient toujours à leurs calculs mathématiques comme en 2014. En 2014, leurs fameux calculs leur donnaient pour grands vainqueurs. Ils ont cru dur comme fer, oubliant que les mathématiques n'ont pas leur place en politique et que les élections ne se gagnent pas sur papier. C'est pourquoi ils se sont retrouvés dans l'Opposition en 2014 et qu'ils y sont toujours. La réalité est là. Nous représentons la majorité et c'est nous qui sommes au gouvernement. Les calculs de pourcentage ne vous font pas gouverner le pays. Je trouve dommage, mais cela fait aussi rire, que certains, et parmi les politiciens dits d'expérience, croient toujours en cette logique que '40 plus 40 font 80', donc, '60-0'. *Aret rever kamarad ! Vivons dans la réalité !*

(Interruptions)

Reste trankil toi!

(Interruptions)

Messieurs les membres de l'opposition, je sais...

Mr Speaker: Silence! Silence!

Mr Sawmynaden: Je sais qu'en se faisant, ils sont en train de se réconcilier eux-mêmes. Je comprends la frustration de certains qui ont passé plus de temps dans l'opposition. Nous savons que ce n'est pas évident, mais ils doivent accepter que c'est le vœu du peuple. Je comprends aussi l'honorable Madame Navarre-Marie qui avance qu'elle pensait que le Parlement allait accueillir une certaine fraîcheur, des idées nouvelles, mais qu'elle s'est vite ravisée.

M. le président, cette prise de position ne m'étonne guère. Pour le MMM, la jeunesse n'a pas d'importance. Il suffit de regarder le banc du MMM pour voir que la jeunesse n'a pas sa place. De plus, il faut se demander où se trouvent aujourd'hui les anciens membres de l'exécutif du MMM. L'honorable Steven Obeegadoo, ancien président de l'aile jeune...

(Interruptions)

Ecoutez! L'honorable Steven Obeegadoo ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Sawmynaden: L'honorable Steven Obeegadoo était l'ancien président de l'aile jeune, l'honorable Kavydass Ramano était l'ancien président de l'aile jeune, l'honorable Naveena Ramyad, *Chief Whip*, était l'ancienne vice-présidente de l'aile jeune, et moi, j'étais l'ancien vice-président de l'aile jeune...

(Interruptions)

...nous sommes tous au gouvernement.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, la preuve est là, nous occupons tous des postes de responsabilité au sein de ce gouvernement. La jeunesse se trouve ici. Je pense que ceux qui se trouvent dans les travées de l'Opposition ne voient pas les choses telles que nous les voyons. Au sein du gouvernement, mené par un jeune Premier ministre, nous avons une vision et nous regardons tous dans la même direction.

The Prime Minister has set the vision and we are all working towards realising it. Nous avons une équipe composée de nombreux jeunes. Nous agissons en concertation, nous discutons, nous avons un Premier ministre qui est à l'écoute et c'est ensemble que nous dessinons un nouvel avenir pour le pays, contrairement à des 'Yes Men' qui suivent aveuglement, sans leur mot à dire, comme un troupeau de moutons qui se dirige vers un précipice. Et oui, pour certains dirigeants, si vous n'êtes pas des moutons, vous n'avez pas votre place au sein de leurs propriétés – excusez-moi, M. le président, au sein de leurs partis. Le MSM et ses alliés dirigent le pays selon le vœu de la population. Le peuple a rejeté la léthargie dans la réalisation des projets d'intérêts nationaux. Le peuple a rejeté le 'deal sous table' entre le Parti travailliste, le MMM et le PMSD. Le MMM allait être le 'king maker'. Mais, M. le président, chasser le naturel il revient au galop. Arrivant à la fin de la campagne, le 'king maker' se voyait 'king' lui-même, comme le film 'Iznogoud, Calife à la place du Calife'.

M. le président, le peuple a dit non aux coffres remplis de billets, aux valises remplies de dollars et aux autres pilules bleues que j'éviterai de parler ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Sawmynaden: C'est la frustration...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! You are not the 'loudspeaker'!

(Interruptions)

You are not the 'loudspeaker'! Hon. Minister, continue!

Mr Sawmynaden: M. le président, il n'y avait pas que des dollars, il y avait d'autres pilules que j'éviterai de citer ici.

M. le président, l'argument que nous avons entendu, c'est que l'argent allait être utilisé pour la construction du nouveau quartier général du Parti travailliste. On serait tenté de demander si les pilules allaient servir de booster pour que les colonnes de ce bâtiment se tiennent droites. Le peuple a dit non à la démagogie.

Le peuple a rejeté la 'zoli mamzelle' qui est retournée vers son ancien prétendant alors que le leader de ce parti avait critiqué le leader de l'opposition à l'époque qu'il était candidat au No.18. En fait, le peuple était bien emmerdé. La preuve est tangible. Il ne veut plus se laisser berné par des paroles mielleuses qui cachent des intérêts personnels.

M. le président, en écoutant les arguments du Parti travailliste et surtout le leader du Parti travailliste, cela me fait retourner en arrière encore une fois. En 1991, j'étais étudiant au Collège du Saint Esprit, avec les amis, c'était la grande campagne électorale de l'Alliance MSM/MMM et avec quelques amis on avait fait un pari et j'avais prédit trois scores, 50-10, 57-3 et 60-0. Et j'avais vu juste. Le Parti travailliste avait connu une cuisante défaite avec seulement trois députés élus. Et à cette époque, j'étais étonné de la réaction de Navin Ramgoolam qui n'avait rien trouvé de mieux à dire que les élections avaient été truquées. Il était 'perplexe'. On se souviendra aussi de ses scénarios qu'il a tenté d'élaborer, notamment avec des urnes qui auraient été retrouvées dans des champs de canne, entre autres.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have witnessed the same scenario after the 2019 General Elections, with the leader of the Labour Party arguing that the elections had not been free and fair.

Et on voit aujourd'hui l'honorable Paul Bérenger s'associer au Parti travailliste concernant les pétitions électorales. Est-ce un 'deal' entre voisins ? This is nothing but “*une attitude du mauvais perdant*”. You know, the kind of people who should always win or else they leave the game and complain, arguing that rules have not been respected. This is exactly what we have seen. With his reasoning, he is pointing fingers at all the civil servants who worked on that particular day.

Les membres de l'opposition insinuent ainsi que les fonctionnaires qui ont travaillé pour les élections sont des personnes malhonnêtes. Admettons que nous suivions la logique de Navin Ramgoolam concernant des soi-disant truquages et prenons comme exemples les élections de 2005 et de 2010 lors desquelles il s'est fait élire comme Premier ministre. Sait-il des choses que nous ignorons ?

Do we need to understand that everything was fine when he was elected as Prime Minister and that his opponents must have obviously cheated in 2014 and 2019? Let's be serious! With some common sense, one will see that the leader of the Labour Party only wants to get some attention and remain in the limelight.

M. le président, en 2014, la population a administré une correction au Parti Travailliste et aussi au MMM. Toutefois, bien que cette défaite à laquelle il ne s'attendait pas lui ait laissé un goût amer, le leader du Parti Travailliste a pu d'une certaine façon assouvir sa soif de rester au-devant de la scène et montrer qu'il existe toujours.

Et maintenant, après la débâcle de décembre 2019 et son maintien hors du pouvoir, comment faire pour gérer cette crise existentielle ? Il a trouvé la bonne astuce : contester les élections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not the one saying it, though I share the opinion. Mr. Yatin Varma, former Attorney General and former Member of the Labour Party, openly said, I quote –

« Les pétitions électorales ont été faites juste pour permettre à Navin Ramgoolam de continuer à exister artificiellement sur le plan politique. Il refait ce qu'il avait fait en 1991 pour avoir une présence en hurlant 'on m'a volé mon élection, *finn énan mardaye* !' Il se présente comme une victime en disant qu'il n'a pas perdu les

élections, mais qu'elles ont été truquées ou volées. S'il n'y avait pas ces 'cases', Ramgoolam aurait été contraint qu'il a, une fois de plus, perdu les élections. »

Mais ces pétitions électorales ne sont que du bluff.

Le Parti travailliste parle d'élections truquées. Si c'était vraiment le cas, est-ce que ce parti se serait retrouvé avec plus de députés qu'en 2014 ? D'ailleurs, venir affirmer que ces élections ont été truquées est une atteinte à la démocratie et cela jette le doute et discrédite la Commission Électorale et l'*Electoral Supervisory Commission* qui sont des institutions indépendantes et internationalement respectées. C'est triste de voir la bassesse avec laquelle certains attaquent la crédibilité de telles institutions. *Shame, Mr Speaker, Sir!*

M. le président, au lieu de formuler des allégations contre le gouvernement et porter atteinte à la réputation d'institutions respectables, le Parti travailliste et son leader devraient faire leur autocritique et un examen de conscience. La question qui se pose: peut-on prêter foi aux allégations d'un leader qui est en perte de vitesse et qui se débat pour essayer de se donner une certaine légitimité ?

De par ces déclarations de M. Yatin Varma, qui était considéré comme un des éléments forts de la jeunesse travailliste, M. le président, c'est plutôt le Parti travailliste qui a l'art de truquer des exercices démocratiques. Yatin Varma qui n'a pas mâché ses mots en évoquant un éventuel congrès concernant le leadership du Parti Travailliste. Il se dit certain, et je cite –

« Ramgoolam va truquer cette élection. Je sais à qui il va attribuer la responsabilité de truquer cette élection. J'assume la responsabilité de ces propos et en temps et lieu je révélerai les noms de ceux qui sont impliqués dans cette opération ».

Avec une telle affirmation, je laisse le peuple juger qui sont les experts en matière de truquage d'exercices démocratiques.

Et pour reprendre les propos de M. Yatin Varma : « Si le Parti travailliste est incapable de respecter les droits de ses membres, comment pourrait-il respecter les droits des citoyens, si jamais il revient au pouvoir ? »

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition campaigned against us, arguing that the MSM and its partners should have been sacked because we have not lived up to the expectations of the population. And I still remember that during the last budgetary debates, the Opposition was

saying that it was the last budget of this Government *et* “*les jours de ce gouvernement sont comptés.*” According to them, Government *ine faner*.

Pour eux le gouvernement a failli.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sawmynaden: M. le président, laissez-moi vous donner la liste des mesures que d’après eux le gouvernement *ine faner* -

- ce gouvernement, M. le président, a augmenté le salaire de ceux qui touchaient comme ‘*cleaners*’ dans les écoles R 1,500. Aujourd’hui, ces employés touchent plus de R 9,500 et travaillent dans des meilleures conditions avec des privilèges et avantages. On n’aurait pas dû le faire d’après eux ;
- ce gouvernement a introduit le salaire minimum. Ils ne sont pas d’accord ;
- ce gouvernement a fauté en combattant les trafiquants de drogues ;
- ce gouvernement a failli lamentablement en haussant la pension des personnes âgées, M. le président ! Pourquoi ce gouvernement a donné aux personnes âgées R 9,000 ! On n’aurait pas dû le faire parce qu’eux, de 2005 à 2014, ils ont donné R 1500 d’augmentation. R 10 par mois ! Nous, R 3,600 à R 9,000, ils ne sont pas contents ! Ils ne sont pas contents et dans leur pétition électorale c’est l’argument qu’ils ont mis devant. Pourquoi avoir donné à ces personnes âgées qui ont travaillé pour ce pays R 9,000 ! Vivre déceamment ! Non ! Pas correct ! On a failli, M. le président !
- nous avons failli en accordant une allocation digne de ce nom aux handicapés à la naissance ;
- l’introduction de l’allocation aux anciens athlètes. L’honorable Ms Karen Foo Kune est bénéficiaire.

D’autres aspects que d’après eux ce gouvernement a failli –

- la mise en opération du Métro Express, on n’aurait pas dû le faire ;
- la mise en opération du PSAC ; l’honorable Madame Dookun-Luchoomun a failli, elle n’aurait pas dû le faire ;
- la distribution gratuite de livres aux enfants du primaire jusqu’au Grade 9 ;

- les nombreuses nouvelles infrastructures ;
- la construction de logements sociaux ; il n'y a plus de maisons '*boîte zalimette*', maintenant il y a des maisons à étage, en béton ;
- une situation économique dont nous n'avons pas à en rougir ;
- des institutions publiques profitables ;
- la performance remarquable de l'île Maurice aux derniers Jeux des Îles de l'océan Indien et le renforcement de l'unité nationale ; on n'aurait pas dû organiser les Jeux des Iles.

Mais moi, M. le président, je demanderai a ce gouvernement continuer '*faner*' '*papa*'.

We have been criticised for being allegedly latent regarding the social integration of the most vulnerable people.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, much is being done to support those who are in need be it in terms of social aid, school materials to needy students and social housing. As I mentioned earlier, from 2014 to date, more than 136 vulnerable families have benefitted from the social housing scheme of the National Empowerment Foundation.

It is important to stress here that, regarding social housing, this Government has put an end to those *boite zalimette* which were being constructed under the Labour regime. Today, we talk about full concrete houses of 50 square metres.

Those who are criticizing should remember that when our predecessors in Government were in office, CIS houses were being constructed for needy families, *du bois, rondins*.

During the last electoral campaign, I visited a family in Dagotière and that family showed me his house and said look at the roof and there was no roof, *c'était à la belle étoile*. I said: you did not put the iron sheet; he said: it was installed but completely disappeared. So, the question is: what type of iron sheets were being fixed at that time? It did not even rest, it disappeared completely. I have never seen that in all my life. Still, it is obvious, Mr Speaker, Sir, that their definition of failure should be swotted. The population has made a choice and we are here to make this country and its people prosper.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank inhabitants of Constituency No. 8 for placing their trust in me. You know on the 08 of November was the proclamation of the results and that was my best birthday present ever because on the 9th, I turned 45.

And many of them here were saying: next time, you won't be here you and I am still here, and I will be here next time also because we deliver our promise. The whole country is witnessing positive changes. And likewise, Constituency No. 8, Quartier Militaire and Moka, has a new face. Our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun and myself have a common goal: working hand in hand, as a team, for the well-being of the inhabitants of our Constituency. Today, inhabitants of the Constituency No. 8 see and feel the change. Numerous projects have been initiated and completed, and many others are yet to come.

I have in mind just a few, Mr Speaker, Sir -

- The new market at St Pierre;
- The new market at Quartier Militaire with a gym;
- The St-Julien by-pass;
- The construction of the Mediclinic at Quartier Militaire;
- The construction of social housing, namely in St Julien, Dagotièrè;
- The multi-sport complex at Côte d'Or, aujourd'hui la côte est en or;
- The numerous drains constructed which are giving the expected results, just to name a few. And for sure, on this side of the House: *ces pas zes touye connaissance.*

M. le président, les membres de l'opposition ne cessent de marteler que le complexe sportif de Côte d'Or est un éléphant blanc, qu'il n'est pas profitable et ils se demandent quand il le sera.

M. le président, il est temps qu'ils comprennent que le sport n'est pas un business. La profitabilité d'une telle infrastructure c'est quand nous voyons les jeunes et aussi les moins jeunes en profiter et quand nos jeunes brillent à l'international. C'est ça la profitabilité.

Que l'opposition ne vienne pas utiliser le sport pour faire de la politique. Premièrement parce que la politique n'a pas sa place dans le sport, et deuxièmement, ceux qui seraient tentés de le faire pourraient récolter la honte de leur vie si nous faisons la comparaison entre ce que ce gouvernement a fait et continue à faire, et les résultats fournis par ceux qui nous critiquent.

Pour nous, le sport a toute son importance. Le MSM au pouvoir a toujours confié la responsabilité du développement sportif à des personnes compétentes. Est-ce un hasard qu'à chaque fois que le MSM est au pouvoir, les Jeux des Îles sont organisés à Maurice - 1985, 2003 et 2019 ?

I am proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have brought my humble contribution as Minister of Youth and Sports.

Upon assuming office in December 2014, my first challenge was the 9th Indian Ocean Islands Games which were held in Reunion Island in August 2015.

Hard work, discipline, the necessary support to our athletes and the right measures put in place led us to the results we all know. Mauritius came back with not less than 66 gold medals. And this was only the beginning as we, thereafter, had to prepare for the 10th Indian Ocean Islands Games in Mauritius. The additional measures put in place and the support granted to our athletes were not vain. Last year, here in Mauritius, our athletes with other representatives made us proud. Mauritius came out first with a total of 92 gold medals, 79 silver medals and 53 bronze medals. Bravo to my colleague, hon. Stephan Toussaint who has continued the work we had started and added his personal touch and the results were marvellous.

C'est ça la profitabilité quand on voit nos athlètes briller. Les jeux se sont déroulés sans anicroche. Nous avons reçu des félicitations concernant le village des Jeux que nous avons aménagé dans les hôtels alors que l'Opposition ne cessait d'émettre des critiques. Le sens de l'hospitalité est en nous.

We have put in the necessary efforts for the well-being of our population and help in the fight against diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. And the Prime Minister, himself, leads by example through an active participation in sports/well-being activities that are organized.

A number of sub-halls and open-air gyms have been inaugurated and access has been granted to sports amenities found in school compounds.

Other measures comprise of the introduction of the concept *de Jeux des Quartiers*, the football academy of the Liverpool football club, the presentation of the new Sports Act, the National Young Volunteer Scheme, the Youth Excellence Award, the National Youth Policy 2016, among others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government, under the able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, and the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth before him, leaves no stone unturned in its quest to propel the country to a higher level of development.

When talking about development, we cannot omit the contribution of the Information Communication Technology sector. This Government has set the pace and the results are tangible.

M. le président, il n'y a pas pire aveugle que celui qui refuse de voir. Aujourd'hui, le pays est entré dans une nouvelle ère. Avec les mesures mises en place, nos concitoyens peuvent désormais utiliser leur téléphone cellulaire pour accéder à une panoplie de services en ligne.

D'ailleurs, s'agissant des nombreux services en ligne, aujourd'hui les candidats privés prenant part aux examens du SC et du HSC peuvent s'enregistrer en ligne; les victimes de violences domestiques peuvent porter plainte ou s'enregistrer pour une aide légale, la *road tax* peut être payée en ligne. Ce sont là quelques-uns des 150 e-services en ligne qui sont à la disposition des citoyens.

N'oublions pas non plus les diverses applications (Apps) que nous avons lancées, y compris pour les planteurs - *Mokaro*.

Par ailleurs, M. le président, les mesures mises en place dans le secteur des TICs visent aussi à l'épanouissement de nos jeunes qui sont notre avenir.

Je me permets aussi de rappeler qu'avec la collaboration du *Mauritius Research Council*, une première session de *Robotics Workshop* a été organisée à l'intention de 350 jeunes. Fort du succès enregistré, l'exercice a été renouvelé et le but a été de former un millier de jeunes.

Les initiatives se sont succédées notamment avec le concours régulier des diverses grosses pointures du secteur des nouvelles technologies. Qui ne se souvient pas du robot Sophia et de Titan ?

M. le président, *we mean business*, et nos annonces ne restent pas lettres mortes. Le *Digital Youth Engagement Programme* a déjà été mis en œuvre pour initier les élèves des écoles primaires et secondaires à l'art de la programmation. Nous sommes également convaincus que le codage est désormais une compétence aussi importante que la lecture, l'écriture et le calcul.

Un autre grand pas en avant avec la promulgation de la nouvelle *Data Protection Act*. Il est un fait que la protection des données revêt d'une importance capitale dans la société d'aujourd'hui. En 2017, j'ai eu le privilège de présenter le projet de loi qui a été adopté avant d'être promulgué en janvier 2018.

Cette nouvelle loi prend en considération les dernières évolutions en matière de meilleures pratiques dans le domaine de la protection des données et couvre également les nouvelles règles générales de la protection des données (RGPD) de l'Union Européenne. Maurice peut se féliciter d'être le premier pays à avoir promulgué une loi conforme aux nouvelles règles.

Le secteur public, M. le président, a aussi connu une transformation. Notamment à travers la facilitation d'échange et de partage d'informations. L'*InfoHighway*, un moyen de communication rapide et surtout permet d'alléger les procédures entre les différents services, rendant ainsi plus efficace le service offert au public. Ce système s'est d'ailleurs vu décerner le *Champion status* dans la catégorie *e-Government* lors du *World Summit on the Information Society* en 2018 à Genève.

M. le président, la République de Maurice a de quoi être fière en matière de progrès technologiques. Et pour cause, le premier projet de satellite mauricien, MIR-SAT1, dirigé par un groupe de jeunes chercheurs du *Mauritius Research Council*, a remporté le premier prix du programme KiboCUBE 2018 organisé par le Bureau des affaires spatiales des Nations Unies (UNOOSA) et l'Agence d'exploration aérospatiale japonaise (JAXA) en juin 2018.

Maurice s'est, de ce fait, vu attribuer le lancement et le déploiement gratuit du satellite dans l'espace via la Station Spatiale Internationale (ISS). Ce sera le premier nano-satellite à être conçu, assemblé, testé et exploité par des Mauriciens. Le déploiement du nano-satellite est prévu par la JAXA.

M. le président, c'est ce gouvernement qui a mis un terme aux angoisses des *IT Officers* de la poste. Ces personnes étaient employées sur une base contractuelle depuis 2005 et à l'approche de l'échéance de leur contrat, ils étaient dans le flou. Aujourd'hui, nous leur avons enlevé ce stress. Ils sont employés.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the main features regarding the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection. This Government Programme 2020-2024 clearly

defines the economic strategy of the Government by taking important measures to fight poverty and, at the same time, promoting investment to revitalize the economic sectors.

The Government Programme 2020-2024 stresses on the broad orientations for taking the country forward for the next four years. This Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, proposes to steer the economy in the league of high-income countries, driven by technology and innovation and bringing higher levels of growth, equality and shared prosperity.

The imposing title 'Towards an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius, Forging Ahead Together' promises a series of measures that would uplift the country on various fronts, bringing human happiness and respect for the environment into symbiosis. This Government Programme contains many valid suggestions, as previous ones did. The pathology, however, lies in the pragmatic application of the proposed measures. Following decades of experience, translating the suggestions into practice can prove thorny.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in line with the mandate of my Ministry and in order to ensure the continuous supply of basic commodities to the whole population of Mauritius, the State Trading Corporation will continue providing subsidy on essential commodities such as rice, flour and Liquefied Petroleum Gas with a view to ensure that these essential products are available at affordable prices to the population. The actual prices of these commodities are fixed by Government at a level below the real prices.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to emphasize that in June 2017, the retail price of flour was brought down from Rs5.85 to Rs4.85 per half kg and that of brown flour to Rs4.00 per half kg. We have brought down the retail price of LPG from Rs330 to Rs210, and during the last election campaign, Navin Ramgoolam promised to further bring the price down. But why had he not done so when he was in power? When he was in power, he was increasing.

The total subsidy on rice, flour and LPG for the Financial Year 2017-2018 amounted to about Rs900 m. and is expected to be about Rs1.7 billion for the financial year 2019-2020.

To ensure a proper distribution around the island, of rice and flour with the STC brand name, a Packing and Distribution Unit has been set up at the STC. In line with Government's vision to make Mauritius a cleaner and greener country and in an endeavour to make of Mauritius a plastic free country within the shortest time, the State Trading Corporation will review its packing for rice and flour.

The STC also intends to construct new warehouses with state-of-the-art facilities in Mauritius and Rodrigues with a view to increase the storage capacity of rice and flour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government also intends to increase storage capacity for LPG in order to ensure continuity and security of supply of the product for Mauritius. In the Government Programme 2020-2024, Mr Speaker, Sir, it was announced that Government will promote more extensively the use of clean and renewable energy and will encourage the use of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), *inter alia*, for production of electricity, for internal transport, for domestic use as well as for eventual bunkering purposes.

Mauritius is heavily dependent on imported fuels for power generation. As such, the Government intends to migrate to LNG as an alternative fuel. In that sense, following the last visit of the President of Mozambique, a Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the State Trading Corporation and the *Empresa Nacional de Hidrocarbonetos* in August 2019 for the cooperation in the field of LNG.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House that in its Vision 2030, the Government has announced the creation of new economic pillars, which include, *inter alia*, the development of the petroleum and bunkering sector. In this respect, the completion of the Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal (MOST) Project in April 2018 has provided an additional storage capacity of 25,000 metric tons of Mogas and Gas Oil, thereby increasing the stock level of Mogas from around 3 to 30 days and that of Gas Oil from 10 to 27 days until the arrival of the next consignment.

The strategic location of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean is an asset for the development of the bunkering industry. A growth of 34.75% in bunker trade has been achieved for the Financial Year 2017/2018 compared to a set target of 15%. A notable increase in the bunker volume has been recorded in Port Louis.

From sales volume which has been hovering around 285,000 metric tons in 2014-2015, the bunkering sector has grown to an estimated volume over 600,000 metric tons in 2019, which represents more than doubling the sales in Port Louis over the past four to five years.

To further boost the sector, an international consultant was recruited by the STC last year. The consultant has made a number of recommendations on a legal framework for on-shore and off-shore bunkering activities and has also worked out a Code of Practice and Checklist protocol tailor-made for Mauritius.

In this age of rapid technological change, growing competition and expanding trade, measurement standards and techniques have become fundamental. Hence, the Legal Metrology Services is being called upon to play a more important role and therefore, has to keep abreast of changes and development in this field.

My Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also going ahead with the re-engineering of the Consumer Affairs Unit. In the present socio-economic landscape, we find that the consumer is a victim of many unfair and unethical tactics adopted in the market place. The untrained consumer is no match for the businessman marketing goods and services on an organised basis and by trained professionals. He is quite often cheated in the quality, quantity and price of goods or services.

With globalisation and development in the international trade and commerce, there has been a substantial increase of business and trade, which resulted in a variety of consumer goods and services to cater for the needs of the consumers. In recent years, there has been a greater public concern over consumer protection issues all over the world. And our country is not an exception.

Consumers' aspirations and vision to leading a modern life have been at par with their increasing purchasing power. This has led them to demand more and more sophisticated goods and services. And obviously, many risks, unknown to the common consumer, are associated with the new products and services.

Consumer Protection, thus, is of utmost importance. Indeed, we have a history of consumer protection here in our country whereby legislations like the Hire Purchase and Credit Sale Act were made as far back as 1964 and the Supplies Control Act in 1974. The Consumer Protection Unit has been set up in 1998 and its overall objectives are to protect consumers against intangible aggressions ranging from aggressive advertisement regarding quality of service, complex buying transaction to e-commerce which resulted from an increasingly sophisticated market due to globalisation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, till now, the CAU has been ensuring traders complied with consumer laws, educating consumers and has been engaged in settlement of disputes between traders and consumers. You will concur with me that this is inadequate in the face of emerging challenges which are gaining momentum.

The challenges of the Consumer Affairs Unit are bound to increase at the time where the resources of the CAU, be it human, financial and legal, need to be revisited so as to enable the detection of new issues arising.

To succeed in our quest to better protect the consumers, it is imperative that obsolete legislation be replaced by new laws to cope with the ongoing transformation in various areas of consumer protection and put in place the appropriate tools to set and achieve the upcoming goals.

By adopting a smarter and more efficient way of operating, including a greater use of new technologies to combat trade, malpractice and educate consumers, the CAU will undeniably have a greater impact.

At this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with much pride that I remind the House that on 06 March 2018, when I was the Minister responsible of the ICT, the “Mauritius Consumer Rights” Mobile App was launched to allow consumers to report to the Consumer Affairs Unit, falling under the aegis of the Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection, any complaints of poor service or defective products from suppliers.

When using this App to flag any malpractice, the consumer can attach photos or files and send them along with their complaint.

On the other hand, we also have a hotline – the 185 – which is operational on a 24/7 basis, through which consumers can make complaints, request for information and even make suggestions on issues pertaining to consumer matters.

The Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection is working towards a new Consumer Protection Agenda. We will soon be coming up with new measures that are more adapted to the needs of the consumers, together with a new Consumer Protection Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now come to the Trade Division of my Ministry where a series of measures are being put in place and implemented.

Mauritius can be proud of its journey to place itself as a destination for ease of doing business. Indeed, as per the Ease of Doing Business Report 2020, published by the World Bank on 24 October 2019, Mauritius is now ranked 13th out of 190 countries for doing business.

Over the last years, the country has remarkably improved its position from 2016 onwards, being ranked 49th, 25th, 20th in 2018 and now 13th. Simple mathematics show that

Mauritius has moved up by 36 places in the Ease of Doing Business survey within a span of only three years.

In this endeavour, to keep the pace, my Ministry will continue to streamline its processes and procedures by re-engineering and rationalising its import and export procedures to fast track trade facilitation. Non-tariff measures will be enforced only for reasons of strategy, security, sensitivity and environment so as not to become unnecessary barriers to trade.

Regional trade constitutes a major factor in determining growth of an economy. Therefore, in order for Mauritius to become a high-income economy, sound trade policies need to be enhanced through digitalisation.

Indeed, much effort is being put in automating the issuance of certificates of origin being issued by my Ministry. Since January 2020, my Ministry has embarked on the Registered Exporter System which is a system developed by the European Union whereby exporters can self-declare their goods being exported to Norway and Switzerland online to benefit from the Generalised System of Preferences.

Moreover, in 2020, the COMESA secretariat is finalising an automated system for the issuance of the COMESA certificates of origin, including the provisions for digital signature which is an important feature of accountability.

The Trade Division of this Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is responsible for issuing both import and export permits for a certain number of controlled goods for security and sensitivity reasons.

Generally, permits are considered as barriers and obstacles to trade as they cause bottlenecks and additional cost to both importers and exporters.

My Ministry will, therefore, review the list of commodities requiring import and export permits. This will no doubt increase growth and help the country to move towards a high-income economy.

M. le président, les critiques et les nombreuses attaques de l'opposition depuis 2014 ne nous ont pas empêchés d'avancer et de faire progresser le pays. Et ce n'est pas maintenant que nous allons nous laisser influencer car nous au gouvernement notre culture est de faire progresser le pays et améliorer la vie des citoyens.

En face de nous, nous avons une opposition qui a choisi de bouder la lecture du discours-programme par le Président de la République et qui par la suite prétend à nous faire la leçon. En boudant le discours du Président de la République, ils ont fait preuve d'un manque de respect envers l'institution qu'est la présidence. Ils sont exactement, M. le président, comme ceux qui ne vont pas au mariage, mais qui ont le culot de critiquer la nourriture.

D'ailleurs, en sus d'avoir été absents lors du discours du Président de la République, plusieurs députés de l'Opposition ont également refusé l'opportunité qui leur était offerte de participer aux débats. Le *walk-out* et l'absence du Parlement en signe de solidarité envers le leader de l'opposition n'a été qu'un prétexte pour abdiquer devant leurs responsabilités de parlementaires. Parce que, M. le président, ils sont payés pour être là.

Peut-être ne savent-ils pas trop quoi dire, je les comprends, étant conscients dans leur for intérieur que le programme de ce gouvernement mènera sans doute le pays très, très loin sur la voie du développement, de la modernité et du progrès. Et je suis certain que le leader de l'opposition était content d'avoir l'honorable Paul Bérenger à côté de lui lors de sa conférence de presse. Mais il ne faut pas oublier la séance de '*manz gato*'. Il ne faut pas l'oublier ! Alors, M. le leader de l'opposition, prenez garde !

Et je suis certain que le *walk-out* de la semaine dernière ne sera pas le dernier. Nous verrons sans doute d'autres actions similaires, comme cela a souvent été le cas, ils seront à court d'arguments face à un gouvernement qui '*means business*', et par amour propre, ils préféreront se retirer.

Quand ils sont dans l'Opposition, ils effectuent des *walk-out* pour ne pas participer aux travaux parlementaires, et pour éviter de rester jusqu'à tard ; quand ils sont au gouvernement, ils ferment carrément le Parlement pendant des mois.

Nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, M. le président, sommes conscients des responsabilités qui reposent sur nos épaules.

Le peuple s'est rendu compte que ce gouvernement ne l'a pas laissé tomber, tout comme cela a été le cas après la naissance du MSM en 1983.

Et c'est pour cette raison que la population a réitéré sa confiance en notre Premier ministre, le Premier ministre adjoint et son équipe, mettant hors-jeu ceux qui n'ont pas su maintenir le pays sur les rails du développement.

Les Mauriciens ont su séparer le bon grain de l'ivraie, et le glas a sonné pour certains.

Je l'ai dit, et je le répète, ce gouvernement dirigé par notre Premier ministre mènera à bien sa mission, avec la bénédiction du peuple, nous rempilerons pour encore plusieurs mandats.

Aux membres de l'opposition, je dirai ceci : Je suis désolé pour vous. Je comprends la frustration des députés qui n'ont pu se retrouver au gouvernement. Nous avons aujourd'hui une jeune équipe, menée par un jeune Premier ministre.

Prenez-en exemple.

Le pays est en plein développement, avec les capacités de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, ce pays va se transformer davantage dans les 5, 10 et 15 prochaines années et même au-delà.

Précédemment, dans cette même Chambre, j'avais déclaré : « *With this Government you will never walk alone* ». Je le répète encore une fois, M. le président, avec ce gouvernement dirigé par le Premier ministre, la population '*will never walk alone*'.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Dr. hon. Jagutpal!

(4.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. S. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker Sir, it is with profound emotions that today I rise in this August Assembly to make my maiden speech as a newly elected Member of the Constituency of Riviere des Anguilles/Souillac.

Mr Speaker Sir, let me first express my deep and sincere gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister for the trust and confidence he had placed in me to stand as a candidate under the banner of *l'Alliance Morisien* for the General Elections held in November last year.

I am even more honoured to have been given the portfolio of the Ministry of Health and Wellness. A sector I am very much acquainted with, being myself a medical practitioner and having served as Chairperson of the Medical Council in the past.

The House and the population at large can rest assured that my commitment and efforts will be relentless. Our resolve stays focused on offering the best health care services to our citizens while ensuring the sanitary security for our Republic.

I also have a special thought for the people and the electorate of Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac Constituency for their renewed confidence in this Government.

More importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight the capacity and wisdom of the Prime Minister to take our country to unparalleled heights and to the next level of its development.

The Prime Minister embodies this sense of renewal our country has been striving for. He has been able to take good note of the expectations of the people, while anticipating the challenges of an ever-growing global context. He has been able to strike the right balance between paving the way to enhanced economic progress and making sure that the population as a whole stands part of this exciting journey that will lead our nation to the status of high income economy.

The programme he has devised to materialise all these expectations is ambitious for sure, and with the support and utmost determination of the Government team, it is also a realistic one and the work for its realisation has already started, and as justly stated by the Prime Minister, "*Ensam Tou Possible*".

Allow me here to also have some words of appreciation for my two colleagues in Constituency No. 13. Our responsibilities englobe the needs and demands of a whole nation but we also keep in mind the specificities and expectations of the inhabitants who have elected us to be their representatives in this Assembly.

As for the few who have not given us their trust yet, I am confident that through our actions, under the able helm of the Prime Minister, they also, will be in a better capacity to measure our commitment and endeavour to work for their progress and well-being.

This address also gives me the opportunity to pay tribute to the more than 15,000 people who make up the Public Health Sector of our country as well as our colleagues working in private institutions. Mauritius remains one of the only countries where quality and specialised health care is dispensed free of charge and in a timely manner.

I was myself part of that family. This strong sense of belonging is now even more earnest given my new responsibilities and together we will work so that our daily commitment towards the population of this country is fully recognised.

May I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to my family for the love and affection they showered upon me during the election campaign. Without their support and understanding, their sacrifice and encouragement, I would not be standing here today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I proceed further, let me extend my warmest congratulations to you on your election as Chair of the House. A special word of appreciation to hon. Nazurally upon his election as Deputy Speaker! We feel elated today because we know we can rely on your ingenuity and your farsightedness to conduct our deliberations in the most fair, transparent and objective manner.

I will here make an appeal to hon. Members on the other side of the House. We stand here in a temple of democracy. As elected Members, we are answerable to the people of this country and they rely on us to come up with reforms, laws and other decisions for their welfare and that of the people at large. In a democracy the Opposition also has a role to play and not to walk out.

We should bear in mind that all our sayings and doings, be it in this House or outside, do not go unnoticed. We should, therefore, set a good example for our citizens. Even when we feel there is a need to challenge the authority of the House, it should be done in a civilised manner bearing decorum of the House. We have recently witnessed a clear provocative attitude of a hon. Member, despite your ruling and even after he withdrew the unparliamentary language, he again intentionally made remarks for his unparliamentary language. What more you have to do, you have obviously to raise your voice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to join the previous orators from this side of the House to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for having presented such a promising and an ambitious Programme to the nation, in spite of an uncertain, unpredictable and highly volatile international economic environment.

This Government Programme is above all a sacred pledge to the people of this country, a pledge that we would wish to see fully realised within the next five years of our mandate.

The bold policy measures in this Programme speak volume and testify to the commitment and determination of Government to lay the foundations and chart the way for an inclusive, a better, and a more prosperous Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Programme has created a feel-good factor among the population, a feel-good factor that is unparalleled in the history of this country.

Through this Programme, we are resolutely determined to bring massive qualitative and quantitative changes in the lives of the citizens of this country. We have the legitimacy and the mandate of the population to accomplish such a dream. We also devote ourselves, as a Government, in the attainment of our purpose and objective, and not wander away into short-lived fancies and imaginings. We will be judged at the end of our mandate which will be the measure of our true success at the helm of Government!

We shall steer safely through every storm, so long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, and our trust fixed on the people of our country. We will not falter in our duties and responsibilities towards this country, towards the population of this country, who, on 07 November 2019, gave us a landslide victory, a historical one indeed, who put their trust and confidence in us. *Une victoire incontestable et sans bavure.*

Members on the other side of the House will, of course, complain. On our side, however, our commitment lies with the whole Mauritian nation and we are resolved to maintain our focus on their welfare.

Mr Speaker Sir, criticism, whenever it is constructive is always welcome. We have demonstrated that we are ready to listen, adapt and to take decisions for the benefit of all. Some Members of the Opposition have had some harsh comments on the status of our economy. We acknowledge that the global situation is a challenging one, it's a changing one and it has been so during the past five years, yet, our Government has initiated reforms that today are bearing fruits. Mauritius just moved seven places in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report and is ranked 13th among 190 assessed countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritian population is an enlightened one, our people know how to differentiate between facts and demagogy, and in November last, this very population called the bluff of the Opposition.

And as far as public debt is concerned, the Government acts with extreme responsibility. Unlike our predecessors who invested billions in crumbling roads or reservoirs one could use as a sieve, we make sure that our population gets value for money. This Government also ensures that the initiated projects are economically viable, and this aspect guarantees our repayment capacity. It should, therefore, not come as a surprise that financing

is easily available for massive projects. Our reputation as a client to reimburse loan is outstanding.

This Government epitomises the future of our country. As a Government, we don't promise if we can't deliver. We have already set the tone. The increase of the minimum wage and the universal pension demonstrate our commitment to continue to uplift the quality of life and the well-being of our people.

Our citizens deserve that their legitimate needs and aspirations are fully realised. We should cater for their needs for housing, balanced living conditions, helping them cope with the effects of climatic change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a new era.

A new society is emerging in which knowledge is our primary source of production instead of capital and labour.

How we utilise and manage knowledge will "per force" create our Nation's wealth and improve the quality of life of our people in terms of education, infrastructure and social indicators.

We live in an era where no country can afford to turn its back on technology. Countries are investing massively in order to cope with these new trends and to leverage digital technology to propel growth and development.

Government has already signified its intention in its Programme to "create an environment" that will accelerate learning through digital technology towards building "a modern, vibrant and innovative economy".

In this regard, mention has been made in the Programme on the development of cutting-edge technologies.

In order to benefit from the full potential of these emerging sectors, our education system has also been seen subject to a well thought upon shift. In this modern era, the way in which we disseminate knowledge has to be reviewed. The system we have today is an inclusive and holistic one.

Education is no longer captive to academic barriers but life skills and other professional courses have been given all their due respect. The decision to allow only

students having, at least, 5 credits to compete for the Higher School Certificate was a necessity.

If we want to remain competitive on the international level, as deciders, we had to make sure that our youngsters are equipped with adequate knowledge.

How many youngsters have, in the past, found themselves prisoners of a system whereby they were compelled to go through their HSC with even very weak results? What do these youngsters do afterwards?

Today, under the leadership of our Prime minister and his team, we have done away with the plague of *universités marrons* that were taking our youth for a ride. Tertiary Education today is free thanks to the vision of the Prime Minister. The Government has, in its wisdom, also catered for those who do not fit in the purely academic sector. Today, alongside public universities, Vocational, Professional, Polytechnics, public institutions are also free for our youngsters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, The current global economic environment is plagued by many uncertainties. Countries across the world are battered by the headwinds of declining economic trends, stiff competition, and by the pace of change that is shattering the fabric of societies.

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus in China in December last year has further exacerbated the prevailing economic situation.

In reply to the first Private Notice Question from the hon. Leader of the Opposition during the First Session of the House, I had the opportunity to reiterate the precautionary measures that have been put in place by my Ministry to protect our citizens.

Today, I wish to re-assure the House that our efforts are yielding positive results. No case of COVID-19 has been registered up to now, although we remain vulnerable like any other country in the world.

We might be compelled and have already been bound to take bold and strong measures. I wish here to re-assure the House and the population at large that all these decisions are taken after thorough consultations with all the sectors involved, under the Chair of the Prime Minister. Different sectors might feel the backlash of this sanitary crisis, but through our actions we also wish to send a strong message to the world.

Our country must, at all costs, be perceived as one which is proactive when it concerns any type of sanitary risk. What might be considered as a hindrance in the short term, will surely bear fruits in the future. Our reputation should remain unharmed at all costs and our efforts are directed to that aim.

Our priority is to ensure the safety of our population. I would here make an appeal to the Opposition. In such a grave situation, political boundaries should fall; blowing things out of proportion will only lead to uncertainty within our country and tarnish our image worldwide. We should all pledge to act responsibly.

Even today, the question put forward by the Leader of the Opposition about loopholes and surveillance, he should know that our country, in the surveillance programme, is not there from yesterday. It has been always there. We have a surveillance for Malaria, we have a surveillance for Dengue. He should know that Dengue is in Reunion Island. There are more than 500 cases, but, in Mauritius, we hardly had one case. It means our surveillance system is perfectly active.

I will also make an appeal to members of the press while recognising their essential role in disseminating valuable information. Verification of information will be key and I am confident that together, we will set an example as how to react whenever confronted with such a situation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with these introductory remarks, I now wish to speak on some of the key projects that are being implemented by my Ministry as part of the Government's vision to improve the well-being and quality of life of our citizens.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in an endeavour to provide a better public health service and create a greater accessibility to the public, my Ministry is investing massively in new infrastructure development and hi-tech equipment. In this regard, particular attention is being given to modern state-of-the-art health facilities.

The coming into operation of the new ENT Hospital is a concrete example of our commitment to modernise our public health systems and to better reach out our citizens.

And here, it is imperative that we pay tribute to the generosity and the contribution of the Government of the Republic of India in sustaining our continued efforts to enhance health services delivery in our country.

With the growing number of cancer patients in Mauritius, there was an urgent need for setting up of a new specialised hospital which would focus on the treatment of our patients suffering from cancer.

A new Cancer Hospital is now under construction at Solferino. The construction works started in November 2018 and will be completed in the coming months.

The first phase of the project consists of the renovation of the existing building and this is nearly completed.

The second phase includes the construction of a new ground plus five floors building which is on-going and is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

And here, I take the opportunity again to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his vision and commitment in the realisation of the new Cancer Centre project.

Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is his idea, his vision, that is becoming a reality today.

Rodrigues will, of course, not be left behind while we continue to better our specialised health care.

Our new Master Plan for Rodrigues Hospital is ready. The existing Queen Elizabeth Hospital will undergo considerable infrastructural changes and the services dispensed will also be upgraded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to further enhance the delivery and quality of hospital and specialised health care services at regional level, my Ministry is implementing a state-of-the-art full-fledged Regional Teaching Hospital at Flacq.

This project is in line with the ambition of Government to develop the country into a medical and knowledge hub and to promote medical tourism.

The new Flacq Teaching Hospital will be implemented in two phases. The first phase of the project is the construction of the Hospital Block and the second phase will consist of the construction and commissioning of the Teaching Block to enable the intake of 100 students.

Similarly, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is coming up with a new hospital project entirely dedicated to eye treatment and care.

We all know that the existing eye hospital at Moka is not amenable for further expansion and thus, cannot accommodate the state-of-the-art eye medical services. The

tender for the construction of the hospital has already been launched and is currently under evaluation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of our policy for the provision of free health services, lab investigations are also being provided free of charge to the public.

The Central Health Laboratory is however, overstretched and the existing facilities are proving to be inadequate to meet the growing needs of the country and the current standards of safety, compliance and quality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, of late, the conditions under which essential drugs and medical consumables are stored at the Central Supplies Division and other places, have given rise to adverse comments in many quarters. Even the Director of Audit has raised serious concerns on the storage facilities.

Hence, my Ministry is having recourse to rented buildings and is paying a huge amount of money as rental annually. I am pleased to inform the House that a modern warehouse that matches international standards will be constructed to address these shortcomings.

The project will enable a better storage, monitoring, control and distribution of stocks, facilitate the timely delivery of supplies as well as help avoid wastage due to expiry of drugs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, improving the well-being and quality of life of our citizens is of overriding concern. It is one of the utmost priorities of this Government. We will spare no effort to create better access to health facilities for the benefit of our people and this objective is clearly spelt out in the 'Government Programme'.

At the same time, we will also endeavour to reduce the workload at the level of the regional hospitals and decrease patients' waiting time. My Ministry is currently implementing a series of projects to decentralise our health services by the setting up of Mediclinics and Area Health Centres in different parts of the island, especially where there is a felt need for such facilities.

The Floreal Mediclinic is today a reality. This new facility showcases our vision as far as bringing health care at the doorstep of the population is concerned. I am pleased to announce that four other Mediclinics are in the process of being constructed, namely, at –

- Bel Air;
- Quartier Militaire;
- Coromandel, and
- Stanley.

A new Area Health Centre was inaugurated at Petite Rivière a few weeks ago and not later than this week, we inaugurated a new Community Health Care Centre at Baie du Tombeau while the New Phoenix Community Health Centre is already operational.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is also actively promoting traditional medicine alongside the allopathic and conventional medicine.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Mauritius and India on how to develop traditional medicine, particularly, ayurvedic medicine in Mauritius. The MoU also provides for the establishment of an AYUSH Centre to strengthen the existing friendly relations between Mauritius and India, and to further develop co-operation between our two countries in the field of traditional systems of medicine and homeopathy.

Our dream now, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to see this AYUSH project become a reality in the months to come.

My Ministry is already in touch with Indian Authorities to finalise the modalities of this project, existing legislations will also be amended accordingly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as mentioned earlier, we are fully aware of the crucial role that technology will play in the lives of our citizens in this country.

The House may wish to know that the e-Health project will soon become a reality. The procurement exercise for the selection of a suitable firm to accompany my Ministry throughout this project implementation is ongoing. My ministry and the Ministry for IT have already initiated discussions in this context, I have already had a working session with my colleague Minister and they are very keen to shoulder us in this process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, people suffering from renal problems in our country is rising, implying that many more of them have to undergo dialysis treatment on a regular basis. It is

my pleasure to inform this august Assembly that my Ministry will soon set up a Dialysis Unit at Long Mountain Hospital to cater specifically for patients suffering from renal problems.

The building that will host this new service is already ready and the dialysis machines are already under procurement procedures.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 43 of the 'Government Programme 2020-2024', mention has also been made about the decision of Government to increase the Overseas Treatment Scheme.

Furthermore, it is stated that in the same paragraph the cost of air tickets for a person accompanying the patient will be borne by Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a caring Government, it is our earnest desire to ensure that health services are available at the doorsteps of our citizens, and more importantly, the old and vulnerable people, especially, those who, for obvious reasons, are unable to call at the nearest health centres to obtain medical treatment.

It is the fundamental objective of this Government to continue to build and foster an inclusive society and in this regard, Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry aims at establishing an effective Primary Health Care System, with a family and community-based approach, to provide integrated people-centred services through the Family Doctor Service Scheme.

The Family Doctor Service Scheme is a novel initiative which will include domiciliary visits to persons who are bedridden, severely disabled elderly who are above 60 years and elderly above 90 years old.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is facing a demographic shift with a declining fertility rate and increasing life expectancy. During the last 25 years, the total fertility rate has steadily decreased to below replacement fertility level of 2.1, that is, the rate required for a population to replace itself.

In 2018, the total fertility rate was 1.37, which is lower than the average in Europe, 1.6. There are indications that the population of Mauritius will show a declining trend after the year 2021.

In this regard, the decision of Government to increase parental leave to 4 weeks is highly commendable since it will encourage young couples to have more children.

Moreover, Mauritius is witnessing an ageing population which is not an ideal economic situation for the country. Ageing population is a complex phenomenon as there is no single easy solution to achieve a reversal in the lowering fertility trends.

There is a need to have a comprehensive approach in order to mitigate the dire consequences of an ageing population, shrinking working age population and depopulation.

My Ministry has, thus, sought technical assistance from the United Nations Population Fund to review our National Population Policy with the aim of determining priorities in population and development programmes for the sustainable development of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of our health strategy to deal with the scourge of NCD's, we will continue to create better awareness in the population at national level on the need and importance of physical activities, thus making Mauritius a physically active and healthy nation. It is wiser to prevent disease onset through simple means than to wait for complications which would lead to massive investment on high tech know-how.

My Ministry is also planning to carry out a National Nutrition Survey. The main objective of this survey will be to study the food consumption patterns and assess the nutritional status of the population.

A survey on NCD will also be conducted by the end of this year in view of determining the prevalence and the trends in –

- hypertension;
- diabetes;
- cardiovascular diseases;
- obesity, and
- their associated risk factors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, promoting healthy living and lifestyle, consolidating the fabric of our society, enhancing the wellness and quality of life of our citizens *per force* imply that we deal with the abuse of alcohol and tobacco consumption.

My Ministry will, therefore, pursue its campaign to sensitise the public through effective community-based interventions in order to accelerate behavioural change at all levels of our society.

We will also strengthen the existing legislation to address alcohol and tobacco consumption trends.

It is also proposed to review and work out a new National Action Plan on Tobacco for the period 2021-2025. My Ministry shall leave no stone unturned to maintain its privileged position as the Regional Leader in Tobacco Control in Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measure announced in the Government Programme to expedite the implementation of a Drug Control Master Plan on rehabilitation and treatment of drug addicts, shows the commitment of this Government to tackle the scourge of drugs and its devastating effects on our society, particularly our youth.

This battle against drugs requires a multi-sectorial approach. In this regard, my Ministry will reinforce the drug use prevention programmes in all educational and vocational institutions with a view to empowering our students with drug resilience skills. Our campaigns are also directed towards our youth who often fall prey to this scourge.

Employees in the public and private sectors will also be sensitised through evidence-based workplace prevention on alcohol and drugs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same manner, my Ministry will step up its effort to contain the HIV epidemic. The available data reveals that the annual number of new HIV cases is around 350 since the past few years. This is quite high for a small country such as Mauritius.

The mission is to provide high-quality HIV prevention, treatment and care services available and accessible to all Mauritians, in particular, the Key Affected Populations who are most at risk of HIV infection.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 39 of the Programme, mention has been made about the setting up of a new Faculty of Medicine and Health at the University of Mauritius. After

running different courses in the medical field in collaboration with various foreign institutions, the UOM is now ready to re-engineer the faculty of Medicine and at the same time, it will ensure that our country has the necessary skills and competencies to face the onslaught of global changes and challenges.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said at the beginning, this Programme 2020-2024 is a social interaction that enjoins us as a Government to rise to the challenges of our ambitions, keep up our promises to shape a better future, a more prosperous future for our citizens.

The vision of this Government is to move to a higher altitude. “It’s like the view from a plane as opposed to the view from a car”. From this perspective, the population will be able to see our true character.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me quote Thomas Friedman, the author of the best-seller “The World is Flat”.

“Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less.”

On 07 November 2019, the people of this country understood us.

Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I will now suspend the sitting for some 30 minutes.

At 5.20 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.13 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(6.12 p.m.)

Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Merci, M. le président.

M. le président, j’interviens dans ce débat, alors que certains membres de l’Opposition sont privés de parole, certains membres du MMM, l’honorable Rajesh Bhagwan, l’honorable Nagalingum et entre autres, l’honorable Armance, et certains membres

du Parti travailliste. Je sympathise avec mes amis, mais après mûre réflexion, on s'est dit qu'on a beaucoup de choses à dire pour participer dans ce débat.

Je voudrais aussi, M. le président, dire que nous entamons le débat sur ce discours-programme en pensant aussi à trois familles qui souffrent énormément de l'incendie d'hier, à Pailles, où trois personnes sont décédées. On a une pensée spéciale pour ces familles, pour ces jeunes. Je connais très bien le jeune Fabrice Maurice, un jeune très prometteur, très sportif de résidence La Caverne, une famille que je connais très bien qui a perdu son fils, son enfant dans des conditions, dans des circonstances tragiques. Les familles sont dans notre prière, dans nos pensées.

M. le président, on 24 January 2020, the President of the Republic stood right here, next to your chair, to deliver a speech which was supposedly the Government Programme 2020-2024. I am sure that the population of Mauritius had hopes and expectation for this 2020-2024 Programme.

However, after listening to the President for almost over one hour, it became clear that the Programme has no future planning based on current economic, social, environmental circumstances. No new innovative ideas, measures and, in fact, simply no effort and vision was put in this document. The Programme was just a mere repetition of the Government Programme 2015-2019 and including some snapshots of the Budget Speeches 2016-2019.

Instead of a serious Government programme with concrete measures for economic and social growth, fight against corruption and poverty as well as careful planning for future needs and our younger generation, the current Government-Programme 2020-2024 mostly contained some beautiful words worthy of a novel book. *Je tiens ça je suppose de deux rédacteurs - l'honorable Obeegadoo et l'honorable Bodha surement y sont pour quelque chose.* I ask myself this question: is this Government serious about leading this country?

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me list a few examples of the Government Programme 2020-2024, *une version de copier-coller-réchauffer* : Climate change, same story to the previous programme; the Marshall Plan, same story; the Waste to Energy Project dated 2006, 30 Megawatt of 2006; Jobs: 10,000 jobs, same story. At least, this time, Mr Soodhun is not around to promise for '*deux emplois par personne*'. Housing! 10,000 new homes, same story! Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government talks about making Mauritius a high-income country, but does not give any indication or plan on how to get there. We all know

the prices of basic food commodities; household sundries are only increasing and will, no doubt, continue to increase, as an example of the effect of the new Coronavirus on the world trade.

Is there a plan after this Coronavirus? Will current import and export trade deals with china be affected, Mr Speaker, Sir? Unfortunately, there are a lot of concern and questions which remain unanswered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will not go into further details of this current uninspired Government Programme. But I will instead stick to my sector, the energy sector.

M. le président, avant d'élaborer sur le secteur énergétique, permettez-moi de préciser dans quelle circonstance nous débattons de ce discours-programme. Nous débattons de ce discours-programme avec en face de nous, M. le président, un gouvernement en sursis, un gouvernement en suspens, un gouvernement dont la survie dépend de ce que notre Cour suprême, la plus haute instance judiciaire sur l'île, va décider en ce qui concerne les pétitions électorales.

M. le président, c'est très facile de dire que nous avons gagné, que nous avons remporté les élections. Même avec les 37 % on a gagné, on est victorieux, c'est facile de le dire. Le Parti travailliste, le MMM, le PMSD - on nous traite de mauvais perdants. Le Parti travailliste est mauvais perdant, le MMM est mauvais perdant, le PMSD est mauvais perdant, Roshi Bhadain est un mauvais perdant, 100% citoyen est un mauvais perdant ! 63% de la population ont rejeté ce gouvernement, c'est un fait ! *It's a fact!* Et c'est facile de dire qu'on a gagné quand, après les élections, nous découvrons des bulletins un peu à Port Louis, des bulletins un peu partout. C'est facile de dire nous avons gagné quand plus de 7,000 à 8,000 personnes n'ont pas pu voter. Alors que les vivants ne votent pas, les morts arrivent à voter !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet on this side!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, l'honorable membre a envie de faire savoir qu'il est là ! Il est là, on le sait. Il faut des clowns des fois....

M. le président, c'est facile de dire on a gagné quand nous avons vu l'exercice de la règle rangeant les bulletins dans des boites. C'est facile de gagner quand nous voyons

l'exercice des *T-squares*. C'est facile de gagner quand nous avons vu les fameux bureaux de l'*IT Room*, où seul un fonctionnaire du *SIL* avait la charge de la comptabilité des voix...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Member speak, please!

Mr Assirvaden: Nous avons choisi de nous remettre à la Cour suprême. Nous faisons confiance au Judiciaire. Nous sommes allés devant la plus haute instance judiciaire sur l'île, nous faisons confiance à la justice et nous attendons. J'ai écouté avec attention l'honorable ministre Yogida Sawmynaden parler du Parti travailliste. Au moins une dizaine de fois, il a cité le nom du Docteur Navin Ramgoolam, mais pas une phrase du ministre sur le cauchemar que sont en train de vivre les automobilistes avec l'essence contaminé. Pas une phrase ! Des milliers et des milliers d'automobilistes nous écoutent, M. le président, ils attendaient à ce que le ministre, au lieu d'être hanté par le Docteur Navin Ramgoolam/Parti travailliste, donne des éléments de réponses, rassure ces gens-là, ces pères de famille qui ont eu leurs voitures abimées.

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec attention certains discours des honorables membres, ici présents, des deux côtés de la Chambre. J'ai apprécié certains discours. J'ai aussi apprécié...

(Interruptions)

Vous voulez que je m'occupe de lui, M. le président, non ?

Mr Speaker: Carry on, hon. Member! Carry on!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, on a écouté avec attention, et surtout, moi j'ai écouté avec attention le *Maiden Speech* de l'honorable Rawoo, un jeune dentiste, élu pour la première fois, faisant tout ce qu'il y a de mesquin sur le Parti travailliste, tout ce qu'il y a de méchant sur le Parti travailliste.

(Interruptions)

Vous avez été élu une première fois, vous être un dentiste, un jeune professionnel, vous trouvez le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam à terre, vous trouvez le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam ceci cela, le Parti travailliste à terre, mais, moi, contrairement à mon ami l'honorable Dr. Mahend

Gungapersad, je ne vous tiendrai pas rigueur, mais je vous conseillerai, honorable Rawoo, de méditer sur ce proverbe africain qui dit ceci, entre autres –

« Même à terre - même en étant à terre, honorable Rawoo - un éléphant est toujours bien plus haut qu'un chien debout. »

Méditez dessus ! Même en étant à terre, il est toujours quand même bien plus haut qu'un chien debout !

M. le président, il y a certains honorables membres qui ont cité Rihanna, d'autres ont cité Abdul Kalam. Je me permettrai, M. le président, si vous me le permettez, bien sûr, de citer quelques lignes d'un Mauricien bien plus conscient de la réalité économique sociale du pays. C'est un Mauricien qui a écrit une lettre il y a quelques jours de cela à l'occasion du commencement du Carême Chrétien. L'Éminence Cardinal Maurice Piat écrit sa lettre pastorale; en s'adressant à la nation, il dit ceci, c'était dans la presse –

« Et cependant beaucoup parmi nous ressentent comme une certaine inquiétude. Au moment où l'on s'attend à un ralentissement de l'économie au niveau mondial, notre situation économique est marquée par un endettement si important que certains experts craignent une dépréciation de la roupie. »

C'est le Cardinal Maurice Piat qui écrit et qui continue, il dit ceci –

« La contestation des résultats des élections – c'est le chef de l'Église Catholique qui parle – d'une ampleur jamais connue jusqu'ici crée une certaine instabilité et nous prive de la sérénité nécessaire pour le bon fonctionnement de notre démocratie. Dans la société, une violence diffuse se manifeste par une recrudescence des meurtres et de violence dans le cercle familial, en particulier, envers les enfants. »

Le Cardinal continue –

« Le trafic de la drogue s'étend – c'est le Cardinal Maurice Piat qui le dit – les gros trafiquants encouragent l'émergence des petits trafiquants qui gagnent leur vie en détruisant un nombre grandissant de jeunes. Leurs familles sont submergées par la souffrance. Sur nos routes, règne une indiscipline notoire et des accidents mortels se multiplient. Dans le monde du travail, des fermetures d'usines et des licenciements menacent la stabilité de l'emploi. Le logement social toujours insuffisant entraîne une

multiplication des squatteurs ainsi qu'un entassement dans une promiscuité dans des logements de fortune. Tout cela est loin d'entretenir au quotidien (...). »

Écoutez ça, M. le président –

« Tout cela est loin d'entretenir au quotidien l'ambiance de paix dont les enfants, les jeunes, les familles ont besoin pour s'épanouir et dont notre pays a besoin pour réussir. »

En 2020, la lettre pastorale du Cardinal Piat que je laisse à l'appréciation de la population et à l'appréciation des honorables membres ici présents.

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec attention aussi comme j'ai dit le discours programme. A la page 37 du discours programme, le Président de la République disait ceci –

“A sustainable and green society.”

J'en ai directement au secteur énergétique. A l'item 143 –

“It is clear that the impact of global warming and climate change is being increasingly felt across the world. Mauritius as an island nation with a small land mass is most vulnerable (...). Government will play a leadership role – très joliment écrit – not only for the domestic front but also regionally and internationally to champion a paradigm shift in our development policy.”

Très joliment écrit. Je vous emmène dans un petit voyage, M. le président. Je peux vous transporter dix ans de cela.

Mr Speaker: Avec plaisir !

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden : On est en 2020. Je n'ai pas à me méfier de vous, vous êtes sûr.

M. le président, je vous emmène en 2010 lors du lancement du *workshop* sur le MID, Maurice Ile Durable. Le 01 décembre 2010, le Premier ministre d'alors disait ceci –

“MID is essentially a vision that seeks to transform the environmental, economic, social landscape of our country. It belongs to each and every one of us. MID seeks to be left capital not only for generations but for generations to come. The MID vision

is engaged in a strategic framework embracing five development pillars, namely education, environmental, energy, employment, equity.”

Vous êtes d'accord, l'honorable Osman. Dix ans de cela ! Nous sommes en 2020. Ceci a été écrit dix ans de cela. Nous lisons la même chose dans le discours programme lu par le Président de la République. Quelle est la position aujourd'hui ? Nous sommes en 2014. Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement élu en 2014 a fait du MID ? Démanteler le MID, révoquer le Professeur Joël de Rosnay, éminent scientifique. Le MID était un projet non pas politique, le MID est un projet de visionnaire pour plusieurs années, une île Maurice avant-gardiste, écologique, *sustainable*. Non, le nouveau gouvernement, avec le ministre actuel, le *Deputy Prime Minister* au sein du ministère de l'Énergie a complètement démantelé le MID. Aujourd'hui, c'est un drame pour le pays. Aujourd'hui, nous payons les conséquences en ce qui concerne la vision, les bases jetées depuis 2014. Et le gouvernement vous dit à la page 37, je lis encore une fois, le Président a admirablement lu, le Président dit ceci à l'tem 146 –

“Government will continue to encourage carbon-free energy generation by accelerating the development of renewable energy to reach 35% en 2025 and 40% en 2030.”

Laissez-moi vous donner un aperçu, M. le président, sur les faits de la situation en termes d'énergie renouvelable de 2014 à ce jour.

“The implementation of renewable energy during period 2015-2019 has been very poorly executed - par le Deputy Prime Minister - and figures speak for themselves. In as far back as 2014, the proportion of renewable energy to non-renewable energy was as follows - je cite ici les chiffres de l'Annual Report du CEB de 2015 -

Total percentage renewable energy en 2014 17.8% and the total non-renewable energy was 82.2% en 2014. Strangely enough, the total percentage renewable energy for period July 2018 – ils sont au pouvoir depuis 2014 – to June 2019 has gone down to 17.29%.”

Je cite ici les statistiques proposées par le *Central Electricity Board* en Juin 2019, 17.9% *renewable energy* 2018-2019. Nous avons régressé, *that is, a reduction of 0.5% over a span of five years, 2014 à 2019*. Tout ce que le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Collendavelloo raconte sur la radio, raconte en se couvrant de la MBC, que du bla-bla. Nous avons reculé. C'est malheureux qu'il n'est pas là aujourd'hui.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Assirvaden: Je suis vraiment déçu. Mr Speaker, Sir, how then are you going to achieve 35% en 2025? This is the direct consequence of the dismantling of the Maurice Ile Durable Project. Je ne suis pas économiste, je ne suis pas financier, c'est ce qu'on appelle dans le jargon *a negative growth*. Nous avons régressé depuis 2014 à ce jour.

M. le président, je vous disais quelle est la situation aujourd'hui. Pourquoi une faillite totale du ministère de l'Énergie et des Utilités Publiques, de la direction du CEB, une faillite totale. Je vous donne un exemple flagrant pour soutenir ce que je dis et, moi, je souhaite de tout cœur, le *Deputy Prime Minister* aura l'occasion j'en suis sûr dans les jours à venir de venir parler sur son ministère. Je suis sûr il viendra et j'espère il viendra me démentir de ce que je suis en train de dire ici.

Je donne un exemple flagrant, un projet, le projet de Plaine Sophie Eolien, des promoteurs Suzlon-Padgreen de 29 MW. Un projet datant de 2012, bien sûr, oui. De 2012, on est en 2020. En 2014, le nouveau ministre de l'énergie est en poste. Un projet de huit ans. Le CEB se retrouve dans un gouffre, n'arrivant plus à savoir quoi faire, 29 MW sur les bras depuis huit ans et vous voulez dire que nous allons atteindre les 35% en 2030? Un projet de 29 MW, du *mismanagement* du projet et moi, je tiens le ministre responsable de ça. Moi je tiens le ministère, le ministre responsable de ça. Et savez-vous ce qui s'est ressorti des enquêtes concernant ce projet? *A fake bank guarantee* a été donné dans ce projet-là. J'espère que le ministre viendra me démentir parce que, dans une réponse parlementaire, en date du 08 mai 2018, le *Deputy Prime Minister* répond à une question de son bon ami, l'ancien député Bashir Jahangeer. Il répond ceci à son ami, le 08 mai 2018 –

“CEB has agreed to a last and final extension of the commercial operation date up to 12 October 2018.”

Je parle ici du projet Suzlon-Padgreen de 29 MW à Plaine Sophie Eolien. Le ministre continue. Il dit ceci. Il répond dans cette Assemblée –

“If I understand properly, yes; should the work not be over by 12 October 2018.”

Ce projet-là - 12 octobre 2018.

“as from 13 October 2018 liquidated damages will apply. But then, after 90 days, the capping of liquidated damages will amount to some USD 3 million.”

Les promoteurs se frottent les mains, Suzlon-Padgreen.

“After that, then CEB can terminate the contract.”

M. le président, comment voulez-vous que nous croyons ce qui est écrit dans ce livret, lu par le Président de la République, de jolies mots, de belles phrases, j'en conviens alors qu'un projet de huit ans, préparé par le gouvernement travailliste, ficelé par le gouvernement travailliste, signé par le gouvernement travailliste est incapable d'être inauguré, d'être finalisé par le ministre, le ministère. Comment voulez-vous que nous croyons dans ce qui est écrit dans ce discours programme?

Toujours à la page 37, M. le président, il dit ceci à l'item 142, *Sustainable and Green Society*. L'honorable Obeegadoo a bien fait son travail. *Sustainable and Green Society* –

“Government is committed to adopting a responsible and environmentally sustainable development policy.”

Excusez mon anglais, M. le président. *Government is committed* sur l'environnement. Vous voulez savoir le gouvernement est *committed* dans l'environnement, allez à la rue Vandermeersch. Allez voir ce qu'ils ont fait. La population en est témoin avec des arbres centenaires, un massacre écologique alors que cela aura pu être évité. Et là on se pose des questions qu'est-ce qui va se passer à Quatre Bornes? Qu'est-ce qui va se passer à Vacoas? Qu'est-ce qui va se passer à Curepipe avec le nouveau ministre? Pour vous dire il parle de vision. Vision, M. le président, vision! Vous voulez que nous croyions de ce qui est écrit dans ce discours programme? La population a le droit de ne plus croire. Vous parlez de vision. Allez à Ebène, à l'arrière du CEB de Rose-Hill, ils sont en train de construire un Wellness Park à Ebene. Vision! Un Wellness Park à Ebene pour les gens - sous la pression populaire, ils ont dit okay, on va construire quelque chose que les gens puissent faire leur jogging. Deux députés de l'endroit. Ils ont été construire sous les réseaux de haute tension du CEB. Nous savons tous que sous les réseaux de haute tension du CEB, on n'a pas le droit de construire, on n'a pas le droit de vivre. Il n'y a pas d'activité. C'est un fait. Allez autour de l'île Maurice.

Allez voir les réseaux de 66,000 volts. Ce n'est pas les 240 volts que nous avons à la maison. Les 66,000 émettent des rayons néfastes pour la santé de tout à chacun.

Vision, un *Wellness Park*, un *jogging track* sous les réseaux du CEB. Du jamais vu. Allez demander au CEB, la permission de construire quoi que ce soit sous son réseau, il vous sera refuser. Pas d'activité sous les réseaux de haute tension du CEB. Voilà, la vision de ce gouvernement et vous voulez que nous croyions, que nous continuons à croire dans ces belles paroles écrites ici. Mais, encore une fois, je déplore, je suppose qu'il est très, très, très, très, préoccupé le *Deputy Prime Minister* pour ne pas être là aujourd'hui. Six ans!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Continue please!

Mr Assirvaden: Six ans, de 2014 à ce jour. Moi, j'avais espéré, quand le nouveau gouvernement se formait, que le Premier ministre allait caser l'honorable Collendavelloo aux Affaires étrangères. Je dis au moins il fera moins de dégâts. Six ans, rien en terme d'énergie renouvelable. Six ans! Le projet éolien, Aerowatt de Plaine des Roches, inauguré après 2014, préparé par le gouvernement travailliste, initié par le gouvernement travailliste. Un projet de 9.35 MW qui roule actuellement. Le projet dont je viens de faire état Suzlon-Padgreen, huit ans, jusqu'ici rien mais j'espère quand le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Collendavelloo sera ici pour son discours, il viendra nous montrer, chiffres à l'appui, pas de bla-bla, des chiffres à l'appui et nous parlons en mégawatts. J'espère qu'il comprend mieux- on ne parle pas kilowatts, viendra pas nous dire quelque kilowatts sur les toits des gens. Non, il nous faut parler en mégawatts. C'est ce mégawatt-là qui nous fera progresser dans l'énergie renouvelable, dans l'île Maurice durable.

Suivons l'exemple de l'île de la Réunion, M. le président. Ils ont les mêmes exigences énergétiques que l'île Maurice. Ils ont le même réseau que nous un réseau fermé de 7,000 kilomètres à 8,000 kilomètres. Ils ont les mêmes contours énergétiques en *peak load* et en *base load*; les mêmes problèmes que nous et pourtant, ils ont fait un bond en terme d'énergie renouvelable depuis plusieurs années. Il suffisait de copier-coller, au moins on aurait su aujourd'hui où on est.

M. le président, à la page 38 du discours programme, à l'item 150, le Président de la République dit ceci –

“Government will encourage the use of Liquefied Natural Gas for the production of electricity, for internal transport, for domestic use as well as for eventual bunkering purposes.”

J’ai écouté un honorable membre quelques temps de cela faire référence à ça. Je suppose que le ministre parle ici du fameux rapport Poten. Le *LNG, le Combined Cycle Gas Turbine*, c’est une bonne chose en soi. C’est quelque chose de propre, comparé au charbon et à huile lourde. L’intention est bonne. Je suppose que le Président de la République en lisant ces quelques lignes faisait référence au rapport Poten qu’on espère le ministre nous fera avoir une copie lors de son discours. Mais ce qui est un fait, c’est que le ministre est au courant qu’un autre rapport le Wally Parsons explique clairement que la masse critique n’existe pas pour ce genre de projet dans l’île Maurice. Nous avons une population de 1.2-1.3 million d’habitants.

Notre masse en matière de transport est très limitée. Le *CEB*, le *peak* du *CEB* tourne autour de 500-507 mégawatts, très petit. Le ministre est au courant que nous n’avons pas cette masse critique. C’est pour cette raison peut-être que le *Chairman*, l’ancien, le nouveau *Chairman* du *CEB* a été à l’île de la Réunion, a été aux Seychelles, a été aux Comores pour essayer de faire un consortium pour pouvoir emmener le *LLG*. Je parle.

J’espère que les membres de l’autre côté de la Chambre, les membres du gouvernement prennent conscience que ce que ce rapport dit est vraiment dangereux pour l’île Maurice en termes de masse critique. Mais quelle vision ? J’ai vu le ministre écrire quelque part et dire quelque part que le projet sera à Fort George. Où à Fort George ? Posons-nous la question ! Attendez une réponse du *Deputy Prime Minister*. Où on mettra ce *storage* de *LNG* à Fort George ? Si ce n’est pas à Fort George, si c’est ailleurs, comment faire pour le transport de ce projet ? Beaucoup de questions que le rapport WorleyParsons donne des réponses, que le ministre entête, a continué à croire en faisant de l’*Acting General Manager* du *CEB*, le porte-parole de ce projet. Un projet d’un milliard de roupies, de 120 MW. La population demande, les députés, les ministres au sein du gouvernement, je suis sûr, vous vous posez des questions en ce qui concerne le bienfondé de ce projet.

Il n’y a pas que ça. La guerre des clans. Vous savez ce projet de *LNG*, un *tender* fut lancé il y a quelque temps, *on open bid*. Une société grecque qui s’appelle Mytilineos, a reçu sa *Letter of Notification Award* 6 ou 7 mois après évaluation. Les grecques sont le *successful*

bidder de ce projet. Le ministère, le *CEB* est conscient. Le *tender document* est toujours devant l'*IRP*, le *tender document* est toujours devant le *Central Procurement Board*. Les grecques ont en leur possession leur *Letter of Award*. Qu'est-ce qui se passe le 26 février 2019 ? C'est important que les ministres de ce gouvernement, surtout les membres du Cabinet et les jeunes Parlementaires ici sachent. Le 26 février 2019 à 16.30 de l'après-midi, alors que le *tender document* est devant l'*IRP*, alors que le *tender document* est devant le *Central Procurement Board*, se tiennent une réunion.

Présents : *The Acting Permanent Secretary, the Director of MOFED, the Deputy High Commission of India, the Senior Adviser du Ministère, the Acting General Manager of CEB, the Chairman of CEB, M. Naidoo, the First Secretary High Commissioner* et tenez-vous bien, *M. Prabhat Singh, Managing Director/CEO of Petronet LNG Ltd.*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, would you table the script?

Mr Assirvaden: *Yes, of course.* Mr Naveen Jain, *Senior Manager Projects at Petronet LNG Ltd* et au sein du ministère, le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo. Au même moment que le *tender document* de Mytilineos, les grecques sont devant l'*IRP*, avec leur prix étalé sur la place publique, leur technologie étalée sur la place publique, le *EPC contractor* connu, le prix au kilowattheure connu, une réunion se tient au *Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities* en présence de toutes ces personnes. Qui préside cette réunion ? Le *Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities*. Laissez-moi vous lire quelques lignes de ce procès-verbal –

“Mr Prabhat Singh, the Managing Director/ CEO of Petronet Ltd thanked the Deputy Prime Minister for giving the opportunity to Petronet LNG Ltd to explain the objective of their present visit to Mauritius.”

C'est le 26 février 2019, j'espère que le ministre viendra me démentir. *He added that –*

“The present visit follows a team which visited Mauritius last week in connection with the procurement of combined cycle gas turbine.”

Devant l'*IRP*, devant le *Central Procurement Board*, et en sa possession, les Grecques de Mytilineos ont un contrat en main, le ministre reçoit dans son bureau, dans une réunion. A la fin de la réunion, *Petronet LNG Ltd agreed to submit a proposal within a reasonable period of time given the urgency of the project*. Quelle crédibilité donnée à ce qui est écrit

aujourd'hui dans ce discours-programme, M. le président ? J'espère que les membres du gouvernement prennent conscience de ce qui s'est passé le 26 février 2019 sur ce projet dont le Président de la République a lu en grande ligne ici. Et j'espère aussi de tout cœur que le *Deputy Prime Minister* viendra me *proved wrong* si cette réunion n'a jamais eu lieu, que ce contrat n'a pas été donné déjà à Mytilineos, les Grecques. Je l'espère.

A la page 29 du discours-programme du Président de la République – M. le président, il me reste que 10 minutes - à l'item 114, je cite, le Président lit –

“Government will support the Utility Regulatory Authority for the implementation of a regulatory framework for electricity and will review the governance structure and operations of the Central Electricity Board to enable it to respond to the requirements of the Utility Regulatory Authority.”

Pour la population, pour certaines personnes, je précise, à la page 29, paragraphe 114, nous parlons ici de la corporatisation du *CEB*. J'ai entendu le ministre, il y a quelques semaines à la radio et j'ai lu, le ministre quelque part disait : « Hors de question de la corporatisation de la *Central Water Authority* ». Ici, nous parlons de la corporatisation claire et nette du *CEB*. Un rapport que j'espère que le ministre a lu, un rapport canadien commandité par le *CEB* en 2018, le rapport *Transcom Company Ltd*. Les canadiens précisent, c'est sur la page 7. Je lis pour vous, M. le président. Je suis sûr que le ministre a une copie de ça et j'espère qu'il a emmené au Cabinet une copie de ça dans le temps.

“The corporatisation of CEB has started the creation of three wholly owned subsidiaries in charge of renewable energy.”

On parle ici de la corporatisation du *CEB*. J'espère que les syndicats, en écoutant ce qui se passe aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée nationale, vont se poser des questions. La création du *CEB Green Company Ltd*, *CEB Fibernet Company Ltd*, *CEB Facilities Company Ltd*. Le rapport est là, c'est pour ça que je parle ici. Et le rapport parle de la corporatisation du *CEB*. Pourquoi corporatiser ? Segmenter le *CEB* en trois, et là j'entends dire qu'il sera segmenter en cinq. *CEB Generation Ltd*, *CEB transmission Ltd*. Pourquoi segmenter ? Le ministre doit pouvoir nous donner des éléments de réponse. Pourquoi ? Pour nommer certaines personnes à la tête de ces sociétés *Company Ltd*. Pourquoi ? Par exemple, un certain Dayal à

la tête du *CEB Green Company Ltd* ou plutôt un expatrié à la tête du *Fibernet Company Ltd*, un certain Monsieur Babu.

Mr Speaker: Please, don't name people.

Mr Assirvaden: Mais pour Monsieur Saumtally, on avait dit.

Mr Speaker: No, that was something else.

Mr Assirvaden: Ça, ce n'est pas *else*? Okay ! Le directeur de Fibernet Ltd, je viens de dire le nom, l'expatrié. Segmenter le *CEB* en trois et prochainement en cinq. Pourquoi ? Corporatiser le *CEB*. Pourquoi ? Pour ne pas passer par le *Central Procurement Board*, les *procurement policies*. On se pose des questions. Le *CEB Fibernet Ltd*, avec l'expatrié qui est là, le nom que j'ai dit, que je ne dirais pas encore. Savez-vous, M. le président, que ce directeur du *CEB Fibernet*, créé en 2018 quand on a segmenté, corporatisé, il a un salaire de 13,000 dollars par mois, Rs480,000 par mois. Vous réalisez, M. le président, le Premier ministre, quelques minutes de cela parlait de serrer la ceinture.

R 480,000, 13,000 USD pour l'expatrié de *CEB Fibernet*. J'espère qu'on aura des éléments de réponse du *Deputy Prime Minister*. M. le président, savez-vous que l'expatrié est supposé vendre - Le *CEB Fibernet Company Limited* a été conçu pour vendre des *broadband internet*. J'espère, encore une fois, que le *Deputy Prime Minister* viendra éclaircir la Chambre, comment expliquer que le CEB en ses fonds propres, la somme de R 350 millions a été investie dans le *CEB Fibernet*, et il viendra nous dire quels sont les résultats en termes de *broadband internet* vendu jusqu'ici. Parce que cette compagnie a été formée justement *on the purpose* de vendre des *broadband internet* aux sociétés mauriciennes. Nous espérons que le ministre viendra éclaircir la situation. Et aussi, ce fameux directeur de *CEB Fibernet*, M. Baboo, savez-vous, M. le président, que dans cette Ile Maurice de 2020, ce directeur de *Fibernet Company Limited*, subsidiaire du *CEB*, il a eu ses impôts, *l'income tax*, je pèse mes mots, *income tax* de R 1.2 millions payés par le *CEB*.

M. le président, moi, je ne connais que le Président de la République et Vice-Président de la République qui ne payent pas les impôts. J'ai bien dit ? Nous payons tous, ici, nos impôts. Tous les membres de cette Assemblée, nous payons nos impôts. Les ministres payent leurs impôts. Vous-même, M. le président, vous payez vos impôts. Même si vous n'avez rien déclaré la fois dernière, mais vous payé vos impôts.

Mr Speaker: Please, resume your seat! Resume your seat! Please, do not impute motives. Do not make allegations! Everything is legal. If you take the pain of verifying everything, you would see the truth. By the way, when I said to you 'do not name people', it is the simple principle that they are not here and they will not be able to defend themselves. It is not me, it is in the Standing Orders.

Mr Ganoo: On a point of order, Mr Speaker, Sir. An hon. Member does not have the right to drag the Speaker into the debates. It is an elementary principle of our Standing Orders.

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, *I have been very nice to you* parce que...

(Interruptions)

M. le président, j'espère ne pas nommer les gens qui ne sont pas présents dans cette Chambre, soit pour tout le monde. Il y a certains membres de la majorité qui ont nommé certaines personnes qui ne sont pas présentes des dizaines de fois et vous avez écouté, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Let me put things clear. There is a category of people which you can put the name in the House here, but other people who are not here, who are not attached to the House, you cannot name them. Please!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, *with due respect*, je n'ai pas voulu vous trainer, j'ai simplement lu, comme tout le monde dans le public, les déclarations de tout à chacun.

Mr Speaker: Yes, let me say once more, I have already made my point clear. Do not refer to the Press and come in the House. You have to verify your information before you say anything and you take the responsibility of whatever you say. Now you continue with your speech!

Mr Assirvaden: Bien sûr que je prends mes responsabilités, M. le président. Bien sûr que je prends mes responsabilités. Je parlais de Fibernet Company Limited avec les impôts payés, non pas exemptés, par la Central Electricity Board, et j'espère que le *Deputy Prime Minister*, responsable de ce dossier, responsable du CEB, viendra, en temps et lieu, me démentir s'il le faut, concernant l'impôt, le salaire, la position de ce directeur de *CEB Fibernet*.

M. le président, nous faisons une route à l'envers. Dans ce qui est fait depuis 2014, au sein du ministère de l'Energie tout est démantelé. Au sein de l'opposition, nous demandons le rétablissement du MID. Ce n'était pas un outil politique, c'était le Maurice Ile Durable, c'était une vision d'une île écologique. Et nous demandons à ce que le MID soit sous la tutelle du *Prime Minister's Office*. Cette vision est trop large, les enjeux trop grands, le défi trop grand pour que nous donnions cela à un ministère, qui a l'exigence du CEB, de la Central Water Authority ou la Wastewater Management. Non! Il nous faut cette vision, cette structure sous la tutelle du *Prime Minister's Office*. Nous demandons le rétablissement du MID. Nous demandons que la politique de la maîtrise de la demande de l'énergie revienne d'actualité. C'est la solution ! Nous savons tous que sur le réseau du *CEB*, nous ne pouvons emmètre plus de 30%-35% d'énergie renouvelable. Il y va de la stabilité du réseau. Tous les experts l'ont souligné, nous ne pourrons jamais dépasser les 30%-35% à cause de l'instabilité du réseau. Et pourtant, nous n'avons pas de *smart grid*, et pourtant, nous n'avons pas de réseaux intelligents.

J'ai lu quelque part, le ministre pense introduire le *smart grid*, le réseau intelligent après six ans. Dommage! A l'île de la Réunion, ils ont segmenté leur réseau pour pouvoir augmenter l'énergie renouvelable. Nous demandons que nous ayons un réseau intelligent. L'efficacité énergétique, où est la politique d'efficacité énergétique du gouvernement ? Zéro ! Pas de vision ! Et nous demandons aussi le retour du professeur Joël de Rosnay, un scientifique de renom, ce n'était pas un politicien. Nous demandons le retour de l'universitaire Khalil Elahee. Ils ont contribué dans le Maurice Ile Durable pour faire notre pays devenir une île durable.

Nous demandons, M. le président, l'optimisation de la bagasse. Nous négocions, actuellement avec l'Independent Power Producer Alteo, un nouveau contrat. Les *IPP* sont arrivés à terme après 20 ans. Depuis des années on se bat avec les *IPP* pour pouvoir changer le contrat. Nous sommes à la veille de pouvoir changer la donne. Nous sommes en 2020, le *CEB* négocie avec les promoteurs d'Alteo, une extension de deux ans, pas d'optimisation de la bagasse, alors que la bagasse compte plus de 58% dans notre énergie renouvelable. 58% ! Les 17.9% d'énergies renouvelables, vous retirez les 10.03% de la bagasse, il vous reste que 7.26%.

L'optimisation de la bagasse était un must dans les négociations avec Alteo. C'est pour cette raison que je demande que cela passe sous la tutelle du *Prime Minister's Office*. Le

Deputy Prime Minister, j'ai l'impression, nécessite dans cette Chambre, à la population, à ces collègues du Cabinet, des éclaircissements. Il nous faut, M. le président, un engagement ferme au plus haut de l'Etat que le charbon est chose du passé. Il nous faut un engagement ferme, ou le Premier ministre ou le *Deputy Prime Minister*, que plus jamais de charbon dans l'Ile Maurice durable. Pourquoi laisser l'initiative à la *Mauritius Commercial Bank* ? Belle initiative de la *Mauritius Commercial Bank*, très louable le projet climat.

Très louable, très belle initiative, très ambitieux, mais pourquoi laisser *the lead* à la *MCB* alors que nous avons un ministère de l'Energie et des services publiques qui roule le *CEB*, qui est en génération et transmission, mais c'était au gouvernement, c'était au ministre de *lead*, pas au secteur privée.

Donc, M. le président, j'espère que le contrat de Terra de 65 mégawatt arrive à terme en juin 2020, j'espère que nous allons voir l'optimisation de la bagasse. Nous, au sein du Parti travailliste, au sein de l'opposition, nous demandons l'optimisation de la bagasse, il nous faut mettre l'emphase sur la bagasse, il ne représente que 10% de notre énergie renouvelable, 58% dans notre énergie mixe. Donc, 58% que la bagasse, vous réalisez.

M. le président, jusqu'ici le *Deputy Prime Minister*, l'honorable Collendavelloo – il n'y a rien de personnel - n'a pas su ou n'a pas voulu expliquer à la population les réalités énergétiques, les visions à long terme. On ne verra jamais, à ce rythme, les 30% de 2025. On ne verra jamais les 40% de 2040, en parlant de kilowatt, non. Il nous faut parler en mégawatt. M. le président, nous sommes en peu comme St Thomas, il faut voir pour croire. Et l'idée aujourd'hui, M. le président, dans ce discours, c'est de demander des éléments de réponse, des éclaircissements. Je souhaite que le *Deputy Prime Minister*, dans son discours, va éclaircir cette Chambre, clarifier certaines choses, mais *be careful*, tout ce que j'ai dit, ici, pendant 40 minutes, je peux à tout moment prouver que c'est la vérité. *Be careful* !

M. le président, je n'irai pas plus loin, mais je vais dire quelques lignes sur ma circonscription. Deux projets qui vraiment font du mal, le bâtiment au centre de Vacoas, *the Municipal Complex* de Vacoas à côté du bazar. Les tuyaux du tout-à-l'égout fuient, le parking est inutilisable, l'ascenseur utilisé par les retraités pour aller au bureau de la *CWA* ne marche plus depuis une année. Je souhaite que la municipalité de Vacoas puisse faire quelque chose pour ces gens-là.

Deuxième petite chose avant de terminer, M. le président, c'est le pont de Hollyrood dans la région de Hollyrood. Ceux qui prennent ce chemin, qui habitent dans la région de

Hollyrood, de Vacoas, de Curepipe, nous prenons ce chemin pour aller à Flic-en-Flac, à Rivière Noire. Le pont de Hollyrood est délabré. Je souhaite qu'on ait un projet pour pouvoir le réhabiliter. Avant de terminer, pour vous donner un aperçu de l'état de ce pont, j'emprunterai un mot à l'honorable Ramkaun concernant l'état de ce pont.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, je prends un mot - il me permet - avec l'honorable Ramkaun, permettez-moi de me servir de ce mot, ce pont est en '*décrépitude*', M. le président.

Je vous remercie.

(7.10 p.m.)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Obeegadoo!

The Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning (Mr S. Obeegadoo): M. le président, mesdames et messieurs les députés, permettez-moi de situer le contexte dans lequel je m'adresse à l'Assemblée nationale ce soir.

Nous débattons, bien évidemment, du discours-programme du nouveau gouvernement, celui de l'*Alliance Morisien* s'entend, et qui dit nouveau gouvernement dit élections.

Donc, permettez-moi de revenir en arrière. Quatre mois de cela, jour pour jour, nous étions le 6 novembre, la veille du scrutin du jeudi 7 novembre, et les résultats de ces élections ont été un véritable tremblement de terre, un cataclysme politique. Je m'explique. Que s'est-il passé au juste ?

Nous avons témoigné d'un Parti travailliste atomisé en milieu rural. Atomisé ! Dois-je vous rappeler que pour la première fois de son histoire depuis l'indépendance, mis à part le 60-0 de 1982, le Parti travailliste ne fait élire que trois députés en milieu rural...

(Interruptions)

Je reprends, parce qu'il est important de le souligner. Trois députés du Parti travailliste élus en milieu rural ; le leader terrassé dans la circonscription qu'il a mis des années et des mois à choisir, la circonscription 10, avec pour résultat que le Parti travailliste, aujourd'hui, s'apprête à poursuivre sa plus longue traversée du désert depuis l'indépendance. Vous allez être cantonnés pendant au moins 10 ans dans l'opposition. Et le MMM - je comprends que le

député Bhagwan et ses collègues ont préféré s'en aller ; un MMM anéanti. Les faits parlent d'eux-mêmes. Un MMM fait le pire résultat de toute son histoire, le plus faible pourcentage de votes de ses 50 ans histoire. Un MMM qui pour la première fois perd même son dépôt électoral, je crois que c'était à la circonscription 7 ; un MMM qui parvient à faire élire des députés uniquement au centre de Port Louis et les Plaines Wilhems ; un MMM donc réduit à n'être qu'un parti régional et urbain.

Mr Speaker: Can you please resume your seat, I have an announcement. This document tabled by hon. Assirvaden cannot be authenticated. There is no date, no signature, it's a loose document.

(Interruptions)

The House will appreciate whether it's fake or not. Hon. Minister!

Mr Obeegadoo: Merci M. le président, je vais reprendre ma leçon d'histoire politique. Je parlais d'un Parti travailliste atomisé, d'un MMM anéanti. Et c'est Monsieur Assirvaden qui nous parle de bagasse ? C'est triste ! Et un PMSD à terre. Je n'en dirai pas plus.

Quelques années de cela, j'avais entrepris un exercice d'étude des statistiques, et imaginez-vous, M. le président, que le parti qui a été le plus longtemps au gouvernement après 1969, après la naissance du MMM, ce n'est ni le MSM, ni le Parti travailliste, mais selon mes statistiques, le PMSD, qui a toujours su faire le bon choix, choisissant l'allié du moment. Et, aujourd'hui, sans doute, quel regret en repensant à la décision de 2016 de quitter le MSM et qui, aujourd'hui, comme le Parti travailliste, va entreprendre, va poursuivre la plus longue traversée du désert depuis l'indépendance. Donc, quelle tristesse ! Et en face, l'issue de ces élections d'il y a 4 mois, c'est la victoire éclatante de *l'Alliance Morisien*. *L'Alliance Morisien* qui a su rassembler, au-delà du MSM, les militants, à l'image du vétéran, mon collègue, le ministre Alan Ganoo; à l'image de mon collègue qui a longtemps été la force montante du MMM au sein du MMM, le ministre Kavi Ramano ; à l'image des nouveaux députés, Melle Diolle et tant d'autres, issus du MMM, au sein de notre équipe aujourd'hui. Donc, Monsieur le Premier ministre a su rassembler. Il a su aussi renouveler, en présentant l'Alliance la plus jeune aux élections du 8 novembre. Un de nos députés, je crois que c'était l'honorable Doolub, l'autre jour, nous rappelait la moyenne d'âge, n'est-ce pas ? Il nous disait comment les candidats de *l'Alliance Morisien* avant les élections et le groupe parlementaire de *l'Alliance Morisien* après les élections, représentaient justement le

renouvellement et le rajeunissement de la classe politique. Et cette *Alliance Morisien* a réalisé un score sans appel dans les régions rurales. Les plus anciens parmi nous me corrigeront si je fais erreur, mais 27 députés sur 30 dans les régions rurales, c'est...

(Interruptions)

Sans précédent, mis à part peut-être les deux 60-0 qu'on a connus. Sans précédent ! Et en milieu urbain, sans compter le *Best Loser System*, 7 circonscriptions sur 10 font élire des députés de *l'Alliance Morisien*. Et on vient me parler de légitimité, M. le président !

Mais cette victoire, c'est le résultat de plusieurs facteurs. D'abord, le bilan du gouvernement sortant, en particulier le bilan de notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, et le dynamisme renouvelé du MSM avec tant de nouveaux, tant de jeunes, tant de femmes. L'élément premier, c'est donc la force tranquille que symbolise Monsieur le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. C'est la stabilité et la confiance qu'inspire le MSM. Mais *l'Alliance Morisien*, c'est aussi cette fibre militante, comme le témoigne le vote militant qui a accompagné, qui a soutenu *l'Alliance Morisien* de la circonscription No. 1 jusqu'à la circonscription No. 19, en passant par les circonscriptions 14, 16, 17, 18, et j'en passe.

Malgré cela, le résultat a été suivi par une contestation de la régularité de ces élections par le Parti travailliste. Et c'est là que je réponds à l'orateur qui m'a précédé. Contesté par le Parti travailliste, j'insiste dessus. Mais contrairement à mon prédécesseur, puisque la question est devant la justice, je ne vais pas me référer aux points soulevés par l'opposition dans les diverses pétitions électorales. J'ai choisi tout à l'heure de ne pas interrompre mon prédécesseur, mais je ne vais pas le suivre dans sa démarche puisque ces questions sont devant la justice.

Mais par contre, je souhaiterais commenter la stratégie politique sur laquelle elle se fonde. Vous noterez, M. le président, que le MMM n'avait pas contesté la régularité des élections. D'ailleurs, le MMM ne conteste jamais des élections ; de toute son histoire ! Je prends à témoin mes collègues, messieurs les ministres Collendavelloo et Ganoo ; le MMM ne conteste jamais. Un *recount*, oui, le lendemain, le jour du comptage des suffrages, mais le MMM ne conteste pas la légitimité des élections. Je me souviens combien nous étions gênés au MMM en 1993 ; l'Alliance MSM-MMM vole en morceaux, nous nous retrouvons dans l'opposition. Le Parti travailliste, comme à son habitude, contestait la régularité des élections de 1991, parce que, disait-il, c'était des élections truquées, et le MMM, en se retrouvant aux

côtés du Parti travailliste dans l'opposition, très embarrassé, avait dit « *Mais non, les élections n'étaient pas truquées mais elles étaient faussées.* » Et cette fois-ci, qu'avons-nous vu ? Le jour des résultats, à Rose Hill, monsieur le député Paul Bérenger, endossant son manteau de patriote, venant demander à la population mauricienne d'accepter les résultats et de jouer le jeu démocratique, pour ensuite, en tant qu'allié objectif du Parti travailliste, se rallier à la démarche politique de contester les élections.

Pareil pour le PMSD, - oui, Sir Gaëtan Duval, défunt, s'était d'abord fait élire à la suite d'une contestation électorale, mais ça ce fut un acte isolé. Après, le PMSD, de lui-même, ne conteste pas généralement les élections suivant ses défaites, sauf quand il est en alliance avec le Parti travailliste ; en 1991 et aujourd'hui encore. En fait, le parti qui conteste presque toujours les résultats des élections, dès lors qu'il les perd, c'est le Parti travailliste.

(Interruptions)

Selon mes recherches, toutes les élections perdues par le Parti travailliste après 1982 sont présentées comme des élections *mardayes*, sauf 2014. L'épisode de 1991, qui ne s'en souvient pas ? Peut-être les plus jeunes parmi nous. Le Parti travailliste-PMSD se fait battre 57-3, c'était ça ?

(Interruptions)

Et le leader du Parti travailliste, qui se dit perplexe, et toute l'histoire des urnes baladeuses - c'est comme ça qu'on les appelait à l'époque - qu'on retrouvait, paraît-il, dans les champs de canne. Rien de nouveau ! *Nothing new under the sun, Mr Speaker, Sir.* C'est l'habitude du Parti travailliste. Je n'oserai pas dire 'mauvais perdant', mais l'histoire est là et on ne peut l'effacer. Une fois de plus, le Parti travailliste vient contester la régularité des élections. Mais quelle est la vérité ? Je l'ai dit et je souhaiterais le répéter ce soir. Quelle est la motivation réelle ? Quel est le sens de la démarche politique ?

Nous avons hérité de l'ancienne puissance coloniale notre système politique, notre système démocratique, notre système de parti. Nous aspirons à devenir une société intégralement démocratique, économiquement moderne, à haut revenu. Et que se passe-t-il dans des sociétés pareilles ? Dès lors qu'un parti politique perd, le leader se remet ou est remis en question. Il ne cherche pas à s'excuser et il s'en va sur la pointe des pieds.

Le Parti travailliste, sous le leadership du présent leader - je ne parle pas du leader de l'opposition, je parle du leader du Parti travailliste. Rien n'empêche qu'il soit demain le leader du Parti travailliste. L'avenir le dira, mais je parle du présent leader du Parti travailliste.

(Interruptions)

Le leader du Parti travailliste mène son parti deux fois à la défaite, de suite.

(Interruptions)

Je parle précisément, monsieur le député, des développements politiques passés et à venir, d'où mon propos au sujet du leader de l'opposition. Donc, on se serait attendu à ce que le leader du Parti travailliste se retire, prenne sa retraite. Confronté par la presse, il dit : « Je l'aurais fait tout naturellement, mais ces élections sont des élections truquées. C'est pour ça que je ne m'en vais pas ». Donc, du coup, vous comprendrez ce que disait mon collègue ministre, M. Hurreeram, l'autre jour, en disant que pour le leader du Parti travailliste, il s'agit d'une crise existentielle. Sans contestation de la régularité, comment peut-il rester? Dans quel parti démocratique, au sein de quel pays démocratique cela pourrait-il se faire? Pouvez-vous imaginez Jeremy Corbyn restant après deux défaites? Mais non, il s'en va !

Dois-je vous parler du MMM qui, entendez-moi bien, à compter de 2005, en est à sa neuvième défaite électorale, sous la direction de son leader historique, le leader suprême !

- 2005 – élections générales;
- 2006 – élections municipales;
- 2009 – la partielle de Moka/Quartier Militaire ;
- 2010 - élections générales;
- 2012 - élections municipales;
- 2014 - élections générales;
- 2016 – élections municipales;
- 2018 – la partielle de Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes, et
- maintenant 2019.

Neuf élections successives, dont trois élections nationales. Et je répète ma question : Au sein de quel parti démocratique - mon ancien leader nous définissait, le MMM, comme des fous de la démocratie - au sein de quelle société démocratique, un leader peut-il rester en place, incontesté et incontestable, après neuf défaites d'affilée? Comme le dit souvent le député Paul Bérenger, le MMM fait l'histoire.

Voilà, donc, dans quelle circonstance le gouvernement a été formé après ces élections, pleine de leçons pour les politologues et les historiens de demain. Le gouvernement a été constitué, et le 12 novembre, suite à quoi il y a eu la prestation de serment des députés et nos collègues, respectés et respectables, de l'opposition, ont choisi de prêter serment, alors même que ces élections générales sont censées avoir été irrégulières, donc, illégitimes. Ils ont donc choisi de prêter serment et de siéger au sein de cette Assemblée illégitime. Ils ont choisi d'assumer les responsabilités et les privilèges qui vont avec le poste de député. Ils ont choisi d'accepter le poste constitutionnel qui est celui du présent leader de l'opposition, avec ses obligations et ses privilèges. Mais pourtant ils contestent la légitimité des élections de l'Assemblée nationale. Expliquez-moi cela, car je n'arrive pas à suivre très bien leur raisonnement, M. le président.

Dans la même logique, ils choisissent de ne pas être présents lors de la lecture du discours-programme ; la première visite officielle du Président de la République au sein de cet auguste Assemblée. Boycott. Pourquoi le boycott? Quelle raison valable ? Ils n'avaient rien à vous reprocher, M. le président ! Quelle était la raison du boycott ? Autant que je m'en souviens, c'était toujours « gouvernement illégitime, élections irrégulières », et pourtant, dès après la lecture, voilà qu'ils se pointent au sein de l'Assemblée nationale pour participer au débat, pour débattre de ce même discours-programme illégitime, présenté à une Assemblée nationale illégitime, à l'issue d'élections irrégulières.

Et en toute régularité, ils viennent en débattre. Mais ils viennent en débattre, pas toujours ! Pas toujours! La semaine dernière, nous avons eu droit à un triste spectacle. Je poursuis pour situer le contexte du débat d'aujourd'hui, parce que je suis tellement heureux aujourd'hui que l'opposition soit là, avec nous, pour engager un débat contradictoire. C'est ça la démocratie, n'est-ce pas? Quelqu'un nous parlait de cette Assemblée comme étant le temple de la démocratie. Suivez mon regard.

Donc, je disais, M. le président, je suis tellement heureux aujourd'hui, mais lors de la dernière séance, ce n'est pas ce que nous avons vu. C'est vrai qu'aujourd'hui, le leader de l'opposition n'est pas, quel serait le terme, embarrassé par la présence de son voisin immédiat qui, l'autre jour, l'a interrompu pour surgir et contester tout ce qui se disait, tout ce qui se faisait au sein de l'Assemblée nationale. Bon, mais, cela étant...

(Interruptions)

Tout à fait ! Mon collègue a vu ce que j'ai vu, mais bon ! Cela étant, on n'a pu débattre de *FATF*, sujet de brûlante importance. Le pays aurait tant bénéficié d'un débat à ce sujet, et je sais que le leader de l'opposition était fin prêt avec toutes ses questions, mais il a été interrompu, la séance a été détournée, on a vu ce qu'on a vu. Heureusement qu'aujourd'hui, l'on a pu assister à une *PNQ* en bonne et due forme à propos du Coronavirus, sujet d'importance nationale.

Donc, voilà pour situer le contexte dans lequel j'interviens ce soir, M. le président, et je voudrais donc vous parler du discours-programme. Et j'inviterai la Chambre à bien réfléchir au titre qui contient, selon moi, quatre mots-clés : « *inclusive, high income, green* », mais aussi « *together* ».

A part le défi immédiat du Coronavirus, à mon sens, l'humanité, notre planète et notre société, notre pays se retrouve confronté à deux défis principaux : celui de l'inégalité sociale, de par le monde et à Maurice, et la crise existentielle du changement climatique. Et je commencerai par le changement climatique, sujet qui intéresse beaucoup Monsieur le député qui est intervenu juste avant moi, l'honorable Assirvaden. Notre époque est celle de l'Anthropocène, l'âge où les activités de l'être humain modifient la composition physique du monde. C'est une crise qui pose un défi à la civilisation elle-même. Nous avons témoigné, impuissants ces derniers jours, ces dernières semaines, des incendies en Australie, par exemple ; des inondations en Europe...

The patterns of climate and weather are changing across the world, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the worst of it all is that we do not know what happens next. We do not know of what will be made next week, in terms of climate in any given part of the world. It is absolutely terrifying, Mr Speaker, Sir, and Mauritius, despite being an island, is not immune from the threat. According to the 2016 Report by the Mauritian Government to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, erosion has shrunk the width of some of our beaches by as much as 10 metres over the past eight years - eight years; we are talking of 10 metres. Sea levels are rising at an average rate of 5.6 mm a year. Climate change is here. According to official figures from the Ministry of the Environment, there is a decreasing trend in annual rainfall of about 8% since the 1950s. The average temperature has nearly risen by one degree centigrade, compared to the average from 1961 to 1990. We all remember the flash floods of 2008 and 2013 with loss of lives. Do we remember that Mauritius has experienced its worst droughts in recorded history in 1999 and 2011? Do I need, Mr Speaker, Sir, to convince you

of the increase in frequency of extreme weather events, be it heavy rainfall or storms in Mauritius? The projected impact is even more frightening:

decrease in utilisable water resources by up to 13% by 2050; increase in heavy precipitation, with increased risk of flash floods; more frequent heat waves, giving rise to cardiovascular and pulmonary complications; increase in number and in intensity of tropical cyclones; increase events of high energy waves, therefore, tidal surges impacting our shores; heat stress impacting on different sectors of the economy, livestock, poultry; propagation of vector-borne, infectious diseases; destruction of our live corals. I could go on and on.

Mauritius is also at risk, and I just wanted to share with you, Mr Speaker, Sir, a quote from a well-known writer and activist, Naomi Klein. Naomi Klein had this to say in her celebrated book, 'This Changes Everything.'

“(...) climate change will change everything about our world. Major cities will very likely drown (...) our children will spend a great deal of their lives fleeing and recovering from vicious storms and extreme droughts. And we don't have to do anything to bring about this future. All we have to do is nothing. Just continue to do what we are doing now.”

And that is why she calls upon us to place climate change at the heart of our progressive agenda, and I am happy to report that this is precisely what we are doing.

I do not know whether I have seen before a Presidential Address that has one whole chapter devoted entirely to the environment and climate change. My colleague, the hon. Minister of Environment has dwelt at length on the measures Government proposes to take to respond to climate change, one of which is energy, and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will, undoubtedly, address the issue and respond to some of the criticisms formulated by Hon. Assirvaden.

(Interruptions)

Not undoubtedly, but maybe respond to some of the criticisms voiced by the previous orator. But there are three elements to which I would like to draw the attention of my colleagues.

The first is the reference to a High level Inter-Ministerial Council, which shows our seriousness of purpose. Second, the idea of having a National Youth Environmental Council because this is a question that stares our youth and the younger generation in the face, and I

cannot but note with immense satisfaction the proactive role of the private sector, rising up to the challenge of climate change. So, as regards this one very serious challenge to our nation and to our country, I believe the Government and this Presidential Address and with a dynamic new Minister of the Environment is doing what it takes to rise up to the challenge.

Let me go on to the second major challenge, which is that of social inequality. I was interested to read from a UNDP publication, in fact, their website, that income inequality in the world is on the rise. The richest 10% enjoy up to 40% of global income, whereas the poorest 10% earn only between 2% to 7%. If we take into account population growth in the developing countries, inequality has increased by 11%. The world apparently is growing richer. Despite all the scientific and technological progress, social inequality and economic inequality in the world has increased as never before.

In a celebrated report, last year, Oxfam, noting that the rich are really getting preposterously rich, argued that making taxes more progressive and directing the funds, for example cash payments, to poor households would foster more poverty reduction than has occurred under the current system. And even the Bretton Woods Institutions, the World Bank and the IMF, today, present income inequality as an obstacle to growth and sustained economic development. How about Mauritius? We have had a very interesting report from the World Bank in 2018, entitled 'Addressing Inequality through More Equitable Labor Markets', the conclusion of which was that there had been in the decade, prior to 2015, a rapid growth in wage inequality. Those are the facts, as stated by the World Bank.

My colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance, the other day, referred to the trend in terms of the best-known indicator of income inequality, the Gini coefficient, pointing out that since 2001 across 2006, up to 2012 - this is not about partisan politics, those are rather stark figures - the Gini coefficient was evolving in the wrong direction, with increased inequality. But the latest Household Budget Survey, that of 2017 showed, for the first time since 2001, a drop in income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient. I was then very interested to go and look at the longer term trends.

As I said, the Gini coefficient is based on the Household Budget Surveys, which are carried out every five years approximately. The first figures we have date back to 1962, which is used as a base year, and income inequality improved right up to 1975, which economists attribute to the labour intensive industrialisation path, with a decrease in unemployment and so on. But then, after 1975, there was a constant increase in economic

inequality, or rather in 1987, it was found that economic inequality was rising. It plateaued between 1987 and 2001, and then, the Gini coefficient deteriorated again until the figures of 2017. We should ask ourselves why? And better still, according to the projections, in 2020 – as per the figures that I have at hand - the Gini coefficient is expected to improve as never before since the first recorded year of 1962. Income inequality will recede in a manner that is unprecedented since 1962. So, on the one hand, the World Bank tells us that between 2001 and 2015, irrespective of whatever government, the gap between the incomes of the poorest and the richest, 10% of household in Mauritius, increased by 37%, and then, the trend is reversed as per the figures of 2017. So, what has happened is that we have had, in Mauritius, irrespective of the party in Government, a social democratic model in place since the 1960s, which has remained constant, save for, let's say, a neoliberal lurch after 2005, which was criticised by the MMM and the MSM. Yet, that model is no longer effective in addressing social inequality, and what the hon. Prime Minister has done with his economic advisors is to reinvent this model by opting for direct cash transfers, income support, which the World Bank has found, in its remarks on the Marshall Plan, to be well targeted and effective.

Hon. Minister Ramano, the other day, listed all the measures; the old age pension increasing from Rs3,700 to Rs9,000 a month, and a host of social benefits that accompany any movement in the old age pension, which has transformed the lives of our elderly as never before. This would have been considered economic taboo prior to the measures taken by the previous Government. Economists said this would bring about disaster, and yet the Government has done it.

The Minimum Wage: in all my years in the MMM, neither have we - we, the MMM - proposed or achieved a Minimum Wage; the Workers' Rights Act, the Portable Gratuity Fund, the guaranteed redundancy payments upon the closure of an economic enterprise, and even the Metro. I learned, I was taught within the MMM, always to fight for the Metro, but, eventually, when the Metro came into existence, the MMM had nothing to do with it, because it spends its time, as usual, in opposition, no longer knowing how to win.

That is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, for all these reasons, the old age pension, the Minimum Wage, the Workers' Rights Act, the Portable Gratuity Fund, the guaranteed redundancy payments which are addressed at the poorest, at the weakest, at the most vulnerable, which in effect have reversed the trend of increasing social and economic reality, this is why so many *militants* voters, taking the cue from hon. Ganoo, hon. Ramano, myself and so many others,

chose to rally to the *Alliance Morisien* and to contribute to this extraordinary victory that we realised on 08 November last.

The Minister of Finance, the other day, spoke of this fundamental shift in policy focus, from the trickle-down economics I used to discuss with the Leader of the Opposition in my university years to a new approach of direct cash transfers and income support. That is why the title of this document is not about just a high income society, but before the high income is the word ‘inclusive’. Growth and prosperity do not make any sense if they are not inclusive. That is the fundamental idea founding the *Alliance Morisien*; that is the fundamental idea at the heart of the, not words, but deeds of the hon. Prime Minister and of our team in Government today. That is the reason for the tectonic shift in our national politics. That is the fundamental reason for the defeat of the Opposition forces and the triumph of the *Alliance Morisien* at the last General Elections. We have, today, what I would call, in action, an ecological social democracy, not only in words, but in deeds; *ce que j'appellerais en français, une sociale écologie conséquente et agissante*.

Let me dwell for a short while on my ministerial responsibilities - Housing.

(Interruptions)

Well, we have to paint a broader picture. What I have the responsibility of undertaking in Housing is only one element of this Presidential Address which we are debating today. And interestingly Housing, at page 9 I believe it is, figures under ‘Inclusion’.

The philosophy that will guide us over the next mandate is the right of each and every Mauritian to decent housing, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 11, providing inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable human settlements. The challenges are immense; the achievements are many. Between 2014 and 2019, approximately 1,900 housing units have been built. According to my Ministry, never before, within a five-year mandate, have so many housing units been constructed, and yet the challenges are immense. The challenges are daunting.

On the one hand, there exists, Mr Speaker, Sir, some 175 former CHA estates spread around the island to which, as from 1991-1992, when the NHDC was created, some 150 NHDC housing complexes were built, which add up to something like 34,000 housing units. These houses have been sold off to their occupiers. In 80% of cases, the occupiers have

bought the land as well, and yet we now have the responsibility to ensure the rejuvenation of all these former CHA and existing NHDC estates.

(Interruptions)

Whether you brought the law or not, the challenges are there, and that is where I appeal to the patriotism of the Opposition in working together to rise up to these challenges. We have a housing market that is by and large dysfunctional; dysfunctional for the very poor, dysfunctional for the middle classes at times, young professionals complaining of the unaffordability of housing. We are faced with the problem in our ex-CHA estates of some dilapidated houses where the initial owner has passed away, there are many inheritors who have left for different parts of the island, with several generations living in the same house, who do not have the means to repair their houses, which has to be addressed. And there are no easy solutions; the NHDC formula, which has worked very well but with a very long waiting list, although we have built houses as never before over the last five years. Social housing has got to be improved.

We have got to build on the success of the past years, with a special effort for the vulnerable sections, the elderly - we have an ageing population -, the disabled, single parent families and children. So, there are immense challenges. Should I speak of asbestos housing that still exists in our land? Should I refer to squatters? Government has done a lot to regularise their situation, but there is still, every single day, new squatters popping up. So many challenges to be addressed! We need to ensure the economic and social integration of these new NHDC complexes that are coming up in terms of employment, in terms of transport and in terms of leisure activities. We need to rethink our building strategies and materials in the light of the ecological challenges of today.

And what of land use? Again, at page 29 of the Presidential Address, is a list of measures that Government proposes to take. First of all, the National Land Development Strategy, which is to be published next year, which will be the result, which will provide for careful planning of the use of our land to balance out economic, social, cultural and ecological imperatives, allowing us to update our PPGs, our planning guidelines, our outline schemes to delimit specific zones for specific uses.

The LAVIMS Project, which dates back to 2009, which had the ambition of providing a digital data bank for all lands in Mauritius, now covers something like 65% of the island.

We would wish it to be comprehensive for Mauritius within our mandate, but we now need to revamp the LAVIMS itself, which is 11 years old, with an outdated operating system. There are, at the present time, six distinct and different pieces of legislation governing land use. It is the ambition of Government to consolidate and to come up with a new legal framework, to make it easier for any prospective purchaser or builder. There is the very sensitive question of claims of land dispossession. As you know, there was a Commission, the Truth and Justice Commission that looked into it.

My Ministry is now mandated to strengthen the Land Research and Monitoring Unit to address some 350 cases referred to us by the Commission, where we will be assisting claimants in researching and analysing their claims. There is the project of a Land Division of the Supreme Court, to which we have committed ourselves, and my colleague, the hon. Attorney General will certainly refer to it in the course of his speech, but the most important is that we cannot do this on our own. That is why our project, our vision is not only that of a high income, inclusive and green Mauritius, but it is a Mauritius we achieve together, hon. Leader of the Opposition. Together!

Let me take the example of PPPs, Private-Public Partnerships. When I left the Ministry of Education and I went abroad to work at the World Bank and at UNESCO, and I had the opportunity of reflecting time and time again on the success of Mauritius since 1960s, first to provide universal free education to each and every one, then to have achieved quasi-universal coverage in terms of early childhood education. And then, after 1977, to have moved on to provide free schooling at secondary level, which became compulsory in 2003, to multiply the possible avenues for our young people going beyond basic education in terms of skills development, in terms of post-secondary education. That would not have been possible without our own Mauritian PPP model of the public sector and the private sector working together. That was the key to our success, which so many other countries in Africa now want to emulate, and at Housing and Lands certainly, we will have the same approach of opening up to civil society, of partnering with economic operators. And that is why I am happy to announce that within the next few months, we will organise a national forum where we shall present our vision; that we shall listen very carefully to the views and comments and proposals and criticisms, hopefully constructive, that may come to us from NGOs, and the Opposition, of course, will be free to participate, and thereafter create partnerships with the private sector, with civil society, in order to achieve this ambition of

providing decent housing to everyone and of promoting the optimal use of our land, which is our most, should I say, important and rare resource in our small country.

So, let me end, Mr Speaker, Sir, by making an appeal to the Opposition. I am very happy today that, after having been in and out of Parliament, they are here today. Let me appeal to them. This Government is going to be in place for, at least, another five years, whatever you may hope for.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to address my hon. colleagues on the Opposition benches to tell them that, having chosen to be sworn in as MPs, they have accepted the legitimacy of this Parliament and of this Government; having chosen to assume their duties and accept the privileges of sitting here as Members of Parliament, Mr Speaker, Sir; having assumed the constitutional position of Leader of the Opposition and all the responsibilities that come with it. My appeal is for patriotism and partnership in working towards an inclusive, high income and green Mauritius, so that we forge ahead together as a nation. Of course, their role is to oppose. Of course, they must play their role of watchdog. Of course, parliamentary democracy calls for vigorous debate and the kind of questioning that will keep us on our toes. So much the better for democracy! That is not only the right of the Opposition but their duty. But I appeal to their patriotism; that they be coherent, that by sitting here, they assume their full responsibility, that they be consistent and that they be patriotic in supporting, in looking at the greater interest of our country, which is why I welcome - and I am sure Government welcomes - the offer of a partnership, which I heard from the Leader of the Opposition today. But this will have to be not only in words but also in deeds. Electioneering has had its day. The time has now come for hard work in the face of multiple threats and dangers.

Quoi qu'il en soit, M. le président, mesdames et messieurs les députés, *l'Alliance Morisien* menée par monsieur le Premier ministre, composée du MSM, du ML, du MP, et mon parti, la Plateforme militante, cette alliance armée d'un optimisme, de la volonté de l'action, entend bien respecter et faire respecter le mandat qui lui a été conféré par l'électorat mauricien le jeudi 7 novembre et qui se reflète dans le discours-programme. Quoi qu'il en soit, ayant dit ici ce que nous ferons, nous ferons ce que nous avons dit.

Merci, M. le président.

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 16 March 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

Mr Speaker: Adjournment time. Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(8.11 p.m.)

SIGNAL MOUNTAIN - HEALTH TRACK

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I would like to raise an issue tonight which is addressed to the hon. Minister of Environment and it concerns the Signal Mountain Health Track - *promenade de santé* Montagne des Signaux. There are some issues of parking, there is no lighting and there is limited access to people wanting to go there for jogging and for walking. This was the subject of a parliamentary question of mine in October 2018 - B/895 whereas we have got to know that there are rockfalls there. Subsequently, there was another question in May 2019, the then Minister of Environment said that they would require an investment of Rs264 m. or so by Donor Agencies and development partners. Last Tuesday, I went there, there don't seem to be anything happening. So, I can request the hon. Minister of Environment to look into this file again and to promptly resolve this problem because people there are having problems with their cars and all these things.

Thank you.

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, je prendrai la question avec le département concerné et je tiendrai l'honorable membre informé de la situation.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

(8.11 p.m.)

VALLEE DES PRETRES MAIN ROAD - ACCIDENTS

Mrs Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I wish to raise a matter with regard to my Constituency addressed to the Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail.

Two fatal accidents recently took place along Vallée des Prêtres main road. The first one occurred on the 30 of October 2019 causing the death of a young girl, 21 years old and the second one on the 20 of February 2020 causing the death of a 69 years old lady and in both cases, two motor cycles were involved.

May I request the hon. Minister to look into the matter in order to ensure that all the necessary measures be taken to protect the inhabitants of Vallée des Prêtres.

Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Thank you. I thank the hon. Member for having raised this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In fact, my Ministry and the TMRSU are aware of the accidents that took place recently in that precise location. I can assure the hon. Member that, in fact, a party of officers from the TMRSU have already

made a site visit and they have already decided what measures will be taken in the coming days and, if I am not mistaken, a second visit has already been programmed during the coming days.

I will certainly inform the hon. Member of the actions that will be taken in the future with regard to the points that she just made.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(8.13 p.m.)

POINTE AUX SABLES - TRIOLET BUS SERVICE

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président.

Je souhaiterais soulever un problème au ministre du transport, hon. Ganoo, concernant les autobus de Pointe aux Sables qui font le trajet de Pointe aux Sables à Port Louis.

De un, les autobus à l'heure de pointe sont souvent remplis de la gare et pour les usagers qui se trouvent à mi-chemin ces autobus ne s'arrêtent pas.

De deux, les autobus ne respectent pas le code de la route et conduisent à des vitesses précipitées qui causent un danger réel pour les piétons et les automobilistes.

De trois, les *feeder buses* mis à la disposition du ministère pour rattraper le métro express ne couvrent pas la région totale de Pointe aux Sables. Il y a des *feeder buses* que dans la région de la Tour Koenig et pas à la pointe et dans les autres régions.

De quatre, la nouvelle gare qui a été inaugurée en 2019 n'est pas toujours pas opérationnelle et on voudrait bien savoir quand est-ce que la gare sera opérationnelle, et

De cinq, ces mêmes autobus de la Triolet Bus Service ont complètement détruit l'accès à la plage de Ti Lac.

Mr Speaker: Raise the issue hon. Member.

Mr Armance: I did in five points.

Mr Speaker: Only one issue.

Mr Armance: I have fingered my point; it is in five points, Mr Speaker. So, we have a problem with the Triolet Bus service.

Mr Speaker: You don't have the right to do that, hon. Member.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I will look into the issues raised by the hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir. But I can tell him straight away. With regard to the feeder buses, it is true that we are receiving some complaints that all the different areas which we had in mind have not been covered. So, I will certainly look into this question of the feeder buses.

And, with regard to the other points raised by the hon. Member, I will certainly ask my officers to look into these different issues.

(8.15 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 17 – SEWER PROJECT

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Je voudrai interpeller le Premier ministre adjoint, ministre de l’Energie et des Services publics au sujet d’un problème d’eau usé qui affecte gravement ma circonscription, No. 17, Curepipe/Midlands. Cela concerne les habitants de la Rue Couvent, Quatre Carreaux, abbé de la Caille, Robinson et Chan Lane. Je fais un appel au Premier ministre adjoint sur cette situation qui cause d’inconvénances aux habitants de ces localités, s’il peut demander au *Wastewater Management* de traiter cette affaire pour remédier la situation et aussi de demander au *Wastewater Management* de faire un *survey* de la Circonscription pour la connexion de tout-à-l’égout. Merci.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Member for having given me advance notice of his intervention. I have, therefore, contacted the authority. I stand informed that the matter is being looked into although it appears to be a very complex situation by reason of certain constructions over the sewer network. But we will look into it. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(8.17 p.m)

MELVILLE, GRAND GAUBE – WETLANDS

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre D’or): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change. I wish to draw his attention to the destruction of wetlands and serious threats to the ecosystem in Melville, Grand Gaube, more precisely at Coucaud where the construction of villas on a beach has begun. Will he look into the matter and confirm if the project is respectful of the environment and has received the Environmental Impact Assessment? Residents and fishermen as well as nature lovers are appalled by the way the project is negatively impacting on the environment at a time when we are trying everything to thwart the effects of climate change. I am convinced that the

Minister will do something to save the wetlands before the situation becomes irreversible.
Thank you.

The Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change (Mr K. Ramano): M. le président, je remercie l'honorable membre pour le point soulevé. Je dois dire que l'honorable Ministre Avinash Teeluck et aussi l'honorable membre, Dr. Ramdhany, ont porté cette affaire à ma connaissance. Une fois le problème porté à notre connaissance, une équipe de la Police de l'Environnement a été sur le lieu et il a été constaté un site de construction de villa à 75 mètres du *wetland*. Toutefois, il a été constaté un *stone wall* à environ 20 mètres du *wetland*, il a été constaté aussi l'existence d'un conteneur et le stockage des matériaux de construction dans un endroit considéré comme le *buffer zone* de *wetland*. Donc, il a été demandé par la Police de l'Environnement au contracteur d'enlever ces matériaux, ce qui a été fait.

En ce qui concerne la présence d'un tractopelle, d'un DCB sur le *wetland*, le contracteur a plaidé l'ignorance et il n'y a aucune trace du chauffeur du tractopelle lors de l'arrivée de la police sur le site. L'enquête de la Police de l'Environnement suit son cours et je suis en train de suivre personnellement l'affaire.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(8.19 p.m.)

NICOLAY ROAD – DRAIN WORKS

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête s'adresse au ministre des Infrastructures publiques et concerne la route Nicolay devant l'hospice Père Laval. Dès qu'il commence à pleuvoir, les trottoirs deviennent impraticables. Je demanderais au ministre de résoudre le problème parce qu'il y a une pharmacie juste à côté.

The Minister of National Infrastructure & Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I thank the hon. Member for having given me advance notice of this issue. The RDA is already looking into the matter. There is a project of drain that will come very soon and the PPS, Dr. Rawoo, is also following the matter very closely. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Ramyad!

(8.20 p.m.)

ROUTE NO. 87, ST HUBERT – PRIVATE BUSES – NON-COMPLIANCE

Ms N. Ramyad (Third Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): The issue I am raising is addressed to hon. Alan Ganoo, Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail. It concerns the transport problem in St Hubert, more specifically Route 87. There were reports about non-compliance of private buses which are serving the line. They are not respecting the established timetable and hence, accordingly, at peak times, the NTC was serving some times during the day and during the afternoon. Since the private bus operators are still not respecting the established timetable, there was a request that the services of the NTC be increased so that the inhabitants do not get any problem now that the school has resumed and everything. Can the hon. Minister, please, just look into the matter and let us be advised accordingly?

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I thank the hon. Chief Whip, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the point she has raised. In fact, my attention has been drawn to this issue by my colleague, hon. Seeruttun. It would seem that this is a problem which has lasted for some time now, Mr Speaker, Sir, at St Hubert. I have even raised the matter with the officers responsible at the NTA and from the information I have received, I understand that some of the individual bus owners are defaulting there. I have already taken the matter with the NTA and we are thinking about the most severe actions to be taken in view of the persistent, negative attitude of some of these individual owners.

So, the hon. Member can take it from me that we are seriously looking at this matter which we understand very well how this is disturbing the population in this area.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Anquetil!

(8.22 p.m.)

LAPEYROUSE LANE, EAU COULÉE – DRAIN WORKS

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Je vous remercie, M. le président. Je voudrais interpellier le ministre de l'Infrastructure nationale et du développement communautaire que des travaux de drains entrepris la veille des élections à Lapeyrouse lane, Eau Coulée, ont été stoppés après les élections et présente un danger pour les piétons et automobilistes. Je souhaiterai déposer quelques photos et je demande au ministre de bien vouloir faire les nécessaires pour remédier à ce problème. Merci, M. le président.

The Minister of National Infrastructure & Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): M. le président, selon mes informations, ces travaux ont été commencés par la Municipalité de Curepipe. Je passerai les informations. Merci.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Mayotte!

(8.23 p.m.)

**CONTOUR PRUNE, CHOISY, CHAMOUNY & CHEMIN GRENIER –
WATER SUPPLY**

Mrs S. Mayotte (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed today to the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo. An urgent request from the residents of constituency No. 14, concerning a recurring problem in water supply at Contour Prune, Choisy, Chamouny, Chemin Grenier as well as in the surrounding areas. It is a fact that the Central Water Authority very often supplies water through water tankers, but I humbly ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister to look into the matter. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Prime Minister: This is not only a recurring problem. It is an ancient problem due to the topography of the locus. It would require immense resources. For the moment, water is being supplied through water tankers. We are not in a position to make any other promise.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(8.24 p.m.)

CITÉ DÉBARCADÈRE – CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

Mr F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Ma requête de ce soir s'adresse à l'honorable Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Collectivités locales concernant la circonscription No. 1, la région de Pointe aux Sables et plus particulièrement le jardin d'enfants de Cité Débarcadère. Au milieu de ce jardin d'enfants se trouve un manège rotatif qu'on appelle couramment un carrousel et au-delà de deux sièges manquants, cette attraction présente un point de sécurité car le plancher de ce carrousel est déformé et ouvert à certains endroits et présente des surfaces tranchantes en acier. Donc, vous comprendrez les problèmes de sécurité que cela pose pour les enfants. Je partage avec l'honorable ministre des photos pour illustrer mon propos et je lui demande de bien vouloir intervenir pour la sécurité et le bien-être des enfants de Cité Débarcadère. Merci.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to talk to the Lord Mayor to look into it. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Doolub!

(8.25 p.m.)

CAVENDISH BRIDGE, VILLE NOIRE - REPAIRS

Mr R. Doolub (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to hon. Minister Hurreeram, Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development concerning Cavendish Bridge, Ville Noire. Despite some repairs undertaken by the authorities recently, it looks like we are still having deficient lighting and broken slabs. I would request the hon. Minister to, please, advise us on any repairs that might be undertaken, if not repairs, but any long term action that could secure the Cavendish bridge. Thank you.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): I thank my hon. colleague for raising this issue. Cavendish Bridge is a national heritage and not much we have been able to do so far.

I am pleased to inform the House that the RDA has already launched a tender for the full refurbishment of the bridge which, maybe, once the tender is awarded, will last for like six months. So, it will be well preserved. The national heritage will be preserved and will be a nice bridge where people will be able to use without any difficulty, then we will come with another project where we will consider having another bridge on the side to be able to have a better coffee. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(8.26 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 15 - CAMP FOUQUEREAUX - ANWAR E-KOوبا ROAD - REPAIRS

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My humble request is to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government.

It concerns the construction of drains that have been completed at Anwar-E-Kooba Road which is found at Camp Fouquereaux, in Constituency No. 15, Since October 2019. But, up to now, the inhabitants are facing serious problems whereby the construction of works has been done, but there has been no tarring of the roads. So, the inhabitants there, they use it to go to the mosque, their local mosque every day, and this is causing serious inconvenience. Requests have been sent to the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, but up to now, nothing has been done.

Could the hon. Vice-Prime Minister use his good office to request the Municipal Council to complete the works? Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to talk to the Mayor of Vacoas-Phoenix to look into it. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(8.27 p.m.)

STUDENTS - SC EXAMS - EXAMS FEES

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My address is to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education.

With regard to the 5 credits benchmark for SC as a gateway for HSC in the Republic of Mauritius, there will students with 4 credits who will want to repeat SC exams. I want to bring to the attention of the hon. Minister of Education that among those students, there are some hardship cases. The fact that they are no longer eligible to have their exams fee paid by the Government, I just want to raise your attention, so you can make an assessment and on a case-to-case basis to see whether you can help those students in need.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is important for me to inform the House that all students who have not got the 5 credits criterion to move on to Lower VI, all students whose families are on the SRM Register, will be eligible for the payment of the fees a second time. So, this applies to Mauritius and to Rodrigues as well.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(8.28 p.m.)

DR. IDRICE GOOMANY MULTI-PURPOSE HALL - CLOSURE

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

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government, a problem in our Constituency. Since the Dr. Idrice Goomany Multi-Purpose Hall has been

closed for quite a long time and we don't know for sure how much time it will take to be operational, I would humbly request the hon. Minister if he can allot another space to sports club and other associations so that they can continue with their activities as the Nujurally Hall cannot accommodate so many sport people to carry on their activities, it is quite small.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, we know the problem with Centre Goomany, I mean, it was in a dire state. So, we started the project. We have got a consultant who is working on it. Now, hopefully, pretty soon we are going to launch the tender for the contractor. That is going to take a bit of time obviously, but it is very limited, as you know yourself, you have been there. The Lord Mayor asked the Minister to find the space for sports. But we are working on a sports centre adjacent to Idrice Goomany, and that is going to take its time. But we are working on it; it is going to take its time.

(8.30 p.m.)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aumeer!

CHAMP DE MARS - ARTIFICIAL TURF - LIGHTING FACILITIES

Dr. F. I. Aumeer (Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Local Government.

It is in regard to the lighting facilities that are in place at the artificial pitch or what we call 'artificial turf' in Champ de Mars where the lighting facilities have been out of order for the last 12 months.

I would request you if you could seek with the local authorities as to the remedy of this situation for the benefit of the youngsters of the area. May I point out that there is a major health hazard going on there where people who want to use the facilities are now connecting personal generators to have access to lighting there at night which is a really hazard to those using it. Kindly look into it, please.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I know about the problem, but the thing is that these things have been repaired before, but, unfortunately, some people tend to interfere with the electrical system. But I am going to pass on the message to the municipality of Port Louis to try to look into it as well.

(8.31 p.m.)

SADALLY TUNNEL - PROJECT

Mr A. Ittoo (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question is addressed to the Minister of National Infrastructure and the NDU.

Can he please enlighten us about the status of the Sadally, commonly known as Sadally Tunnel? What is the status of the project? It is a long awaited project by the inhabitants and they are getting a lot of problems. Thank you.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Thank you, hon. Member, for raising this issue again and we are looking into the matter. I invite the Member, let us have a site visit together with the PPS of the constituency, we will look into the matter and we will sort it out together. Thank you.

At 8.33 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 16 March 2020 at 11.30 a.m.