



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 08 JUNE 2023

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Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 13 of 2023

Sitting of Thursday 08 June 2023

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

EMMANUEL ANQUETIL BUILDING – PROPOSED DEMOLITION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development whether, in regard to the proposed demolition of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building, he will state –

- (a) if he is in presence of any professional feasibility study as to the various options available and, if so, table copy thereof;
- (b) if the occupants will be permanently relocated in a new Government building or in rented offices and, if so, the location thereof;
- (c) the estimated cost of the demolition;
- (d) if he is in presence of the estimated cost for the construction of a new building of similar area of 300,000 square feet, and
- (e) the time frame envisaged.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Emmanuel Anquetil Building (EAB) is a 10-storey building in reinforced concrete, constructed in 1979. The basement area comprises two floors, one dedicated for parking space and a lower basement to house heavy equipment, such as Chiller Units of the Central Air Conditioning system and other plant and equipment. The building is vested in the Prime Minister's Office and my Ministry has been entrusted the responsibility of its maintenance, which includes mechanical, electrical and plumbing services. The maintenance is ensured by a team of my Ministry comprising officers from the Building Section and the Energy Services Division (ESD).

The building is occupied by around 1,130 public officers who are posted in several Ministries and Departments, comprising amongst others, the Ministry of Health and Wellness, the Ministry of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management, the Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change, the Central Information Systems Division (CISD), the Registrar General's Department and the Procurement Policy Office.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that in 2013, my Ministry commissioned a feasibility study for the refurbishment and conversion of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building into an eco-building. The assignment started in 2014 and the final report was submitted in January 2016. Based on visual inspections, the Consultant reported that the structural elements appeared to be in good condition, with few cracks and deformations. However, the Consultant also recommended that a series of destructive and non-destructive structural tests should be carried out to determine the properties of the concrete structures and the steel reinforcement, which would dictate the overall stability and durability of the building.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in its report, the Consultant proposed three possible options as follows –

1. Basic refurbishment;
2. Full refurbishment with eco-friendly features, and
3. Demolition and reconstruction of a new eco-friendly building.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (b) of the question, as the hon. Member is aware, this is a newly announced budget measure, which is still being debated, I am informed that the Prime Minister himself will be chairing an Inter-Ministerial Committee to look into the different options available and decide on the best alternative to implement the proposed demolition of the EAB and the creation of a mini-forest for leisure and recreational activities, as part of our vision for the cultural regeneration of the City of Port Louis. The Committee will also look into the relocation of all the present occupants to ensure that the exercise is undertaken in the best possible conditions. All this will be in line with the environment, economic and social resilience and traffic decongestion programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (c) of the question, the estimated cost of the demolition will be determined by reputed and experienced Consultant/expert in the field of demolition, which may not be available locally.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (d) of the question, it would be premature at this stage to come up with any estimate for the construction of a new building. We shall await the deliberations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, which I am sure will take into

consideration all aspects of that matter and the best interest of the present occupants and stakeholders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to part (e) of the question, once again, this will also be determined by the Interministerial Committee to be chaired by the Prime Minister. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Minister for his precise and concise answer. It seems to be a bit of a *coup de tête*. This announcement has been made and there seems to be no back up report to justify the demolition. Are you actually telling me that you have, in presence of your Ministry, no report at all which says that the building is structurally unsound because you seem to suggest that? Are you saying that your engineers or some experts from overseas have now found that the building is structurally unsound?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Leader of the Opposition listened to my reply well, I was pretty clear that there was a report that was commissioned and that report suggested measures based on visual assessment. Now, we have to enlist the services of a Consultant for an in-depth analysis of the building. So, this is what this Budget is providing money for and this is what we are going to do.

Mr X. L. Duval: Actually, this announcement seems to be a bit of a *coup de tête* because if you read paragraph 175 of the Budget Speech, it is not a conditional announcement. It is “we will”; we will do this and that by the creation of a mini forest and the pulling down of the Emmanuel Anquetil Building. It does not say ‘considering the pulling down’.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would have thought that if such an announcement was made which has created so much turmoil in Port Louis amongst 1,100 Civil Servants working there that there would have been something more than just words or intentions or if there were intentions, then this announcement should have been on a conditional basis.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of the Opposition has been a former Minister of Finance himself, I am pretty surprised. In a Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance has announced the vision of the Government and that vision of the Government, what we intend to do is based on representations that he has received from several stakeholders during the budget consultation and that have been taken on board and based on this, the Minister of Finance has provided money to my Ministry to determine the way forward and the way forward is: yes, we will go ahead with a mini forest, we will go ahead with the demolition of the building but how to do it, but not the Minister of Finance who is going to tell them how to do it.

That is my Ministry, my engineers, my officers, with that money; we will enlist a Consultant and as I said in my reply, maybe this ability, we do not have it locally. We will have to go on an international tender. So, now the budget is being voted and my officers will start working on it as soon as possible.

Mr X. L. Duval: If I understand correctly, Mr Speaker, Sir, you as a Minister, has decided to destroy a building which may be perfectly sound –

- (i) without knowing what is the cost of demolition;
- (ii) without knowing what is the ecological effect in the surroundings;
- (iii) without knowing where to relocate the staff permanently or even temporarily;
- (iv) without knowing the cost of a new building.

Have I succinctly summarised your attitude towards this announcement?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr X. L. Duval: Or you can prove me wrong! You can actually give me the figures now.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, what we know is that 1,130 public officers coming from around the island, from Triolet, from Cottage, from Goodlands are suffering in that building which dates back to 30 years now. There is leakage in that building. It has no Fire Certificate. There is pest and pigeon infestation. There is the presence of asbestos in that building. We have been putting money year in, year out to try to renovate and year in, year out, we are putting millions of rupees of public money in that building and still, it is not coming to an acceptable level where this caring Government can put its public servants to work safely.

So, as a caring Government, *un gouvernement visionnaire, il y a des décisions à prendre!* We refuse to keep on putting public money in a building that will not be to the standard. *Certaines personnes ont quitté le bâtiment du gouvernement et sont parties se réfugier dans le New Newton Tower. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'elles ont besoin d'un certain confort. Non, nos fonctionnaires aussi méritent mieux que ce qu'ils sont en train d'avoir en ce moment.*

An hon. Member: *Zot ava konpran!*

Mr X. L. Duval: I think probably if you are talking about my office moving, you are probably blaming the Speaker and I do not know what he will say to you. I would like to ask the hon...

Mr Speaker: We are together, don't you worry.

Mr X. L. Duval: You know that! You know that very well.

Mr Speaker: You are my good friend!

Mr X. L. Duval: You do. Yes, very good. Very good, you know that.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that the asbestos are not in the walls; they are in the panels' partitioning and this partitioning has, for the most part - but a lot of these panels have already been replaced and anyway, if you were to demolish the building - you will know this because you are an expert - you will have to remove the asbestos panels before removing them.

So, are you aware that the asbestos are in the panels, that many of these panels, if not most, have been removed anyway and replaced? Are you aware of that, hon. Minister?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that there are still asbestos in the building and this concern has been raised repeatedly by the Trade Unionists. They have raised concerns about the health of the employees occupying the building and this is exactly what the Minister of Finance did. He listened to their qualms and has announced appropriate actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite all necessary precautions that are being taken in that building, currently in accordance with the Occupational Safety and Health Control regarding asbestos at work, we feel there is still concern for the health of the people in there.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the Minister of Finance tried to play a bad joke on his colleague but this is not a joke. This building, as you know, is a national landmark. It was designed by one of the best architects in the world Dame Jane Drew, chosen by Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam himself after independence. This is not just any building.

So, announcing and shocking Mauritius with this announcement that they are going to destroy the building on a *coup de tête* without any figures, without any plans, it is just a bad joke. Do you agree with that?

Mr Hurreeram: Are you done?

Mr X. L. Duval: Yes. Do you agree?

Mr Hurreeram: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not agree. The regeneration programme of Port Louis has already started. We started with the Victoria Urban Terminal. Today, we have a brand new building that makes all of the Mauritians proud and if I am not mistaken, it was the same rhetoric when we engaged into renovating Victoria to make it what is today.

Immigration Urban Terminal is on its way. We have so many landmark sites around Port Louis today. The Intercontinental Slavery Museum, the Ministry of Finance

announced the upgrading of Allée Père Laval, Jummah Mosque, Aapravasi Ghat, the China Town and I was also told the fish market. All these are being looked into as a whole.

So, this is not *un coup de tête*. It may seem to them because we know that they are not in power, they do not know the vision of this Government, the way we have been working, the way we are working, the way we are progressing. So, it seems a *coup de tête* to them, no worries, but this is a well-planned action with a series of things that are being done in Port Louis.

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not a *coup de tête*. I went there this morning, one firm, Rey & Lenferna Ltd is presently, as we are talking, carrying out a contract of maybe nearly a Rs100 m., completely changing the electrical system, the *wires*, everything inside that building. So, this is not a *coup de tête*, you have a vision. A vision! But you do not see in the vision that you have already spent in your vision Rs100 m., and it is actually in the Estimates. You know the Estimates and they are there. 31112.433, there are Rs100 m. for this year and the forthcoming years. What sort of vision is that? Is it electrical vision?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am really shocked.

An hon. Member: Electrical shock!

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, when the Leader of the Opposition is talking, I do not know if it is demagogy or whatever. He really thinks that those 1,100 employees will leave the building on 01 July? They will have like, I do not know, maybe three financial years before we construct a new building, before we move them out, and then, we do whatever we want to do at this location. Meanwhile, what is he suggesting once again? That we leave those employees in the heat of Port Louis working without air conditioning? Is this what he is suggesting? This may make him laugh, but not me, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am sure you would find a *petit copain*. You could have found a *petit copain* to rent you a building for a while, saving you Rs100 m.

Mr Hurreeram: That is your way of working.

Mr X. L. Duval: And letting him...

Mr Hurreeram: That is your way of working.

Mr X. L. Duval: ... letting this fellow Rs100 m. in his pocket.

Mr Hurreeram: That is your way of working.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, that is another thing. Now, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, we know therefore that in the Budget Speech, it is completely contradictory to the Estimates, the planned expenditure. There is not only money to refurbish, Rs100 m., which you consider to be adequate, but also, not a single rupee, unless you will show me, for consulting, specialist works and all this that, you say yourself, are necessary before you actually decide on a *coup de tête* or not to crash down this building with all the environment impacts. Where is the money for the demolition and how much did you provide, at least for the consultancy?

Mr Hurreeram: Yes, the consultancy has been provided. If you give me two seconds, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will tell you on what page and where it is.

Mr X. L. Duval: You should have it! Table it later. You are going to give him extra...

Mr Hurreeram: No, it is there, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: Table it later. You are wasting my time!

Mr Hurreeram: *Ou poz kestion, bizin atann gagn repons!*

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

An hon. Member: Attendez! Attendez!

Mr Hurreeram: So, it is at Vote Item 102, you will find that...

Mr X. L. Duval: What 'Vote, Item – 102'? Which Ministry?

Mr Hurreeram: My Ministry, National Infrastructure! Which Ministry will that be?

Mr Balgobin: Ministry of Leader of Opposition!

Mr X. L. Duval: *Taler to pou eklate ek to komputer!*

Mr Hurreeram: Here it is, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is at page 350, Capital Expenditure, Acquisition of Non-Financial Assets, so there is Refurbishment of Emmanuel Anquetil Building. There is a provision of Rs40 m.

Mr X. L. Duval: For refurbishment...

Mr Hurreeram: Under this vote item.

Mr X. L. Duval: Refurbishment...

Mr Hurreeram: This item will be...

Mr X. L. Duval: ... demolition...

Mr Hurreeram: This is consultancy fee.

Mr X. L. Duval: This PNQ is a demolition!

Mr Hurreeram: This is consultancy fee.

Mr X. L. Duval: This is demolition!

Mr Hurreeram: If you do not want to understand, I cannot do much.

Mr X. L. Duval: There is nothing on demolition.

Mr Hurreeram: If you do not want to understand, I cannot do much.

Mr X. L. Duval: Don't joke on PNQ! Don't joke! There is no money for demolition. You have just proved it, there is only refurbishment.

Mr Hurreeram: You have just said, there is no money for demolition, there is money for consultancy. *To fek dir papao!*

Mr X. L. Duval: I cannot see. Let me go back again, Mr Speaker, Sir, to this 2016 Report, which is quite recent. You may know what the 2016 Report says. It says that in fact the figures will change now, but the percentages probably will remain the same.

Mr Hurreeram: Percentages of what?

Mr X. L. Duval: Percentages! Just bear with me, be patient! The cost of basic renovation is about half to a third of the actual cost of a new building. It depends of course, it tells you whether you want a super comfortable building or you want a basic

building that you can use for a lot of other things. You know that. So, this is why, of course, it begs the question on what basis the Ministry decided to go for demolition and construction somewhere else, whereas the only report - I thought he was going to give me another report - that exists in 2016 gives you the cost of Rs380 m. for basic refurbishment with inflation - it is much more now - and two or three times the cost for reconstruction? Are you aware of that?

Mr Hurreeram: What is the question?

Mr X. L. Duval: What you don't understand?

Mr Hurreeram: You made a statement. I have not got any question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr X. L. Duval: My question is whether you are aware that it is much more expensive and not recommended at all by the Mauritians and foreigners who came to study the refurbishment, renovation or demolition and reconstruction? Are you aware of that?

Mr Hurreeram: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, once again this report, the consultant said that it is based on, once again, visual inspection only and recommended three options. So, the report does not say whether it is viable or not. The report says, go and hire a structural engineer who will tell you with destructive and non-destructive structural tests to determine. If this has not been done, so how can I reply to what the Leader of the Opposition is saying? It is not me who is saying this, the report is saying this. We are going by the report of a professional.

Mr X. L. Duval: We are several Ministers of Finance in this room; we all know that the budget is approved by Cabinet. It is a Cabinet decision. It is not a game. A budget announcement, a budget speech is not a game, as you know. So, you announced there that you will demolish a building without having done any structural work at all to find out whether the building is sound or not. Okay, I got that and I think the public has also got this point.

I would like to ask you this question. I am sure you have read completely the Report of 2016, and you know, I presume, that the cost of renovation, basic cost, is Rs380 m. in those prices, with that US dollar rate. The cost of reconstruction, including the cost of demolition could rise to Rs1.5 billion. So, it is a big difference, hon. Minister. It is a big

difference, and I think the public is waiting for your reply here. You are not just going to look at me.

Mr Hurreeram: Once again, yes, this is what the report says, but we are not there yet. Let the structural engineers tell us what to do and how to do, and then, the Government will take the decision that needs to be taken.

Mr X. L. Duval: I do not know what to say. I am lost, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Hurreeram: *Pena kestion!*

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I am lost because I never expected so much amateurism. Really, I did not expect!

Mr Speaker: No! Hon. Leader of the Opposition...

Mr X. L. Duval: It is not a good word?

Mr Hurreeram: *Enn rapor lor Lee Kwan Yew ki li pa inn mem kompran, li pe poz kestion!*

Mr Speaker: It is not a parliamentary word. Please, remove.

Mr X. L. Duval: Amateurism, we can't say?

Mr Speaker: Don't discuss with the Chair. The Chair is not your enemy. The Government is your enemy. Yes, the Government is your enemy. You see? So, withdraw that word 'amateurism' or whatever. You cannot say that to a Minister. You can't say that!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think and I maintain that it is not serious. If the Speaker thinks otherwise, good for him.

Mr Speaker: No, it is not a question...

Mr X. L. Duval: If you think otherwise, good for you. What can I say?

Mr Speaker: You don't comment upon my ruling.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay!

Mr Speaker: My ruling is clear.

Mr X. L. Duval: It is clear, okay.

Mr Speaker: There are words that can be used in Parliament; there are words that can't be used in Parliament. Whether it pleases you or not, you have to obey the rule of the Speaker.

Mr X. L. Duval: It seems it does not please you, but anyway, I will ask this question now. There has been a decision now to have a mini forest. Do you know what a mini forest looks like? It's a real mess. Go and have a look at the mini forest at the Cathedral. It's not a pleasant sight a mini forest, it really is *enn la forêt à brousse*. That's what it is. A mini forest is rewilding. When you are returning a piece of land to the wild, it's not usually a pleasant sight; it's like any terrain *en brousse* that you will find in Quatre Bornes or elsewhere.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, he knows full well that Cathedral gardens are not even a minute walk from Emmanuel Anquetil and *Jardin de la Compagnie* is not far either and Champ de Mars is becoming a dump, so much wild and uncontrolled construction...

Mr Speaker: Now, you are making a speech about Champ de Mars. Listen, let me remind you of your own question: whether in regard to the proposed demolition of Emmanuel Anquetil Building, he will state x, y, z. Now, you read Champ de Mars being a dump. What are you talking about? Time is almost over. I am reminding you.

Mr X. L. Duval: Don't get excited, it is not good for your health.

Mr Speaker: I am not excited.

Mr X. L. Duval: Don't get excited!

Mr Speaker: Put your question properly!

Mr X. L. Duval: The question is: these three sites being next to each other and in very small distance from the mini forest that you are planning at huge cost, don't you think it would be better for everyone of you to invest in *Jardin de la Compagnie*, help with Cathedral gardens and Champ de Mars, make all these into wonderful places where we can all go on an afternoon and sit in the shade? Is that alright?

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, the only thing that comes to my mind is human beings are resistant to change and so is the Leader of the Opposition. So, what we are trying to do in Mauritius, in Port Louis exists in all big cities around the world where maybe they have gone a step further by preventing vehicles from coming in, from making it pedestrian - there are tourist attractions coming in with the harbour a few metres away and those *croisières* coming in will provide places for the Mauritian public to go for a walk and have fresh air. Today, when we are talking about carbon footprint; today when

we are talking about climate change, I think the more we have, the merrier it's going to be, which, I think, is hard to understand for some.

Mr X. L. Duval: Finished? You said nearly over. Is it not over yet?

An hon. Member: Two minutes left.

Mr Speaker: Are you putting questions to me now?

Mr X. L. Duval: Nearly over!

Mr Speaker: I told you I am not your enemy. The Government is your enemy, shadow Prime Minister!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Speaker: Shadow Prime Minister, you are in a haste!

Mr X. L. Duval: You may be our opponent, the Government is also our opponent and we have no enemies, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sorry to disappoint you.

Mr Speaker: I couldn't understand what you said.

Mr X. L. Duval: Never mind, it's okay. Mr Speaker, Sir, so my last question is this: given that they had been announced on a *coup de tête*, given that the Minister has not been able to produce even half a paragraph to justify what he has announced, whether he will rectify the situation. He talked yesterday and I don't think he mentioned anything on this issue. He said he will rectify and let the people know that this was announced as if *un peu d'une façon désinvolte* and that he will now do all this and come with a final decision after the project plans, committee etc. have looked at it. That's my question.

Mr Hurreeram: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think for this Government, the welfare of our *fonctionnaires* is equally important. We are also looking into their wellbeing. They also deserve decent working place. This is what the Inter-Ministerial Committee, chaired by the Prime Minister, will look into and this will allow us to liberate some space in Port Louis *et faire Port Louis respirer encore une fois. Merci.*

Mr Speaker: Time over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to 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 seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL*Second Reading***THE APPROPRIATION (2023-2024) BILL****(NO. IX OF 2023)**

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the second reading of the Appropriation (2023- 2024) Bill (No. IX of 2023).

(12.04 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for giving me the opportunity to intervene on the Budget Speech.

Firstly, I wish to congratulate my colleague, hon. Dr. Padayachy, for coming forward with such a commendable budget. I know that it has not been an easy task to reconcile both our social and economic objectives given the unstable economic environment prevailing around the world.

We are all aware of the unprecedented situation regarding the world economy, especially with the COVID-19 and unfortunately, the war in Ukraine which is still impacting on the prices of commodities globally.

Since the last general elections, this Government has presented three budgets and, this fourth budget is in line with the same philosophy, that is, continuing investment, creating growth and help the vulnerable groups of the society.

In my budget speech of last year, I highlighted the fact that –

“The Ministry of Finance is trying to kick start the economy by giving an exceptional boost to the economy, shaping a new economic architecture and restoring confidence”.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, the economic indicators are proving us right. Just to name some figures, in 2022, the Mauritian economy grew at its fastest pace in over 35 years, 8.7% compared to an initial forecast of 7.2%. Our GDP exceeded earlier estimates by Rs26 billion to reach Rs570 billion. Foreign Direct Investment totaled Rs27 billion, that is, 50% higher than in 2021. Total investment exceeded expectations by Rs10 billion to reach Rs113 billion, that is, a 20% increase compared to 2021. Exports of goods and services amounted to Rs320 billion, representing an increase of Rs40 billion over earlier estimates and a surge of Rs110 billion compared to 2021. Unemployment rate declined from 9.1%

in 2021 to 7.7% in 2022. Government debt was lower by 7.2% points, to 68.7%. And according to the IMF's World Economic Outlook in April 2023, Mauritius was amongst the 20 fastest growing economies in the world last year, Mr Speaker, Sir. And what is more important, I think, the population as a whole has welcomed this budget, naturally except, as expected, some Members of the Opposition.

Comme d'habitude, they have been negative. This negativity and this attitude of *nanye pas bon*, you would agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, is in their DNA. The reality is that, *lopozision pa pe kapav dizer ki mazorite popilasion inn satisfé avek sa bidze la, lopozision pa pe kapav dizer sa*. This budget provides *enn bouffée d'air frais* for the population, especially those at the lower rung of the ladder.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to respond to some of the negative comments before coming to the essence of this budget and on my ministry. For example, the Leader of the Opposition has qualified this budget as 'caring for the rich by daring to take from the poor'. I wish to draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition that everyone is going to benefit more from the many social measures mentioned in this budget and, most importantly, those from the lower income group. This will increase their purchasing power and hence enable them to enjoy a better standard of living.

Hon. Bérenger has claimed that –

“Ti kpav fer plis”.

Here, I wish to point out that if we had more means, certainly we would have done more as we have always been a Government that cares for the betterment of this population. That is the reason why we are here and we will still be here after the next elections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me, I am just going to answer the hon. Shakeel Mohamed. Yesterday, during his speech, he was talking about Constituency No.3 –

“Sports infrastructure in Constituency No.3, Plaine Verte, Camp Yolloff and Roche Bois are under renovation years after years.”

Well, I am happy they are being renovated, Mr Speaker, Sir. If they were destroyed and not being renovated, I would have been unhappy but the fact that they are being renovated is being appreciated by the public. They are being used by the public and by normal wear and tear, *naturellement* they need renovation. So what's the problem with that? I can't understand. Then he came to Stade Kaya –

“Ah, there is a lot of problem at Stade Kaya. People are complaining.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I had a project together with the Municipality of Port Louis to renew Stade Kaya. That was last year. We reopened the stadium last year. You know what the cloak room at Stade Kaya was Mr Speaker, Sir? It was a den for drug addicts and prostitutes. That is what it was. We went there, cleaned everything and refurbished the whole place and the stadium as well and now the young people are enjoying Stade Kaya and he is not happy with that. The fact that we have removed the drug addicts, we have removed the prostitutes, he is not happy with that. And also, in the program of the Municipality of Port Louis, we are going to have an irrigation system for Stade Kaya to make it better because we know it is very hot in Port Louis. So, we are going to work on that. Then, he came to Priest Peak. About six months ago, I inaugurated a synthetic pitch at Priest Peak – “*C’était mon projet*”.

My goodness! You were there for about 10 years. You did not do anything and when we came, we have done it - *c’était mon projet* – I mean what did you do to that? I don’t understand this kind of logic and these kinds of people and then Stade Mamade Elahee –

“There is no water in the toilet”.

I think he’s got a fixation with the toilet. Was he thirsty *ankor*? *Eski li ti pe gagn swaf ankor*?

I don’t understand. Centre Goomany à Roche Bois –

“It’s leaking”.

This has been repaired a long time ago. The flooring has been done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I don’t know in what age he is living. He is also complaining about Centre Goomany but I think about a week ago, he asked permission from the Municipal Council of Port Louis to go and have his *congrès* dans Centre Goomany and he is complaining about the Centre Goomany.

Everybody in Plaine Verte, I can assure you, and in the surrounding areas, appreciates what we have done to this *Centre*. What a mess it was before and what we have done!

And I can tell you, regarding booking, Centre Goomany is booked till the end of the year and may be beginning of the New Year as well and he is complaining about this Centre. And again, near the Centre Goomany, we are building the sports centre and he is saying that I have destroyed the children’s playground for my ego.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if I have removed the children's playground there, I have transferred it to where the kiosk is but sometimes I suppose ignorance is bliss. He should have known better but I suppose some people live like that. I have moved the children's playground to where the kiosk is and then we are going to build a new sports centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have known Plaine Verte. I was born in Plaine Verte, I grew up on Plaine Verte, I know the problem at Plaine Verte. I was a Municipal Councillor for Plaine Verte and I am an MP for Plaine Verte. So, I know the problem of Plaine Verte and these people cannot teach me what needs to be done for Plaine Verte.

Talking about ego, he said I have moved this playground for my own ego but you would agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wonder who has a hyper inflated ego. Is it me or the hon. Member? I'll leave that to the Members of the House and the public to decide and yesterday hon. Juman said –

“Gouvernman in oublier No.3”.

Well, just let me remind him as well – *Gouvernman in oublier No.3* but *Gouvernman in depans 130 milion pou fer the Water System à Plaine Verte et 133 milion pareil à Roche Bois. Apel blier sa?* The last time this work was done was 50 years ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Government when we came, 130 million *à la Plaine Verte*, 130 million *à Roche Bois*. *On a oublié Plaine Verte? On a oublié No.3?*

Centre Idrice Goomany, I have just mentioned, Rs50 m. already opened. We have done two other Municipal Centres, la Route Militaire and Canal Bathurst Street.

Plaine Verte Sports Arena which we are doing now, that is going to cost Rs150 m. The work has started and may be in about nine months, the work is going to be completed. Is that what you mean *nou p neglig Plaine Verte?* A new Area Health Centre is coming; it is going to be opened by the Minister of Health and Wellness in a few months' time. *Sa ki nou apel neglig Plaine Verte?*

Apart from that, there was another Area Health Centre for Roche Bois as well but because the contractor was not doing the work properly, the Ministry of Health and Wellness has changed the contractor. We are going to put a new contractor to get the work done. So does that mean the work is not being done in Plaine Verte and at Roche Bois?

Works are being done at Camp Yoloff as well; in the Community Centre and just to tell him because otherwise, he would say he did not know about it. At Renaissance Centre, we are going to have another Multipurpose Hall there at the tune of about Rs20 m. to about Rs25 m. and the Centre BAT which has been there for about 20 years, *il est*

depassé maintenant. So we are going to have an extension of Centre BAT. Does that mean that we are neglecting Plaine Verte?

Coming to Roche Bois, recently the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development inaugurated the Quay D Round About, the structure that has been done at the roundabout. At the same time, they have just done an overhead pedestrian crossing for the inhabitants of Roche Bois to connect Quartier Shell to the other side of the motorway.

You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants have been asking for this pedestrian crossing for about 15 years and what did the hon. Shakeel Mohamed do? Has he done anything for the last 15 years? Nothing! Because on that stretch of motorway, just to give you an idea, Mr Speaker, Sir, you have about 6,000 vehicles which cross that motorway every hour. How can you expect mothers and children to walk across that motorway to go to the other side to take a bus to go to school in the morning and to return home in the afternoon?

How can you expect people to do that? He did not do anything and we have done it, a few months ago, I think it is operational since a couple of weeks ago.

Mr Hurreeram: Yes.

Dr. Husnoo: And then he is complaining that we are not doing anything?

In Quartier Shell as well; Quartier Shell is one of the poorest places in Roche Bois, there is lot of work that need to be done and Quartier Shell is a part of Roche Bois and is worse. It is the worst area in Roche Bois if you can say that, Mr Speaker, Sir, and now, about a month ago, the Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning has given us one acre of land in Quartier Shell to do a Municipal Centre, to do a synthetic pitch for the young, *zardin zanfan* et a *pétanque* pitch.

About a month ago, we have got the land, and now, we are going to build this project. And we are not doing anything in No.3? Yesterday, hon. Ehsan Juman said that for the 400 houses we are going to build, *pe neglig Plaine Verte, ine bliye Plaine Verte*. We are not going to do it in Plaine Verte; we are going to do it outside Plaine Verte. We are going to do about 200 in Baie du Tombeau and 200 at Arsenal. He wants the houses to be done in Plaine Verte, but as we all know, Plaine Verte is one of the smallest constituencies in terms of surface area.

Where do we have land to do 200 housing? Now, with 200 housing, which means we are going to multiply by 4 at least, you are going to have about 1,000 people. Plaine

Verte is so overcrowded. You want to put more people in Plaine Verte or do you want to put them in a place where it is going to be better for them, where *l'environnman la* is going to be better?

I would ask him to discuss with his colleague who is sitting next to him, Nando Bodha. Nando Bodha is an urbanist. Ask him, whether it is good to put so many people together in the same place. Ask any sociologist. Ask any psychologist. They would tell you if you overcrowd a place, sooner or later, you are going to have social problems, but he can't seem to understand. He wants to build it in Plaine Verte. Never mind what is going to happen in the future. We are going to have problem, never mind, but he wants to build the house in Plaine Verte. Apart from Plaine Verte, we are going to build 200 houses in Baie du Tombeau as well.

What did he say for Roche Bois? Why are we building them in Baie du Tombeau? We should have removed the Mauritius Meat Authority and build it where the Mauritius Meat Authority is. Mr Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of Roche Bois are complaining about the rubbish dump that we have there. It is affecting their health. Is it wise to build 200 houses where the MMA is now, which is near the rubbish dump? Is that what he wants? Is that the kind of project he wants to bring to Roche Bois? Don't the inhabitants of Roche Bois deserve a better lot than this than to be placed near the rubbish dump? I cannot understand this kind of logic from these people sometimes.

Next, he was criticising about *Qurbani*. Hon. Ameer Meea and hon. Uteem who mentioned it as well. Mr Speaker, Sir, since this Government came, we have been trying to improve the situation because we know as far as importation of cattle is concerned, we have a monopolistic situation in Mauritius. When we have this kind of situation, it is difficult to control the price. Since we came in late 2014, that is, 2015, we started working on that. We have been trying to see how we can decrease the price.

I will just give you an idea, Mr Speaker, Sir, 2014, when the Labour was here, the price of cattle per kg was Rs139.50. When we came in 2015, we negotiated with the importers, it was Rs125. It came down. In the next year, there was no COVID-19, there was nothing in 2014, the price was Rs139. One year later, when we negotiated with them, it can down to Rs125. 2016 – Rs129; 2017 – Rs135, 2018 – Rs134; 2019 – Rs132; 2020 – Rs136. All the time, below the 2014 figure. That is what we have been doing, and they say we are not doing anything.

The price went up for 2021 and 2022 because of COVID-19 and the increase in freight. And he says we are not doing anything? Apart from that, the Government decided

that we are going to import cattle. It's not just the cattle for Eid-ul-Adha, but also goat and sheep for the festive season at the end of the year. We were working on this, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I know I said that we are going to import it for Eid-ul-Adha, which is coming in a couple of weeks. We did not manage to do it because of time constraint. We did not manage it. Why say 'wow, we have failed. We have done this, we have done that!' But we have been working. Since we came here, we have been working to control the price. It did not work this time, but we will continue to work. We will continue to work because the Government means and this is why in the Annex, it is mentioned. We have changed the regulations for MMA to import cattle, sheep, goats and all that. That is why the Government is coming to that so that we can give a better deal to these people. We do not want the people to be fleeced each and every year by some importers. That is how the situation is, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Government realises it and we have been working on it. Okay! Agreed, we did not manage this year, but as we say *inshallah*, next year we will do it. And they are criticising me for that? When they were here, they did not do anything. I have just shown, I have just given the figure. The Labour Party did not do anything about the price.

Aadil Ameer Meea criticises me. What has he done for the last 15 years? He has been a member of this Assembly. Nothing! Just *poz kestion*! Nothing at all! Nothing in the constituency! Not one project in the constituency, but good at criticising. *Enn blok li pa ine mete par la*. You know, just criticise. That is what they are good at, but I do not give a damn about that. Sorry, I do not care about that, but have a bit of sense. For 15 years, you have done nothing, and you have the guts to criticise us?

Shakeel Mohamed was criticising me again about the garden. *Ki li ine fer pou zardin Plaine Verte ? Ki li ine fer*, Mr Speaker, Sir? *Li ine pran de canots li ine met dan enn zardin*, that's all ! That's all he has done and criticising me. In this Budget, it is mentioned now, we have got money to revamp Jardin Plaine Verte again. And he has the guts to come and criticise us? You know it is too easy to criticise. It just comes like that. That's it. And they criticise and just barge away and just go away. No, but we don't have any lessons to hear from these people. We don't have any lessons to take from these people, Mr Speaker, Sir.

After these few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me to come back to my Budget Speech. As I mentioned earlier, some Members of the Opposition cannot digest

that, despite all the economic difficulties that we are facing, the Minister of Finance has been able to craft a Budget that takes into consideration the needs of all our population.

As we are all aware, the main issue that is affecting the population at present is the rising cost of living. We are all aware of that. Obviously, we, as a caring Government, are very concerned about this issue. The population is suffering from these two disastrous events, from the COVID-19 and the war in Ukraine. We all know how the cost of living has gone up affecting the purchasing power of everybody, be it a member of the vulnerable group of the society or even members of the middle-class as well. This Government is investing around Rs4.3 billion to sustain the purchasing power of more than 350,000 individuals, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Yes, Mr Speaker Sir, this Government cares; whatever the Opposition thinks. We have done it before, we are doing it now, and we will continue to care. Despite the fact that we faced the worst crisis of our economic history, the Minister of Finance has dared to come with measures to alleviate the financial situation of all the categories of the population.

The panoply of measures is unprecedented. There are so many measures in this budget that it is difficult to enumerate all of them. The Minister of Finance has taken full two hours to enumerate them – obviously, I will not go through it line by line again – because each budgetary item has been crafted to help ease the financial burden of the Mauritian population, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This is being done for different age groups: babies and children up to three years are being given a monthly child support of Rs2,000. We realise it is difficult when a mother has small children, they have a lot of additional expenses. That's why the Minister of Finance has come with these. Same for the young people, they are getting Rs 20,000 as soon as they reach 18 years. Has a measure like that ever been done, Mr Speaker, Sir? Never!

Mr Speaker Sir, despite all the criticisms that we have heard in this House, it is an encouragement and a step in the right direction for these young people. This is an unprecedented measure and I am confident that, in the future, as the situation improves further, this Government is going to do much more for our youth.

Government is maintaining the CSG allowance. Working families with an income of Rs25,000 to Rs50,000 monthly will be paid an allowance of Rs1,000 monthly while those earning Rs25,000 and less, will be paid an allowance of Rs2,000 monthly.

Moreover, this budget has made sure that no individual with a full-time employment will receive a revenue less than Rs15,000. And recently, a couple of years ago, we just came with the minimum wage before we knew what some people were earning per month – Rs1,500 per month, some women cleaners were earning Rs2,000-Rs2,500. Now the minimum would be Rs15,000 within what, 6 to 7 years? More than 10 times, nearly 10 times. The salary of those getting Rs12,000 will now be topped up by the Government so that the minimum income for anybody working full-time will be Rs15,000.

The personal income tax has been reformed to provide additional income to the families. This will also be an incentive to attract young Mauritians who are studying abroad and foreign talents because, let us face it, without them, we will not be able to sustain high level of growth and develop new economic sectors.

We, on this side of the House, Mr Speaker Sir, have no qualms. We support this budget completely, whatever *l'état d'âme de l'Opposition*. Deep down in our hearts we know that the measures announced in this budget are going to ease the financial burden of the population and we gladly support the Minister to Finance and the Prime Minister in this endeavour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll just now mention a few words about the National Disaster and Risk Management Centre. I am going to mention the ranking of Mauritius in the World Risk Report. Now, by the way, if you are ranked 1st, it is the worst ranking. I just want everyone to understand that. In 2014, we were 14th; in 2019 we were 47th; in 2021 we were 51st and in 2022 we were 107th out of 193 countries. As you see the risks to disasters are improving in Mauritius – this is the World Risk Report Index. I've taken it from 2014 to 2022.

Obviously, climate change is exacerbating the extreme weather events and the past summer 2022-2023 observed six out of eight storms reaching tropical cyclone or higher intensity. One of the worst one was cyclone Freddy which was a category 5 cyclone, Mr Speaker, Sir. We know for how long it stayed in the southeast of the Indian Ocean basin and we know what kind of damages it did in Madagascar, Mozambique and Tanzania. We were lucky it did not come directly towards Mauritius, if not, the situation would have been catastrophic, Mr Speaker, Sir. But in the future, we should be ready for these category 5 cyclones. That is why the MMS, NDRRMC, MFRS and Local Authorities are working together to mitigate the effects of these adverse weather conditions.

The National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre has already completed the Phase 1 of the national project National Multi-Hazard Emergency Alert System (NMH-EAS). The implementation of the second phase of this alert system, namely the Cell Broadcast Centre (CBC), is being envisaged in the coming financial year. The Cell Broadcast Centre will allow for the sending of messages to all smart mobile phones within chosen geographical areas. And here it is very important, because now we know that flash floods sometimes do not affect the island at one go. It can be in the north, south, central plateau, west – it is very regional nowadays. That is why, we have developed This Cell Broadcast Centre so that we can send the message to specific geographical centres. Upon its completion, the whole population will be able to get emergency alerts wherever they are in Mauritius.

As far as the MMS is concerned, they are procuring the Synergie-Web, a modern web-based Forecasting Meteorological Information System, compliant with international requirements. The system has been proven in many countries and will optimise the use of the TRANSMET system.

Additionally, the MMS would be upgrading its IT network infrastructure for better communication and optimum use of the new servers that have been received within the ClimSA project, namely, one server for climate action and one server to integrate early warning system.

The MMS will be procuring servers to run a High-Resolution Limited Area Model (HRLAM) – that's a very important one, Mr Speaker, Sir, for Mauritius so that you can get detailed information because when you get information from overseas, it is some time for a bigger area. But, Mauritius being a small place, we have to get more detailed information and that is where the High-Resolution Limited Area Model for Mauritius and its outer islands is coming. This will enhance the capability of the Mauritius Meteorological Service to provide accurate forecasts in a timely manner and also to develop an operational flood model. The MMS would also be upgrading the storm-surge model for better forecasting of incoming heavy swells and storms surges during passage of cyclones.

In the next financial year, the MMS is planning to construct a new Headquarters at Vacoas to have adequate space to accommodate all the new equipment and to improve the service as well.

In collaboration with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, MMS is procuring two Automated Weather Stations (AWS) that are installed at Songes and Riviere Banane. A

waverider was also procured and installed at Port Sud-Est. This waverider is providing real-time observations on the wave height, direction of waves/swells and temperature of the sea surface.

As far as the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service is concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are currently operating 11 fire stations throughout the island namely at Port Louis, Triolet, Piton, Coromandel, Quatre Bornes, Tamarin, Curepipe, Mahebourg, Rose Belle, Flacq and St Aubin.

The Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service has already embarked on the construction of two new fire stations at Goodlands and Montagne Blanche. Action is also being taken for the relocation of the Quatre Bornes Fire Station and the construction of the headquarters of the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service on a plot of land already acquired at Tulipes Avenue, Quatre Bornes.

Fire and other natural related disasters, incidents are increasing every year as we know. The response time to attend to an incident is at present nine minutes by the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service but with a view of achieving a response time of five minutes, and now this is a gold standard – I am not pretending, I am not saying that tomorrow we are going to reach five minutes but we have to work in this direction. Now you take five minutes for the Fire Rescue Team to reach the place where you have an incident but now we are trying to improve the time.

So that we can attend to these emergencies quicker, the Government is coming with satellite fire stations all around the island and this will be constructed in order to provide – as I mentioned – efficient service to the community because the Fire Service Team does not only have to extinguish fire. Now they have to take care of flash floods and all types of flooding which are more common in Mauritius. So, that is why they have to be near the habitation area and they have to respond very quickly. That is why we are working on the satellite fire station. We have already worked on it. This is going to be different from the ordinary fire station as the satellite fire stations will be equipped with two bays and one water tender.

We have already identified 16 locations for these 16 satellite fire stations and provision in this budget has been made for eight and they would be eight satellite stations in this first year at –

- 1) La Gaulette;
- 2) Chemin Grenier;

- 3) Bambous Virieux;
- 4) Bel Air;
- 5) St Pierre;
- 6) Bambous;
- 7) Grand Bois, and
- 8) l'Escalier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an unprecedented measure. Eight satellite fire stations in one year, in the budget. Okay, it is going to take us time, we have to find the land; we have to work on the project and everything. It is going to take a bit of time but the decision has been taken, Mr Speaker, Sir. This has never been done before. We realise that with the frequent occurring of flash floods, as I mentioned, the Fire Services should be nearer to the different towns and villages to provide a prompt service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Centre is playing a very important role in coordinating the management of the different types of disaster that we are facing. I have been to the NEOC personally during the flash floods and cyclones and I can vouch for the efficiency and their professionalism. This service is provided on a 24-hour basis whenever a disaster is declared.

Allow me to mention another initiative which will be a first of its kind, Mr Speaker, Sir. From 19 to 23 June 2023, that is, in a couple of weeks, Mauritius is going to organise a Mass Casualty Evacuation at sea. We have never done that, Mr Speaker, Sir. If tomorrow we have a major incident happening on a cruise ship or whatever in our Economic Zone, how do we cope? We have never had any exercise. It is the first time that we are going to do such an exercise. This unique workshop and exercise will be organised by the Prime Minister's Office in collaboration with the National Disaster Centre and other agencies. The objective of the workshop is to formulate and implement a Mass Evacuation Plan as I mentioned in our Economic Zone.

This workshop will be conducted by a team of United States' Trainers whereby a tabletop simulation exercise will be carried out initially and this will be followed by a simulation exercise of the actual physical evacuation at sea. It will not be just a tabletop exercise but an actual exercise at sea. It will be carried out from a casualty site near the port area. This will be a good opportunity for us to test the National Maritime Search and Rescue Plan, Mr Speaker, Sir. This will allow us to test our capabilities and also to identify our shortcomings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to now highlight the main achievements of my Ministry, the Ministry of Local Government. It is an undeniable fact that we have achieved much more in terms of capital projects. At the level of the local authorities, we have implemented around 3,000 projects between 2015 and 2022 for a total amount of Rs5 billion. As I speak, we have 1,204 projects in the pipeline or under implementation estimated at Rs3 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to just cite just a few examples of the major capital projects that we have completed so far or are reaching completion –

- We have completed the construction of the headquarters of District Councils of Pamplermouses and Flacq. As you know they were separated in 2011 but no provision was made at that time. We have completed these two projects and now, hopefully Savanne will be completed by later this year or early next year;
- New market fairs at Goodlands, Chemin Grenier and Bel Air are nearing completion;
- Upgrading and renovation of the Multipurpose complex at Idrice Goomany, I have just mentioned it before;
- We have completed the renovation of the Town Hall of Curepipe. We all know in what state that building was and now, it is a real jewel in the town of Curepipe,.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to support our youth, we have implemented several mini soccer pitches throughout the island and many more would be implemented in the next financial year for which funds have been provided. We have already started on construction of a sports arena in Plaine Verte, as I have mentioned earlier. Similarly, we have other gymnasias which would be constructed, namely, at Stanley, St Felix, whereas that ‘Quorum’ is presently being renovated and would be completed by September 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to improve the day to day living conditions of our countrymen, we have initiated many small community development projects which are being financed under the Indian Grant Assistance to the tune of Rs250 m. All these projects would be implemented in the Financial Year 2023/2024 across the island.

The implementation of the Metro Express has given rise to opportunities for the redevelopment of strategically located areas around our cities and towns into modern urban terminals. Besides the Victoria Urban Terminal, five modern Urban Terminals

would be developed through private sector participation along the metro corridors from Port Louis to Curepipe.

As we all know, the Victoria Urban Terminal is already in operation. As regards to Vacoas and Quatre Bornes Urban Terminal, the Request for Proposal documents has already been launched and the RFP document for the Curepipe Urban Terminal is under preparation. With respect to Rose Hill Urban Terminal, the Ministry of Housing and Land Use Permit is currently looking into the possibility of acquiring additional plots of land in order to make that project a much better project and for the Immigration, I am afraid, I know that we are a bit late but we are waiting for UNESCO. We cannot start that project. We have got a contractor, we have got a promoter but unfortunately we have to wait to get the okay from UNESCO, then we can proceed with the project.

To decrease our carbon footprint, solar powered street lighting will be installed across the island to replace LED and other lightings. The Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes has already completed the installation of solar photovoltaic system on its administrative building and presently, it is autonomous in terms of electricity production and consumption. The Municipal Council of Port Louis is going to install new solar voltaic panels at its headquarters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, similarly, we have many other green projects. For instance, we are completing the Promenade Farquar, at Quatre Bornes. Another project which I mentioned earlier is the rejuvenation of Plaine Verte Garden, which will be implemented in this coming financial year. The main objective of this project will be that of using all the means to make a Zero Energy and Zero Carbon Green Sustainable Park. This will also contribute to the health and wellness of our citizens and converting this place hopefully into a safer and healthier place for our children and youth.

As promised, the Municipal Tax on primary residences has been abolished with effect from 01 July 2022. This has benefitted around 150,000 households at a cost of Rs124 m. annually to the Government. I wish also to highlight that the exemption of Municipal Tax on Family Home Regulation 2022 was promulgated on 27 April 2023.

As announced in the Budget, during the next financial year, all religious institutions in municipal areas will also be exempted from the payment of Municipal Tax, since we as a Government, we strongly believe that everyone should be given all the facilities required to practice their religion and culture.

With a view to modernise the service of the local authorities, my Ministry - we have been working on that for some time, but the project is continuing and I am just

mentioning it - is continuing the project and has embarked on an array of digitalisation projects and technological innovations. The I-Council project management software was developed by the Councils to organise and supervise implementation of projects being implemented at all levels.

About construction of drains, Mr Speaker, Sir, in this financial year, various drains projects are being implemented under the National Flood Management Programme by different agencies across the island. Local authorities are implementing 668 drains projects worth Rs1.16 billion, out of which, 203 have already been completed, 84 are at construction stage and the remaining 381 are at pre-tender stage. A separate budget of Rs90 m. has been provided to the local authorities for the cleaning, desilting, rehabilitation and upgrading of drains and rivers.

Mr Speaker Sir, I cannot end my speech without mentioning some measures announced in the Budget for our children. Firstly, the provision of Grant In Aid to the SEN's schools has been increased to 23% to Rs191 m. We all know the special care and attention that these children need, and this Government has lived up to this promise, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Secondly, for paediatric patients up to the age of 17 years who require medical treatment not available locally, the maximum amount of Rs1 m. under the Overseas Treatment Scheme has been waived because we know that it was not enough and Government will thus cover the full cost of the overseas treatment of these patients. Children diagnosed with cancer will benefit financial assistance for the full cost of the cancer care and treatment in foreign hospitals, that is, for the whole duration of the treatment.

Another 1,000 patients suffering from Type 1 Diabetes will be provided with continuous glucose monitor and 450 high-risks patients will be provided with insulin pump.

Mr Speaker Sir, I have had the opportunity of looking after children suffering from diabetes when I was working at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital. Childhood diabetes is different from adult diabetes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Depending on their condition, these children need blood tests and insulin injection about three or four times every day. You can imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, how traumatic it is for a child to have so many injections, so many needles every day. And this is lifelong, Mr Speaker, Sir. They have to inject themselves sometimes in the tummy or in the thigh up to three or sometimes four times depending on their condition.

Similarly, when anybody is diagnosed with cancer, you can imagine how it is difficult for that particular patient. I can assure you, Mr Speaker, Sir, when a child is diagnosed with cancer, it is much worse. The parents, *comme on dit, zot abazourdi*. It is like the roof falling over their head when a child suffers from cancer. They are completely lost and do not know where to start and what to do. Is there a treatment available? Is the child whom we love so much going to die? These are the kind of questions that go through their mind. Do they have the money to pay for the treatment? Sometimes, as you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, when they go overseas for the initial treatment, after a few months, they have to go again for follow-up. Fairly frequently, they run out of money, and we have seen these people asking for donations so many times in the newspapers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is very difficult for the parents and I welcome the measures taken by the Minister of Finance to help these children in distress. Hon. Minister, Dr. Padayachy, my colleague, in the name of these children, I would like to thank you personally for this humane approach towards these unfortunate children.

In conclusion, Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the difficult economic situation globally, in the two previous budgets, the Government managed to ease the financial situation of the population to some degree. We realise the increasing cost of living is impacting negatively on the purchasing power of the population. In this Budget, the Government came with a raft of measures to improve the economic condition of the population across the board. The Minister of Finance has been successful in this exercise and has provided a masterstroke which nobody expected.

I would like to end on this note, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Gini coefficient measures the income inequality between the rich and the poor. The ideal outcome for the Gini coefficient is 1.0. In 2010, it was 4.1. Now, it is 3.1, Mr Speaker, Sir, and that speaks for itself.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will now suspend the Sitting for one and a half hour.

At 12.56 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.33 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Wochit!

Mr R. Woochit (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Thank you. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for providing me with the opportunity to address this august Assembly on the 2023-2024 Budget Speech that was delivered on Friday 03 June 2023.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I deepen my analysis on this current budget, I would like to make a general observation to the effect that the hon. Minister of Finance is attempting to freshen up the economy through social measures in order to instill an elusive feel good factor in the country. This is a clear exercise of *reculer pour mieux sauter* politically.

Such a budget showers the image of a socialist government as mentioned by some hon. Members on the other side of the House to mitigate their repressive character. However, the macroeconomic indicators were carefully embedded in the speech to hide the real and the true state of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the presentation of any budget should start with an assessment of sectorial economic indicators to gauge the overall performance of the previous budget. However the Minister of Finance started his speech with the worst crisis of our economic history and continued to compare it to the 2021 budget demonstrating that the economy is not only well on track but also that expectations have been exceeded in many key sectors. For example, the increase of Rs1,000 for old aged pensioners is a clear indication that they want to show, at least, to the pensioners their good intentions towards them but the Government cannot give more than that in this particular budget. But Mr Speaker, Sir, the real sum that should be paid to the pensioners should be Rs15,000 due to the inflation rate and I hope that they are going to gradually increase it during the course of this financial year before the forthcoming National Assembly Elections.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prime mission of the Government is to protect the population. We have noticed that in the current budget, an additional sum of Rs7 billion has been allocated for social protection, health, defense, housing and education after an increase of Rs11 billion compared to the previous budget. This budget clearly indicates that there has been a decrease in the allocation of funding to the basic needs. Hence, it is insufficient to alleviate poverty.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the new fiscal framework will trigger a loss of gain of Rs3.5 billion under the personal tax regime but it will bring an increase in VAT collection by Rs12 billion, and this will continue to Rs61 billion in 2023-2024 Budget.

The hon. Minister of Finance has reduced income tax to increase consumption with increased excise duties and VAT on imported goods. Mr Speaker, Sir, according to page

481 of the Appendix A: Revenue, we have seen Rs8.1 billion on excise duties on cigarettes, Rs7.5 billion on alcohol and Rs4.5 billion on petroleum products.

According to page 11, paragraph A.5. – Passenger Fee, from Annex to Budget Speech 2023/2024, passenger fees on air tickets for people coming from the region Reunion, Madagascar, Seychelles or Comoros and other international passengers have been increased from Rs612 m. in Budget 2021-2022 to Rs2.8 billion in this budget – an increase of nearly Rs2.2 billion.

In the same vein, the recurrent revenue from taxes was Rs107 billion for the year 2021-2022 Budget and Rs132 billion for the year 2022-2023 Budget. This is an increase of Rs25 billion in one year. And for the next Financial Year 2023-2024 Budget, the recurrent revenue from taxes will be Rs156 billion. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is an additional increase of Rs24 billion. This is unprecedented revenue from taxation. More taxes mean more suffering and distress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that the underlying and hidden agenda of the Minister is to conceal the real econometric behind this budget and project an image of *bolom nwel*. Make no mistake, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a tax budget.

It is unfair to advertise progressive taxation regime while on the other hand, the Government is encouraging inflation resulting in increased spending of the population. It's a financial calamity and a disguised heist.

M. le président, komsi donn ene dizef pran enn troupo serf.

For the first time ever, indirect tax and VAT on goods and services will peak over Rs100 billion with a forecast for the year 2023-2024 to reach Rs104 billion. During the previous financial year, total collection was Rs70 billion. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government is looking at a 30% increase in indirect and direct tax.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *gatokoko* will dissolve in the hand of people. People will feel that they are saving money on income tax but in reality, it is not proportional compared to household recurring expenditure. The savings made on the income tax for low and middle income earners would be on the average of 20% as compared to an average increase on recurring household expenditure; through increase on excise duties and other indirect taxes upon which the population will have no control. I repeat, people are saving on income tax allowance but at the same time, we will spend more through increased excise duty and eventually on more tax, on more VAT.

Mr Speaker, Sir, due to the economic mismanagement of this Government, the inflation rate is impacting hard on the purchasing power of consumers especially the vulnerable people at the bottom of the economic ladder.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must bear in mind that the Government is depreciating our Rupee as a means to write off the Rs60 billion that were taken from the Bank of Mauritius a few years ago. In order to unwind the remaining Rs80 billion, the Government will need to further depreciate the Rupee over the medium to long term period. The Bank of Mauritius has been adversely affected by the rising international interest rates and as a result, it will be unable to defend our Rupee in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main causes of this high rate in the depreciation of our Rupee is due to printing of money. Government is using inflation to boost revenues and maintaining the fiscal largesse. In 2014, the gross public debt was Rs278 billion, Mr Speaker, Sir, compared to Rs476 billion in 2019 and Rs516 billion this year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, according to page 481 of the Appendix A – Revenue, the population should also be aware that since 2020, the Government has amassed Rs83 billion from *Contribution Sociale Generalisée*, that is the CSG, out of which, only Rs30 billion has been returned as social protection until today. Removing VAT on the 15 listed items, in paragraph 533, will not alleviate the burden of the public at large, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the weight of these items represent an insignificant percentage in the basket of goods for the population at large; 15% VAT on *gomme*. *M. le président, c'est ridicule*.

There are more basic and essential food commodities which are used every day especially with regard to variable segment of the population which could have been targeted to alleviate the burden of the vulnerable groups. I maintained that those small measures are not only insufficient but frustrating and disappointing.

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, Sir, pensioners, people with disabilities, people with low income, patients and other vulnerable groups spent almost half of their earnings on medication and this put a lot of stress on their financial budgets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has not yet taken any action to alleviate the financial burden of these categories of individuals. This is heart-rending indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir. During the course of the budget speech, several billions of rupees have been mentioned but not a single word on the price of pharmaceutical products.

Le grand oral, M. le président, but no oral pour les médicaments. In fact, a few years ago, the same Government promised to develop pharmaceutical hub in order to lower the cost of various medications but as of today, we note that no action has been taken in this regard and we can say that the measure, so proposed, was calculated to serve as a *l'effet d'annonce, M. le président.*

Furthermore, during the 2019 Electoral Campaign, the Labour Party proposed a 25% decrease in the electricity rate due to the profit margin in the Central Electricity Board but in 2020, this Government transferred all the profits, around Rs8 billion to the Consolidated Fund. Since February of this year, there has been an increase in the electricity tariff between 9% and 29% depending on the tariff rates. This increase in the electricity bill has also affected the vulnerable groups.

The retail prices of Mogas and Gasoil also have an impact on the most needy population. The Petroleum Pricing Committee formed by Government Notice No.9 of 2011 sets retail pricing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to highlight the Year 2022-2023; change in retail pricing for Mogas and Gasoil. Since 27 February 2022, prices have gone up by Rs61.30 per litre for Mogas and Rs45.10 per litre for Gasoil. On April 2022, prices went up again, this time by Rs67.40 for Mogas and Rs49.60 for Gasoil. On 19 May 2022, a third price high was implemented; this time by Rs74.10 for Mogas and Rs54.55 for Gasoil, respectively.

While the price of a barrel of Mogas fell on the global market, domestic prices remain the same for the whole year. Now, after the last Fridays' Budget Speech, petrol prices have dropped by barely Rs5.10 per litre representing a decrease of less than 6% which is largely insufficient to alleviate the burden of the population. The current price of a litre of Mogas locally is Rs69, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As of 30 June 2019, the State Trading Corporation has saved over Rs3.5 billion and today making a profit of more than Rs10 billion. Additionally, the agreement between the State Trading Corporation and Betamax and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Ltd was terminated. The State Trading Corporation was required to pay roughly Rs6 billion in damages. In reality, the expenses of this mismanagement fall on us, the consumers, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In order to reduce the burden on the population as a whole, the Government should lower the price since this measure will bring *une bouffée d'oxygène à la population, M. le président.* Today, the real price for petrol should have been approximately Rs58. This is

what we refer to as daylight robbery because the Central Government has wiped out all buffers from the Central Bank that we created over the years and now, due to the on-going depreciation of the Rupee, we are keeping prices artificially high.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is high time to recalculate both prices for gas and gasoil as soon as possible before it is too late.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has now declared at paragraph 223 that one million trees would be planted in public spaces around the island by the National Environment Cleaning Authorities (NECA) and Mauri Facilities Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that the idea of planting one million trees round the island has never been invented or fathered by hon. Minister of Finance or his Budget Advisers. This idea was born and put into practice by the Government of Delhi whilst late Mrs Sheila Dixit was a Chief Minister. One million Ashoka trees were planted around the Union Territory of Delhi between 1998 and 2013. The hon. Minister of Finance is proposing to do here what the Government, late Mrs Sheila Dixit, already did successfully In Delhi. Let us hope that the project brings here the same success as it obtained in Delhi. However, I am not convinced that we can achieve similar results in Mauritius due to the constraints that we have with our local bodies, especially NECA and Mauri Facilities Ltd.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate why, as per paragraph 221, NECA will extend its programme to motorways and some 300 sites island wide while, in last year's budget, Rs500 m. were allocated for the recruitment of 2,000 employees at Mauri Facilities Ltd., a private company completely owned by Landscape Ltd., and mainly engaged in the cleaning and maintenance of school facilities across the island. But the tasks are not being performed to the satisfaction of the general public because there are several educational institutions which had bed bugs infestations due to the carelessness and negligence and want the caution of the company.

In the same way, there are a number of highways and public areas that have not been cleaned for months producing eyesores, blind corners and safety hazard for everyone. The condition of the highways and the main road may be witnessed when driving by. The hon. Prime Minister is well aware of these problems and recently took part in a cleaning campaign along the major highways to encourage citizens to do their part to keep the island clean. As a result, the National Environment Cleaning Authority (NECA) has lamentably failed in its duty to provide adequate and reasonable service.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, how do we expect the tree planting initiative assigned to NECA and Mauri Facilities Ltd. to be successful when their existing responsibilities *laissent à désirer, M. le président?*

They already have a lot on their plate, but now the Government has given them the task of planting 1 million trees all around the island. We can observe that at Grand Bassin, several endemic trees have been removed without permission for unauthorised construction and to organise rave parties. During the tramway construction project, several trees which were more than one century old were cut down. Several trees along the public beaches at Mont Choisy, Flic en Flac, Belle Mare, among others were again cut down in order to make room for parking spaces. More trees were further removed along La Vigie – Henrietta new link road. Even if we replant in replacement of every trees that was pelt, it will take time and effort before new trees can absorb as much carbon as effectively as old trees.

While some logging is necessary and even beneficial, climate change mitigation is the biggest reason why those trees should not be destroyed and removed irresponsibly. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, 1 million trees to be planted by these bodies do not look convincing because they have failed to provide proper services when required.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius being a tourist destination, such unprofessionalism cannot be condoned. Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to draw the attention on the budget items that are related to local authorities. I know with deep regret that the following items are repeated annually, but are not completed in a timely manner or even not yet started. This creates false sense of hope for the betterment of our country's infrastructures and public services, and also brings a sense of disappointment when these promises are not acted upon with consequences at many levels.

In previous interventions in this august Assembly, I stressed on the introduction of a system of waste sorting, *tri sélectif* and recycling. As at today, I maintain that due to lack of sensitisation campaigns, all households and industrial plastic wastes are discarded in the same waste bag and are transported to Mare Chicose Landfill.

There are several District Councils and Municipal Councils that are understaffed because of late recruiting process. Due to lack of drivers and helpers, the District and the Municipal Councils have several idling vehicles in their parking lot. Other vehicles are idle due to lack of proper maintenance, servicing and monitoring by the administration. As a result, the quality of service provided to the public suffers.

The issue of incinerator at Calebasses, we are now in the fourth consecutive year where mention has been made about the installation and commission of the incinerator for the village of Calebasses. People in the surrounding villages are still awaiting the operation of this incinerator. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have two PQs which have already been put to hon. Dr. Husnoo. We hope that this will be in operation at the first week of July 2023.

Among other capital projects, that is the widening and upgrading of Bon Air Road, Triolet, Pont Bruniquel at Baie-du-Tombeau, Branch Road, Fond du Sac, upgrading of Triolet Police Station, installation of lighting in *Stade* Sir R. Ghurburrun at Triolet, installation of street lighting at NHDC at Mon Gout and other places have been ignored for the past years, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Many of those capital projects are repeated every year in the budget speech and same can be seen in Appendix J on page 530 to 539. We also noticed that capital projects like treatment plants, upgrading of filtration plants, construction of dams, upgrading of dams, drilling of boreholes, desilting and other associated works have been repeated between the current Budget and the one presented last year, 2022-2023, as well as the previous one 2021-2022 budget.

During the 2014 electoral campaigns, the Government promised to provide potable water on a 24/7 basis. Now, nearly 9 years, Mr Speaker, Sir, the said promise has remained in the state of wishful thinking. This year also, we learned about the Rivière des Anguilles Dam mega project. Since 2019, the construction of Rivière des Anguilles Dam and its treatment plant over a three years span has been announced in each Budget Speech. I had spoken lengthily on this project last year and expressed my concern.

This Government has no vision and does not care about the population because Rs9.4 billion was earmarked for the dam and the treatment plant in the Budget 2021-2022, mentioned at paragraph 33(d). Today the same Minister informed the following to the House at paragraph 237 –

“The detailed design and project preparation for the Rivière des Anguilles Dam has now been finalised”.

And at paragraph 238 –

“The bid will be launched internationally and award of contract will be done by June 2024”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, 2024! Contract will be awarded by June 2024. What a farce Mr Speaker, Sir! The lack of sufficient water supply in the pipes has delayed the approval of a number of water applications submitted by promoters, contractors all around the island to the Central Water Authority.

Water storage should remain one of the highest priorities for a Government because new morcellements for social housing projects, agricultural irrigation projects, new hotels and other related commercial constructions are increasing every year, Mr Speaker, Sir. I worry if this Government will implement a fair and effective water distribution in the years to come.

The target of 12,000 social housing units has been reduced to 8,000 housing units. Hundreds of millions of rupees are spent on consulting fees as a result of improper planning and amateur handling of the projects. Even then, the Government has not yet been able to deliver any of these social housing units. The Minister and his colleagues should learn from the Indian tramway contractors, that is, Larsen & Toubro, on how to start and finish a project in a timely manner. Due to heavy penalties attached to the project, payments and their execution are followed accordingly. If same clauses of penalties were attached to these housing projects, the end result would have been very different.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, this Budget Speech demonstrates the lack of vision of this Government. The attractive effect of some of the initiatives to bring financial assistance to a part of the population will be quickly neutralised by the degrading economy and the rising cost of living. We have seen that substantial devaluation of our rupee has led to a steady increase in inflation and that our people will have to keep fighting for a decent living standard. I worry that under this Government the vast majority of our people will experience continued poverty. The public anticipated that the Government would introduce ambitious policies that would really and effectively strengthen our economy. But we regretfully observe the budget recommendations won't produce any expected results.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Léopold!

(3.02 p.m.)

Mr J. B. Léopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

From the very start of my response to the Budget Estimates 2023-2024 of the Republic of Mauritius presented in our august Assembly on 02 June 2023, I have to thank the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development, the hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, for his national budget in daring to care; a budget which dares to maintain our economy stable; a budget amidst enormous global economic challenges; a budget which considers the cost of living crisis; a budget to combat the ill effects of inflation; a budget which gives due care to the people, to the nation of the whole Republic of Mauritius; a budget which allows the Government to stand ready to help and reduce the distress of people as consequential causes of COVID-19 pandemic, global inflation, climate change and geopolitical conflicts, especially the war in Europe.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must seize this opportunity once again to thank late Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger for granting Rodrigues its autonomy during their tenure in high office in the year 2001 in the MSM/MMM-led coalition government. The law for a decentralised government is deeply rooted in the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius. This process of decentralising power to Rodrigues is a testimony as to how democratic the Republic of Mauritius is.

I must also thank Louis Serge Clair who is watching live in Rodrigues and who is now holding the title of honorific leader of OPR after the smooth *passation* of leadership to hon. Francisco François. After that smooth passing of leadership, I have to thank the honorific leader Serge Clair for his relentless effort put in for Rodrigues Island to gain the status of autonomy within the Republic of Mauritius.

It took the OPR party led by Serge Clair 25 years to convince the central government of the benefits of a decentralised sub-national government which will bring Rodrigues and the Republic of Mauritius as a whole. The objectives of the OPR Party were very clear at the time we demanded for a decentralised system. Firstly, to show our capacity as Rodriguans, to show our abilities to attain our traditional development goals and it is also the process of bringing decision making closer to locals. For the many years, the OPR Party have had to lead the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. We have demonstrated our capacity and maturity in promoting political stability, economic development in a very well-coordinated approach with successive central governments and we had always demonstrated our responsibilities towards the people of Rodrigues in a well-defined and coordinated – as I have already said – within a good intergovernmental relationship with central governments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the responsibility of a central government in making sure that our decentralised form of government works. No matter what, there must be no conflict otherwise, the local population will suffer. Central government needs to help in creating the required environment for the devolution process to take place for the betterment of its local population. It is proven now that the status of autonomy given to Rodrigues has benefited Rodrigues in so many areas.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is where the central government needs to make sure that subnational government is functioning to its full potential. It is true that the actual Rodrigues Regional Government is very unstable. This must not be a reason to question the importance of our autonomy. We must not allow the structure and this system of governing to be weakened. On the contrary, as I have said, we need to enhance the process of devolution instead.

There is a weak regional Government in Rodrigues with multiple political parties having great difficulty to govern but the national Government still has its role within that decentralised Government, especially in making sure that resources are being used appropriately and having an ability to govern.

With autonomy, Mr Speaker, Sir, while the OPR party was in office through that decentralised system of governance, the OPR party has demonstrated good governance and accountability to its people and respect to institutions. We know where our responsibility lies. We know that, for example, the administration of Police, the administration of Judiciary does not fall under the responsibility of Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and any Government led by the OPR party had never interfered within these institutions. We have, through civilised dialogue with central Government, determined the critical needs of the island of Rodrigues and collaboratively solutions were found.

It is an established fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that to solve the problem of water shortage in Rodrigues, we need to invest in desalination plants, and this is supported by various international reports done by respected institutions and approved by the central Government of the Republic of Mauritius. The OPR party has already set all the necessary measures needed for the economic development of Rodrigues and the wellbeing of the people of Rodrigues. In full collaboration with the central Government, we have already started to set the critical structural needs of Rodrigues Island.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues is already connected to the world with the fibre optic cable and we have already witnessed the beneficial effects of such a huge infrastructural development where jobs are being generated. Because of COVID-19 pandemic, there has

been considerable disruption in the continuity of important infrastructural projects while OPR party was in office. Amongst is the delay in the finalisation of the Techno Park.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I welcome the provision that guaranteed funds for the construction of a new run way of international standards in Rodrigues as the OPR party has reiterated and I must mention that this project has been initiated on the vision of the OPR Regional Government where we know that such an important infrastructure in Rodrigues will generate economic growth, create jobs, connect people, cultures and businesses across the world.

In the same line of the infrastructural transformation journey, another critical structure that we will need is a state of art model hospital with adequate speciality treatment to meet the growing needs of the people of Rodrigues. OPR party has the vision to give a maximum and high quality healthcare in Rodrigues whereby decreasing the needs of patients to go through the burden of coming to main island Mauritius to seek further treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, over the last decade, Rodrigues, through the decentralised system of Government, with the support of the central Government under the leadership of Serge Clair, has set the critical structures for economic development of Rodrigues. It is, as I have said already, unfortunate that COVID-19 pandemic has caused delay in this development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you name it; OPR party is the initiator of not just one but every critical infrastructural project in Rodrigues since Rodrigues became autonomous. Among the critical structures are the port development with the elaboration of a Port Master Plan, Airport Development, ICT Infrastructure, Road Infrastructure, the availability of Rs1 billion for water sector development. Mr Speaker, Sir, the people of Rodrigues are so grateful to learn of the finalisation of a long awaiting cargo vessel to serve Rodrigues and other outer islands of the Republic and the fact that now the Republic will have a cargo vessel, I hope and the people of Rodrigues hope that this will enable the concerned company and Ministry to ease the cost of freight which will be very beneficial to the Rodriguan people and their consumers.

We are also grateful to hear that there will be two passenger vessels made available for Rodrigues and other outer islands of the Republic of Mauritius. If you make an analysis over the pattern to which the Rodriguan people travel back and forth to Mauritius, Rodriguan people tend to travel by air only in emergency circumstances, in urgent circumstances; most of the time for medical emergency. Otherwise, a great majority of Rodriguan prefer to travel by ship. The main reason is it is cheaper in the sense that the

Rodriguan people can carry more luggage, more than 50kg luggage which is allowed by air, and this is why I will make a plea to the Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping to look of at least allowing passengers travelling by ship to carry at least 60kg of luggage. That would be great.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must thank the hon. Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance for bringing *d'avantage* social justice and inclusion of our community in this budgetary exercise. This budget is addressing to so many social issues in the time of post-COVID recovery, inflation and military conflicts. The people of Rodrigues welcome this budget and once again, are grateful to the central Government for the help in the socio-economic transformation of Rodrigues Island. Some of the considerations are as follows, Mr Speaker, Sir –

- (i) airport development;
- (ii) acquisition of cargo and passenger vessels;
- (iii) service to Mauritius Scheme extended to Rodriguan university leavers;
- (iv) support to rainwater harvesting;
- (v) maintenance of special holiday package which will be very beneficial for our tourist sector;
- (vi) increase in bad weather allowance for fishermen;
- (vii) Pension Scheme for artists;
- (viii) increased sum for Casting of Slabs Scheme;
- (ix) increased pension, and
- (x) the taking over of cancer care of infants who will need further treatment abroad;
- (xi) provision of Rs53 m. for our young athletes to participate in the Indian Ocean Island Game;
- (xii) waiving freight for shipment of goods from Rodrigues to Mauritius, amongst so many.

We are also glad of the measures taken by the hon. Minister of Finance for extending available schemes to Rodrigues, especially the extension of all the incentives that the Budget is providing to the agricultural sector in Mauritius, which are being extended to Rodrigues. This is an excellent example of inclusive and sustainable

development, the consideration that the Central Government is giving and the recognition that Rodrigues forms part of the Republic of Mauritius. These types of incentives, Mr Speaker, Sir, are very encouraging.

Mr Speaker, Sir, will be called to vote this Budget in a few days. I might have to remind the House that Rodrigues being an autonomous island, that the Rodrigues Regional Act, section 44(1) allows the Rodrigues Regional Assembly (RRA) to approve the draft Estimates of recurrent revenue, recurrent expenditure, capital revenue and capital expenditure for financial year ending 30 June 2024. And then, send to the National Assembly to vote.

I am glad and thankful to the people of Rodrigues for giving hon. Francisco François and I such exceptional privilege to vote for the Budget. Some may not like it, but we are the only two persons present in the National Assembly to proudly represent the people of Rodrigues and to vote the Budget, to vote the Budget Estimates of Rodrigues 2023-2024, not only for Rodrigues, but for the national budget of the Republic of Mauritius also.

I am glad that the Central Government has allocated an envelope of Rs5,156 billion to Rodrigues which is significant. But I am also sad due to the incompetence of the actual Rodrigues Regional Government. They are misusing public funds in an unprecedented bad financial management and overspending. Mr Speaker, Sir, while the National Government was celebrating the National Independence Day in a very simple way, just a flag raising in Réduit, on the other hand, the incompetent, multi-parties, Rodrigues Regional Government were splashing money in a big concert to celebrate Independence Day. To celebrate the 20th of autonomy in Rodrigues, while the Mauritian Government was dealing with cases of flooding, the incompetent Rodrigues Regional Government was splashing money again. Public funds *pou fer fet* to celebrate the 20 years of autonomy. They were celebrating 20 years of autonomy by doing *vin zour fet – tamtam*.

The OPR Party did not fight for autonomy to *fer fet*. We were fighting to have that status of autonomy for the emancipation of the Rodriguan people and that the Rodriguan people can take their own destiny, their development and their economic development into their own hands, where decisions are taken locally for the benefit of the Rodriguan people. But, as I have mentioned earlier, the incompetence of the actual Rodrigues Regional Government must not and should not influence the Central Government to weaken our autonomy. Though they are a threat to our autonomy, the law provides the Prime Minister other power to do the needful if necessary, if needed, if the Prime Minister sees by his own

judgement that this weak Government can no longer govern due to their incompetence, without threatening the status of autonomy of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine that the Rodrigues Regional Government, the actual government, has an outstanding of nearly Rs1 billion of debt. *B kan tir tou sa larzan la dan sa 5 milyon la, b ki pou reste pou fer developman ?* There is a Circular Note, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the time that I am speaking, circulating, informing the public officers of Rodrigues that for this month, there will be no refund of travelling, no allowances for this month, no *ad hoc* allowances, no overtime, no bank and no responsibility allowance. Can you imagine? To add insult to injury, while the Ministry of Sports is investing Rs53 m. to invest in our youth for the Indian Ocean Island Games in Rodrigues, *larzan inn fini pou prepar atlet pou sa gran zwe la*. It is very sad, but what can we do. We need to get them out as soon as possible.

Thanks again to the people of Rodrigues to have kept OPR to secure seats in the National Assembly. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the OPR Party has successively secured seats in the National Assembly since 1983 consecutively, which makes the OPR Party among the greatest and the biggest party, both Rodrigues and nationally, with its uniqueness so far, as maybe the only non-allied party in the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, once again, I must thank the hon. Minister of Finance for such a delicate balance he has brought into this Budget. This Budget is gender sensitive without going into details. This Budget is giving due consideration to our youth. This Budget is bringing awareness of coming challenges that our nation will face such as the increased trend of ageing population. Therefore, this Budget is preparing us to design a strategy to support an ageing healthy population and special needs of this category of the population. Strengthening our healthcare services to respond to the challenge of an ageing population; preparation of workforce, yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is a socialist budget. We are all social democrats anyway in this Chamber. I am done, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(3.28 p.m.)

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, beaucoup se sont aventurés, à voir dans les dotations budgétaires 2023-2024, un fort accent social, une fois que la présentation du budget par l'honorable ministre des Finances a terminée.

Comme une épreuve ratée, les Mauriciens se sont vite rendus compte que ce présent budget n'a à aucun moment tenu ses promesses. En effet, M. le président, nos compatriotes s'attendaient avant tout que ce présent budget propose une réduction conséquente des prix des carburants, à une augmentation du *Basic Retirement Pension* à R 13,500 et à des mesures pour contenir la hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires entre autres. Mais tel n'a pas été le cas.

Le salaire minimum ou plutôt le revenu minimum garanti à R 15,000 est fortement trompeur. D'autres avant moi l'ont expliqué, c'est en fait l'allocation de la CSG qui est doublée passant à R 2,000 pour ceux qui gagnent moins de R 15,000. Par la suite, c'est le gouvernement, l'État qui décaissera les R 1,425 sur un salaire minimum inchangé de R 11,575., M. le président.

Même si dans ce présent budget, des mesures ont été certes proposées pour atténuer la perte du pouvoir d'achat, les problématiques des causes de cette perte ne sont pas abordées ni adressées. À titre d'exemple, le ministre des Finances n'a proposé aucune mesure pour contrôler l'inflation alors que nous savons tous que c'est une des premières causes de la perte du pouvoir d'achat des mauriciens.

Le ministre des Finances aurait dû venir avec des propositions pour expliquer comment le gouvernement à travers le ministère du Commerce compte exercer un meilleur contrôle sur les prix de vente des aliments de première nécessité et de consommation courante. Également, les R 5.10 de baisse sur le prix de l'essence ne représentent que 7% alors que globalement les prix sur le marché mondial ont baissé de 42% depuis mai 2022.

En vérité, M. le président, au fur et à mesure qu'on épluche les dotations de ce budget, on arrive à la conclusion que c'est plus un exercice populiste et électoraliste comme ce cadeau de R 20,000 offert à 15,000 jeunes qui auront 18 ans cette année pour commencer un nouveau chapitre de leur vie. Dois-je rappeler à la Chambre que ces jeunes vont voter pour les prochaines élections générales ? Si elle ne l'est pas, cette mesure ressemble étrangement à une bribe électorale, tout comme les recrutements massifs annoncés dans la force policière, dans l'éducation et la santé entre autres. Nous verrons bien qui seront celles et ceux qui obtiendront ces emplois et comment se fera le recrutement.

M. le président, ce qui est évident avec ce présent budget, c'est la capacité du ministre des Finances de copier-coller. Il peut même être considéré comme un spécialiste puisque nous avons eu droit à la sempiternelle liste des régions de toutes îles Maurice où les drains, les terrains de foot synthétique, les *multipurpose complex* seront construits entre

autres. Souhaitons, M. le président, que les travaux d'aménagement des drains se fassent désormais à un rythme accéléré pour soulager dans bien des cas le calvaire des habitants des régions concernées.

M. le président, il est fini le temps où Maurice était considéré comme un pays à haut revenu sur le dernier rapport de la FMI. Aujourd'hui, après deux mandats de ce gouvernement et quatre budgets de l'honorable Dr. Padayachy, l'écart entre les mieux lotis et les plus démunis se creuse. La situation sociale dans notre pays est telle que les honorables membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre ne réalisent même pas que dans ce pays où des milliards sont dépensés sur des projets mirobolants, il y a des enfants qui grandissent toujours dans des maisons en tôles rouillées sans électricité ni eau courante. Malheureusement le dernier rapport de *Statistics Mauritius* sur la pauvreté date de 2017 mais je tiens à rappeler qu'à cette époque qui n'est pas si loin que ça, plus de 131,300 personnes, soit plus de 36,000 ménages vivaient dans une pauvreté relative. Si on prend en considération que la cherté de la vie touche pratiquement toute la population, de même que la déréglementation et les disparités qui existent au niveau des salaires, je suis convaincu qu'aujourd'hui plus de 250,000 personnes vivent sous le seuil de la pauvreté à Maurice.

Depuis son arrivée au pouvoir, M. le président, les différents budgets présentés par le ministre des Finances et ses prédécesseurs n'ont pas corrigé cette situation. En effet, en proposant ça et là à des mesures qualifiées comme populaires voir populiste, ce gouvernement cherche à dévier l'attention sur son impopularité, ses scandales, des accusations de corruption contre certains de ses membres les plus influents, la dégradation du *law and order*, l'utilisation à outrance de la force policière et de son *Special Striking Team* contre ses opposants et contre ceux qui dénoncent le pouvoir en place. Dois-je vraiment citer, M. le président, le cas de l'argent du MSM, Soopramanian Kistnen?

C'est le comble de l'ironie quand le ministre des Finances annonce dans sa présentation budgétaire l'introduction d'un *Whistleblowing Act*. Surtout quand on sait que depuis des années, la proclamation d'une telle loi est réclamée par des O.N.G. et des instances internationales. Du reste depuis 2022, *Transparency Mauritius* a même remis au Premier ministre l'ébauche d'un *Whistleblowing Bill*. M. le président, posons-nous la question, quel intérêt un gouvernement qui est cloué à pilori sur la question de corruption et de favoritisme aura à venir avec une telle loi ?

Nous assistons, M. le président, depuis 2019 à de nombreuses accusations de corruption et de favoritisme contre des membres du gouvernement. En effet si certains ont été priés de prendre la porte de sortie *akoz enn tibout papie*, d'autres pour des raisons

basement politiques conservent toujours leurs places dans le cabinet ministériel et sont protégés par nul autre que le Premier ministre. Quand la corruption est infiltrée au plus haut sommet de l'État, le peuple ne peut plus rien attendre d'un gouvernement. Deux rapports ont été rendus publics cette année, notamment celui de l'audit et du *Public Accounts Committee* et qui confirment le niveau de la corruption et du gaspillage dans lequel patauge ce gouvernement année après année. En effet, les années se suivent et se ressemblent.

Dans son dernier rapport, le Directeur de l'audit a exprimé ses craintes face à l'incapacité de certains départements du gouvernement en particulier le *Procurement* de travailler selon les règles établies. Le scandale de l'achat du médicament Molnupiravir pendant la pandémie de la Covid-19, les largesses incontrôlées au niveau de l'approvisionnement en général, le gaspillage dans les ambassades à l'étranger, les sommes excessives payées concernant le transport gratuit, la *Central Water Authority* et la *Waste Management Authority* qui sont des trous sans fond ou encore les millions de roupies versées à des policiers suspendus. Nous sommes sans aucun doute, M. le président, arrivé à un coin de non-retour concernant le gaspillage au plus haut niveau de l'État.

Pour ce qui est *du law and order*, la situation se dégrade de plus en plus avec le sentiment que pour une catégorie de personnes la police fonctionne mais pas pour d'autres. M. le président, il est bon de le rappeler que nous sommes appelés à voter une somme de pratiquement R 12 milliards pour la police et je vais dire quelques mots justement sur ce qui se passe au niveau de la force policière. Ajouté à cela, je ne peux passer sous silence ce climat de peur qui s'est installé en raison du comportement de certains officiers de police à la solde de qui, nous savons. Par définition, l'autorité policière existe pour protéger la population et non le contraire. Or, M. le président, nous assistons depuis ses cinq, six dernières années à une recrudescence de délits où des policiers sont au banc des accusés. Sans oublier, M. le président, ces cas de torture et de barbarie dont les images ont choqué toute la population. Mais à ce jour paraît-il aucune action ni sanction n'a été prise.

Cette perte de confiance de la population dans la police est sans précédent, comme le démontre un sondage mené par *Afrobarometer* publié en juin 2022. Quelques chiffres de ce sondage donnent froid dans le dos, M. le président, et qui me fait penser qu'une réforme en profondeur de la force policière est plus que jamais nécessaire.

En effet l'indice de confiance de la population dans la force policière est de 46 % seulement soit moins d'une personne sur deux, contre 59 % en 2019. Un adulte sur quatre croit que des membres de la force policière sont corrompus et deux sur trois, soit 67% des sondés pensent que la police est engagée d'une façon ou d'une autre dans des pratiques illégales.

Moins d'une personne sur deux, soit 45% accusent des policiers d'être impliqués dans des activités criminelles. Deux sur trois, c'est-à-dire 64% sont d'avis que les policiers font des contrôles de routine de véhicules sans aucune raison valable. De plus une personne sur deux, c'est-à-dire 58 % estiment que la police fait usage d'une force excessive face à des situations de contestation et 63 % quand ils ont affaire à des criminels.

Oui, seulement deux personnes sur cinq, 42 % reconnaissent que des policiers agissent de manière professionnelle dans le respect des droits de l'individu et finalement, M. le président, trois personnes sur cinq disent regretter que la police *get figir* au lieu d'agir de manière neutre.

Ceci dit, M. le président, à ce titre et comme je me suis déjà exprimé dans cette Chambre sur cette question, je voudrais réitérer ma demande pour qu'il y ait un système de recrutement beaucoup plus équitable et transparent au sein de la force policière car je doute fort que le système et les méthodes utilisés actuellement pour le recrutement des policiers et policières favorisent l'inclusion des meilleurs éléments au sein de la force.

Il y a de mon point de vue trop de brebis galeuses au sein de la police qui ont fini par ternir l'image de nos policiers dont je suis certain que beaucoup font contre vents et marées un travail formidable.

Dans la foulée, M. le président, l'image de la force policière est si écorchée que pour le bien de la République, il faudrait s'assurer que des sessions de formation appropriées et soutenues soient mises en place afin que les nouvelles recrues soient mieux encadrées et suivies.

M. le président, autre sujet d'une grande préoccupation au sein de la population, c'est le business de la drogue à Maurice qui non-seulement a pris une ampleur effroyable mais ce business se fait au vu et au su des autorités. Jusqu'à quand les mères de famille vont continuer à pleurer la mort de leurs enfants en raison de la drogue ?

Les marchands de la mort ne se cachent plus pour faire leur business. Ils ont pignon sur rue dans chaque région du pays. Aujourd'hui, ces mêmes marchands de la mort

affichent leurs richesses et savent comment blanchir leur argent. M. le président, le business de la drogue n'est plus une simple affaire du Bad boy du quartier ; c'est désormais un business organisé avec ses codes et ses blanchisseurs, ses transporteurs, ses martins et disposent aussi leur entrées dans les bureaux feutrés d'hommes d'affaires haut placés. Le business de la drogue n'est plus qu'une affaire locale.

Non, M. le président, les marchands de la mort se sont internationalisés avec des ramifications et fonctionnent comme des multinationales à tel point que Maurice est considéré comme une plaque tournante de ce commerce dans l'Océan Indien notamment avec Madagascar, la Réunion et les Seychelles.

Du reste, M. le président, *Global Initiative*, une ONG, financée par l'Union Européenne et le gouvernement des États-Unis, a consacré tout un chapitre sur Maurice dans son rapport publié en 2021. On peut lire entre autres que les marchés des stupéfiants sont de loin, la plus grande économie criminelle de Maurice. Ils sont largement protégés par l'élite politique du pays et sont à l'origine d'une corruption généralisée dans les institutions de l'État. Maurice est un pays de destination pour l'héroïne avec un taux de consommation de drogues parmi les plus élevés de la région. Les flux d'héroïnes, en provenance d'Afghanistan, continuent de se déplacer le long des côtes de l'Est et du Sud de l'Afrique. Les marchés intérieurs de l'héroïne se sont profondément implantés à Maurice ainsi que dans d'autres états insulaires de l'Océan Indien occidental.

M. le président, si on prend le temps de lire ce chapitre consacré à notre pays, on ne peut qu'être horrifié car d'autres sujets de grande préoccupation pour les mauriciens sont aussi abordés. Tout cela pour vous dire que malgré les réponses pompeuses que donne le Premier ministre dans cette auguste Assemblée lorsqu'il est interrogé sur la question du drogue, les mauriciens constatent eux que ce business est de plus en plus florissant pour les barons de la drogue.

Mr Speaker: Can I just stop you there? Everything is okay except *trompeuses*, withdraw that word.

Mr Quirin: Non, je n'ai pas dit *trompeuses*, j'ai dit *pompeuses*. *Pompeuses* veut dire ...

Mr Speaker: Okay.

An hon. Member: *Pomper*.

Mr Quirin: Oui, je n'ai pas dit trompeuses. On s'étonne aujourd'hui, M. le président, que nous avons une affaire nommée Franklin. En effet, l'affaire Franklin, M. le président, a révélé au grand jour ce que Global Initiative appelle –

« Un commerce largement protégé par l'élite politique du pays est à l'origine d'une corruption généralisée dans les institutions de l'État. »

Laissons la justice faire son travail mais déjà certains dans cette Chambre se sont brûlé les ailes dans cette affaire. Si une partie de l'élite de ce pays est attirée par ce business, comment voulez-vous que les jeunes qui n'ont aucun avenir professionnel après avoir échoué la grade 6 ou qui ne peuvent pas terminer leurs études secondaires n'ayant pas les cinq crédits comme le réclame le ministère de l'éducation ne soient pas eux aussi, M. le président, attirés par ce business qui génère avant tout de l'argent facile.

C'est désormais un fait que ceux qui sont impliqués dans ce business ou qui consomment de la drogue sont de plus en plus jeunes. C'est un rajeunissement alarmant, M. le président, et j'espère que l'honorable ministre de l'Éducation a pris bonne note de la situation car le 26 mars dernier, des journaux ont rapporté des récents cas de drogue en milieu scolaire qui m'interpelle fortement. Quatre élèves ont été épinglés pour délit de drogue ; le premier cas remonte au 8 mars quand un jeune de 13 ans a tenté de mettre fin à ses jours après avoir été surpris avec de la drogue en sa possession. Il a notamment expliqué aux policiers qu'il voulait en revendre à ses camarades de collège tout en avouant qu'il en avait déjà vendu à des élèves de deux autres établissements scolaires situés l'un dans la capitale et l'autre dans les Plaines Wilhems.

M. le président, le lundi 20 mars, trois jeunes ont été pris avec du cannabis et du papier à rouler; le premier cas concerne un élève de 14 ans fréquentant un collège des hautes Plaines Wilhems et celui-là, il a été pris avec 1,33 g de cannabis, un carnet de papier à rouler, deux cigarettes artisanales contenant du tabac et des feuilles soupçonnées d'être du cannabis. Le même jour au Stade Marie Justin à Réduit, un élève de 17 ans a été interpellé avec une cigarette contenant du cannabis toujours alors que dans un collège de l'est, un jeune de 18 ans a été pris avec six sachets de gandia dissimulés dans une boîte de cigarettes.

Qu'on ne se voile pas la face, l'échec scolaire a une cause à effet sur le rajeunissement des vendeurs des consommateurs de drogues ; des études faites dans de nombreux pays ont démontré cette corrélation. Comment ne pas exprimer ma colère, M. le président, quand je note avec quel dédain et légèreté certains, au sein de ce gouvernement, ont réagi dans cette Chambre lorsque la ministre de l'Éducation a annoncé un taux de 96

% d'échec au niveau de *l'Extended Programme* ? Ce programme qui promettait d'être révolutionnaire...

Mr Speaker: On this programme, many people have already spoken. Change the item.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, j'ai des choses importantes et différentes à dire de ceux et celles qui m'ont précédés. Vous allez écouter et vous allez certainement être d'accord avec moi.

Mr Speaker: I will try.

Mr Quirin: Ce programme, comme je le disais, qui promettait d'être révolutionnaire pour le système éducatif à Maurice ...

Mr Speaker: Last warning for you.

Mr Quirin: ... à démontrer le contraire. Seul 71 élèves sur 3,291 ont réussi à leurs examens. Cette réforme qui se vantait d'être inclusive, équitable et efficace, a donc faillit à ses objectifs.

Mr Speaker: No, this has already been said.

Mr Quirin: Attendez!

Mr Speaker: Non, I can't wait.

Mr Quirin: M. le président...

Mr Speaker: You can't tell the Speaker to wait and you repeat your argument. You told me you will be telling me something new, you will be telling the House something new but this has already been said. You want to check the Hansard?

Mr Quirin: M. le président....

Mr Speaker: I give you another chance, try again.

Mr Quirin: It is not a question of chance. It is not a question of laughing or anything like that. I have prepared my speech. Okay?

Mr Speaker: You may have prepared your speech but by mistake you may have ...

Mr Quirin: Yes, I have many things to say here in this Chamber.

Mr Speaker: May I talk? I am the Speaker. May I talk?

Mr Quirin: Yes, you may.

Mr Speaker: You may have prepared your speech.

Mr Quirin: Yes.

Mr Speaker: I don't deny that.

Mr Quirin: Yes.

Mr Speaker: But, if by mistake, you have put arguments that others have already been debating, then it is repetition.

An hon. Member: Who others?

An hon. Member: *Res to trankil do Boolell.*

Mr Quirin: I did not find anyone talking about this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Okay, I suspend the Sitting. I will bring Hansard and then the consequence would be serious.

Mr Uteem: Lipa gagne droit ...

An hon. Member : Gouvernement gagne droit rekozer !

At 3.50 p.m., the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.14 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated!

Hon. Members, I have checked the recordings and it has been ascertained that the issue of Extended Programme has been canvassed at by at least the hon. Leader of the Opposition, hon. Ramful and hon. Assirvaden. Hon. Members, I therefore maintain my earlier stand.

Hon. Member, you may continue your speech on other issues. Please, continue on other issues.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. Standing Order 47 - Irrelevance and Repetition –

“The Speaker or the person presiding, after having called the attention of the Assembly or of the Committee, to the conduct of a Member, who persists in irrelevance, [and listen to this well] or tedious repetition [the word is tedious repetition] either or his or her own argument or argument used by other Members in debate, may direct him or her to discontinue his or her speech.”

So, Mr Speaker, Sir,...

Mrs Navarre-Marie: *Laise li koze !*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, hon. Quirin! There is a point of order.

Mr Ameer Meea: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, my point is, it has always been the past practice in this House by all Speakers and also in the House of Commons, that in Budget Speech...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member!

Mr Ameer Meea: We let every Member to...

Mr Speaker: Can you give way? Can you give way? Hon. Member, I know what you are telling me. I am not bound by the past practices by other Speakers, nor by precedence by other Speakers, nor by my own precedence. The Speaker is the Speaker of the day. So, I have already given my ruling. My ruling is I maintain my stand. That's all.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I please raise another point of order?

Mr Speaker: Please!

Mr Bhagwan: I am just asking your guidance, and also we want to know. The point you have raised should not apply only to Members of the Opposition. We have listened to many Members of Government. There has been repetition by Members of Government. So, can we, at least, expect that there will be a fair treatment to Members of both sides of the House?

Mr Speaker: I totally agree with you, hon. Member, particularly with your experience. If ever there is anything of this sort that happens, please, draw my attention to this point.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: I have to draw your attention?

Mr Speaker: You have to draw my attention! You have to draw my attention. You have the right! You have the duty! This is your work. This is Standing Orders!

Mr Assirvaden: Standing Order 41.

Mr Speaker: And no more point of orders. I have already ruled. Please, continue.

Mr Quirin: M. le président, avant de poursuivre avec mon discours, permettez-moi, d'affirmer à la Chambre...

Mr Osman Mahomed: I have a point of order!

Mr Speaker: I have already ruled. There are no more points of order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Why not?

Mr Speaker: This is my decision.

Mr Osman Mahomed: Why?

Mr Speaker: You cannot question that. You continue ! Don't interrupt. Don't interrupt. You can raise your point of order later.

Mr Osman Mahomed : When ?

Mr Quirin: M. le président, je disais donc, avant de poursuivre mon discours, permettez-moi de rappeler à la Chambre et à vous, en tant que président de cette Chambre, que cela fait le treizième discours que je prononce ici dans cette Chambre sur un budget présenté par le ministre des Finances qui est en poste. C'est la première fois qu'un *Speaker* m'empêche de dire ce que j'ai à dire.

Mr Speaker: I will stop you. Excuse me! Once more, I will draw your attention to the rule in Parliament. There has been a ruling. I have already requested you to continue your speech. The character, conduct and whatever, this is not interesting. This is done by way of motion. Do not comment on the Speaker! Comment on your speech.

Mr Quirin: Donc, si je comprends bien, vous ne me permettez pas de poursuivre avec ce que j'ai à dire sur *l'Extended Programme* ?

Mr Speaker: Now, you are continuing again. I also have the right to suspend your speech. Mind well! I am giving you the chance, I am giving you the opportunity and you are circumventing and you are are going around and around.

Mr Quirin: Je ne retourne pas, je ne retourne pas. Vous m'avez mal compris. Je ne retourne pas. Je poursuis mon discours, mais je me permets de vous dire que j'ai en main le budget pour les différents ministères, et pour le ministère de l'Éducation, nous sommes appelés à voter un montant de pratiquement R20 milliards, M. le président. Cet *Extended Programme* fait partie justement de cette somme pour laquelle nous aurons à nous exprimer, à exercer notre vote.

Alors, si vous considérez que ce taux d'échec n'est pas important, que cette somme est dérisoire...

Mr Speaker: No! No! I am...

Mr Quirin: Je poursuis sur un autre thème...

Mr Speaker: No, you seem to be debating with the Chair and this is not permitted, number one. Number two, I haven't asked anybody not to discuss this item, but this item has sufficiently been canvassed by the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Ramful, hon. Assirvaden. Now, I am asking you to move on. Move on to another item!

Mr Bhagwan: It has not been discussed on our side.

Mr Speaker: You continue with your speech!

Mr Armance: Can I have a point of clarification?

Mr Speaker: No! Sufficiently canvassed!

An hon. Member: It's not!

Mr Quirin: En effet, M. le président, je vais poursuivre.

Les annonces de ce quatrième budget de l'honorable ministre des Finances ne sont que des vaines tentatives pour colmater les importantes brèches après ce qui peut être considéré comme l'échec du plan Marshall introduit en 2016 pour combattre la pauvreté. Quelle est aujourd'hui la situation des personnes qui vivent sous le seuil de la pauvreté ? La réponse à cette question, M. le président, est catastrophique si nous prenons en considération les points 433, 434 et 435 du discours de l'honorable Dr. Padayachy.

En effet, les chiffres qui ont été donnés par le ministre indiquent qu'environ 700 000 personnes à Maurice y compris les 350 000 pensionnaires vivent avec moins de R 15 000 par mois. Ce n'est ni plus ni moins qu'un constat d'échec de la politique de la lutte contre la pauvreté de ce gouvernement à tel point qu'il a été nécessaire de créer une nouvelle catégorie à savoir les ménages touchant jusqu'à R 18 860.

Pour le reste, c'est encore une fois les répétitions des budgets précédents. Heureusement, toutefois que le ministre des Finances a corrigé l'infamie envers les personnes handicapées notamment la proposition d'une révision de l'évaluation de l'invalidité des personnes après une amputation. C'est d'ailleurs un combat que je mène depuis plusieurs années pour rendre justice à ces personnes amputées souvent après un accident tragique qui doivent passer, repasser devant un board médical pour essayer de faire renouveler leur pension d'invalidité. Et dans beaucoup de cas, M. le président, leur demande est refusée alors que nous savons tous que ces personnes ne retrouveront jamais l'utilisation de leurs pieds ou de leurs bras. Le fait que dorénavant une personne amputée

ou ayant perdu un bras ou une jambe ou une main bénéficiera de la *full basic invalidity pension* de R 11 000 n'est que justice rendue.

À ce titre, j'espère également que justice sera rendue à ces familles qui ont perdu leurs proches dans ce qui est considéré comme le scandale des patients dialysés. En effet, la mort de ces 11 personnes pendant la pandémie de la Covid-19 est un lourd fardeau que porte ce gouvernement en particulier le ministère de la Santé qui continue à ne pas dévoiler toute la vérité aux familles des victimes. Pour conclure sur ce chapitre, je dirais que ce budget a fait certes de la place à un certain nombre de mesures sociales mais ces mesures, M. le président, n'ont pour but que de traiter les symptômes au lieu de guérir ce mal profond qui est la pauvreté à Maurice.

M. le président, quelques mots maintenant sur le sport et la jeunesse. À ce chapitre, je dirais il est à constater également sur ce dossier que le gouvernement joue encore une fois au copier-coller. Comme pour la Rivière des Anguilles Dam, les projets de piscine à Curepipe, Flacq, et Rivière des Anguilles sont de sortie cette année comme une mesure phare pour nos sportifs. Sans doute, M. le président, pour combler un espace vide dans le discours du ministre des Finances, on peut en dire autant pour les *cash prizes* pour les éventuels médaillés aux Jeux olympiques de Paris en 2024 qui n'est pas non plus un fait nouveau.

Un pique de rappel quand même pour dire qu'en France un athlète qui gagnera une médaille d'or aux Jeux Olympiques touchera € 65 000 soit plus de R 3 millions et qu'à Hong Kong ce même médaillé d'or touchera 642 000 dollars américains. Je laisse donc aux athlètes de tirer leurs propres conclusions. Mais les propositions du ministre des Finances est aussi un pied donné à son collègue des sports qui lui, avait annoncé une prime de R 2 160 000, R 1 000 440 et R 720 000 respectivement, en janvier 2022 en cas de podium olympique. Mais la question qui mérite d'être posée est la suivante : comment ce gouvernement peut-il penser qu'un athlète gagnera une médaille olympique avec un soutien de seulement R 30 000 par mois pour sa préparation ? Ahurissant, cette façon de penser ! D'autant qu'il existe des études qui démontrent que pour gagner une place sur un podium olympique, un athlète a besoin de trouver un financement mensuel de presque R 250 000 pour assurer le soutien d'un encadrement technique, un préparateur mental, une préparation physique des soins de récupération et les services d'un diététicien entre autres.

Comme le dit si bien l'adage, les chiens ne font pas des chats, et cette absence de politique bien définie dans le fond comme dans la forme du sport mauricien depuis 2015 fait que ce sont malheureusement les athlètes qui en payent le prix fort. Pourtant, M. le

président, le sport mauricien a de si nombreuses fois démontré sa force et sa capacité de rassembler. Mais en termes de considération, nous sommes loin des attentes des sportifs.

Oui, M. le président, le sport mauricien souffre d'un manque chronique politique, de planification et de structure. Depuis plus de 10 ans, je n'ai pas arrêté de tirer la sonnette d'alarme et aujourd'hui on ne doit pas s'étonner de voir l'état pitoyable dans lequel se trouvent certains sport comme football, judo, handball, natation, tennis, basket-ball entre autres. Pour preuve, les dotations budgétaires pour ce ministère indiquent que le budget 2023/2024 fait la part belle aux amis du ministre et du Premier ministre et non aux sportifs.

Le vote concernant le *grant* alloué à plus d'une trentaine de fédérations est resté inchangé à 50 millions alors que le *Mauritius Sports Council* dirigé par la *blue-eyed lady* du *PMO* voit son budget passer de R 60 millions à R 100 millions. Idem pour la *Mauritius Multisports Infrastructure Ltd.* sous la direction du tandem Gopee-Sauzier dont le budget passe de R 57 millions à R 91 millions. On constate définitivement, M. le président, quelle est la priorité de ce gouvernement en particulier celle du ministre des Sports. Ce ne sont définitivement pas les sportifs sinon nous n'aurions pas eu droit à la cacophonie qui a régné lors du *Team Mauritius Sports Award* la semaine dernière où les contestations pleuvaient de toutes parts après l'annonce des résultats.

Et par ailleurs, nous avons une loi sur le sport qui est dépassé, qui ne répond plus aux aspirations de nos jeunes sportifs. Pire, cette loi ne protège pas nos sportifs à ce comportement pour le moins scandaleux de certains dirigeants sportifs. Dans quel pays au monde a-t-on vu un comité Olympique suspendre un athlète ? Qu'a fait le ministre pour que le nageur, Bradley Vincent, soit rétabli dans ses droits après un simulacre de comité disciplinaire mis en place par le comité Olympique mauricien pour protéger une de ses membres ? Le meilleur nageur mauricien, M. le président, qui a été suspendu pour trois ans, aura-t-il le droit de participer aux Jeux des îles en août prochain à Madagascar ? Les meilleurs judokas de Maurice, auront-ils la chance de gagner leur place dans la sélection nationale alors que depuis plus de trois ans une fantomatique fédération de judo refuse sciemment l'affiliation de leur club sans que le ministère des Sports ne bouge le petit doigt ?

À cet égard, M. le président, comment ne pas citer le camouflet ? C'est malheureux mais il faut bien le dire que le ministre des Sports a reçu de la FIFA dans sa démarche de mettre en place un *Temporary Committee* au sein de la *Mauritius Football Association*. Une fédération que je dois le rappeler est dans l'illégalité la plus totale depuis plus de 10

ans et qui ne respecte même pas le *Sports Act 2016*. Sa maladresse, son amateurisme voir ses connaissances limitées des règles qui régissent les fédérations, ont forcé ce ministère à dissoudre *illico presto* son comité temporaire. Mais ce n'est pas pour autant que les choses sont réglées au sein de la MFA. La situation est encore bien pire qu'avant et on ne sait même pas quand il y aura les élections de renouvellement au sein de cette fédération alors que le mandat de l'actuel comité exécutif a pris fin depuis juin 2022.

Le sport, M. le président, n'est pas uniquement le parent pauvre de ce budget mais c'est le parent pauvre tout court de ce gouvernement. Il n'y a qu'à voir les conditions dans lesquelles se préparent nos athlètes pour les Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien pour s'en faire une idée.

Alors que les stades et les autres infrastructures sportives, M. le président, ne sont pratiquement pas entretenus comme les images, circulés sur les réseaux sociaux concernant le stade Anjalay Coopen l'ont démontré, et pour le ministre des Sports, les pigeons sont responsables de cette situation comme il l'a lui-même affirmé mardi dernier dans cette Chambre. *Pa mwa sa, pigeon sa* comme dirait l'autre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now turn to Africa and the Government's lack of interest in the economic and artistic opportunities that our continent represents. The Government has announced a series of measures in every budget speech since 2015 to promote stronger economic relations between Mauritius and mainland Africa in the domain of trade, investment and technology transfer. These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, are collectively termed 'Mauritius-Africa Strategy', and in this present budget, the only measure announced is the update of the legal framework on industrial development to cater for the special Economic Zone in Senegal in order to position Mauritius as a gateway to the African market. Judging by references to the Africa strategy, it seems that Mauritius is losing interest in Africa. This is very unfortunate since the African Continental Free Trade Area launched in January 2021 is projected to boost trade and generate gains to all countries except that some countries will gain more than others. Mauritius should be ready to take advantage of the agreement and the immense opportunity that the African market represents. Having said that, we note that there is a lack of transparency and the status of implementation of the project announced in recent budget speeches and on the operation of the Mauritius Africa Fund.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, it appears that most of the projects have not been realised and in the case of what has been said to be completed, for example, the first phase of special Economic Zone as I said before in Senegal, it is not clear what kind of activities

they will host and what would be the degree of participation of Mauritian investors and enterprises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a risk that these projects suffer the same fate as the Jinfei project which was announced with much enthusiasm in 2008 but not yet materialised. Moreover, the Africa strategy has an overt emphasis on Mauritius investment into Africa. I do think that this bias needs to be rectified. The strategy should also be geared towards attracting productive African investment to Mauritius as well as towards trade with Sub-Saharan countries that could improve Mauritius trade balance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is needed, in fact, is a targeted approach. Mauritius must remain in areas in which it has demonstrated a comparative advantage. These include agriculture and agricultural biotechnology, textile, tourism and banking. Every project must be launched on the basis of interest expressed by Mauritian businesses. A more effective strategy would be to set up trading houses in the SADC and COMESA regions as an outlet to promote exports of Mauritian products.

M. le président, d'autant plus, conformément au thème 2023 de l'Union Africaine qui est l'accélération de la mise en œuvre de la zone de libre-échange continental africaine (ZLECAf) et alignée aussi sur l'agenda 2063, le Parlement Panafricain va collaborer avec le secrétariat de la ZLECAf et AfCFTA pour s'assurer que cette année apporte des changements positifs afin de stimuler le commerce intra africain à travers la mise en œuvre de la zone de libre-échange continental africaine. Cela impliquera des efforts concertés pour s'attaquer aux barrières commerciales existantes, favoriser la croissance des capacités productives et renforcer la compétitivité à travers le continent.

Grâce à ces actions, M. le président, le Parlement Panafricain entend jouer un rôle déterminant de la réalisation des objectifs de la zone de libre-échange continental africaine, et ainsi contribuer au développement économique de l'Afrique dont Maurice fait partie. C'est sans aucun doute une chance à saisir pour notre pays car ce projet phare de l'Union Africaine pourrait contribuer à augmenter le commerce intra africain de plus de 50 % au cours des 10 prochaines années s'il est effectivement mis en œuvre par les pays africains.

Aujourd'hui, il est clair, M. le président, que ce gouvernement qui est en fin de règne a définitivement peur des urnes. Le renvoi des élections municipales pour la troisième fois démontre que nous avons affaire à un gouvernement autocratique et antidémocratique. Il ne fait pas l'ombre d'un doute que ce gouvernement a volé le vote des citoyens, mais tôt ou tard, M. le président, il faudra passer à la caisse et affronter

l'électorat. D'autant que les raisons qui ont été avancées par le ministre des Administrations régionales sont incohérentes. La réforme des Administrations régionales dites-vous? Du bluff, encore du bluff, M. le président, car ce gouvernement qui est au pouvoir depuis huit ans a bien eu le temps de voir, analyser, revoir ce dossier et venir à la veille de la date de la dissolution des conseils municipaux, amender la loi pour renvoyer les élections municipales est carrément un manque de respect envers les citoyens, M. le président.

Ces mêmes citoyens sont très mécontents à l'effet que ce gouvernement ait trouvé le moyen d'étendre le mandat des conseils municipaux pour encore deux ans alors que l'insatisfaction est de mise. Comme par exemple, à Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, les citoyens auront sans doute à se mettre sous la dent deux années additionnelles d'incompétence et d'inefficacité. Pendant ce temps, de nombreuses routes sont impraticables, les trottoirs sont dans un état déplorable, l'insalubrité des lieux publics, les terrains laissés à l'abandon et non entretenus font office de repaires des bandits. Le manque d'activité criant pour les jeunes et moins jeunes sont légion. Les centres municipaux, des jardins familiaux sont tout aussi dans un état déplorable, M. le président. Les drains, n'en parlons pas, ne sont pratiquement jamais nettoyés alors que l'argent a bel et bien été voté dans ce dernier budget.

Au niveau des infrastructures dans les régions, le constat est affligeant et malgré les annonces pompeuses dans le budget 2022–2023 sur la construction des drains, les maisons et les routes continuent à être inondées, transformées en rivières, que ce soit à Coromandel, Résidence Vétiver, Mont Roches, Gros Cailloux, Albion, et d'autres régions lors des pluies torrentielles. Et, je formule le souhait, M. le président, que le ministre des Infrastructures publiques utilise les fonds disponibles pour ma circonscription pour aménager des drains adéquats afin de soulager le calvaire des habitants de ces régions.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Mr Quirin: A bien voir, M. le président, oui j'ai pratiquement terminé. Les conseils municipaux sont devenus les *rubber stamps* du gouvernement et c'est pourquoi ce gouvernement n'a pas honte de prolonger le mandat de ces conseils inefficaces pour deux encore. Au niveau des autres régions de ma circonscription, j'ose espérer que le village de Canot aura enfin son terrain de foot comme confirmé par le ministre des Collectivités locales en réponse à une récente question parlementaire sur le sujet. J'ose espérer aussi que le village de la Valette sera enfin pris en considération et qu'un plan d'ensemble sera déployé afin de doter ce village des moyens pour alléger la vie de ces habitants. J'ai eu

l'occasion dans cette Chambre, M. le président, d'affirmer que les habitants de la Valette sont malheureusement laissés-pour-compte, abandonnés à leur sort loin de tout.

Sur un plan humain c'est inacceptable, et pour terminer je voudrais rapidement, M. le président, aborder un sujet auquel je me suis beaucoup intéressé ces derniers temps ; l'industrie hippique et je vais aussi me référer aux amendements au *Gambling Regulatory Authority Act* qui se retrouve dans l'annexe au discours du budget.

M. le président, la situation telle qu'elle est aujourd'hui démontre clairement que le gouvernement a lamentablement failli dans sa tâche à redorer le blason à cette industrie. Toutes les promesses faites au départ ont été reniées. D'abord il y a le club organisateur historique des courses de chevaux qui a été forcé de fermer ses portes et avec cela la conséquence que 186 pères et mères de famille ont dû faire appel au *Redundancy Board* du ministère du Travail afin d'obtenir justice et réparation.

En attendant ce qui sera encore proposé comme faveur dans le *Finance Bill*, il est bon de faire ressortir que trois des mesures qui se trouvent dans l'annexe du budget ont sans doute ravi le principal bailleur de fonds du MSM.

Mr Speaker: Je vous arrête là !

Mr Quirin: Oui ?

Mr Speaker: Déjà votre temps est terminé.

Mr Quirin: Non, je m'attendais à ce que vous m'arrêtiez.

Mr Speaker: Non, non, non! Bailleur de fonds du MSM ou MMM, *this does not concern Parliament*.

Mr Quirin: Ah bon?

Mr Speaker: Whether it is *bailleur de fonds* MSM or MMM, this does not concern Parliament.

(Interruptions)

Your time is over!

Mr Quirin: M. le président, pourquoi vous défendez ce monsieur ? Tout le monde sait qu'il est le bailleur de fonds du MSM.

Mr Speaker: *Je ne defends pas.*

Mr Quirin: Ce n'est pas la première fois.

Mr Speaker: I am telling you, '*bailleur de fonds*' que ce soit du MMM ou MSM does not interest me.

Mr Quirin: Peu importe.

Mr Speaker: Don't be the lobby!

Mr Quirin: Je ne dis rien !

Mr Speaker: Nobody is a lobby here.

Mr Quirin: Il n'y a pas de *lobby*.

Mr Speaker: Nobody is a lobby. Your time is over! If you insist, you will walk out.

Mr Quirin: Il a lui-même avoué.

Mr Speaker: You will walk out! I am ordering you to walk out.

Mr Quirin: Continue!

Mr Speaker: Withdraw!

Mr Quirin: I will walk out with pleasure!

Mr Speaker: Withdraw!

An hon. Member: *Al lakaz boner!*

Mr Speaker: Withdraw from the Chamber!

Mr Quirin: Yes, I will withdraw!

Mr Speaker: This Parliament should not be the lobby place for hon. Members.

Mr Quirin: There is no lobby.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members on both sides of the House are reminded that your duty is to your constituents first, the nation and the country at large. Those who want to become lobbies should go outside!

Mr Quirin: Il n'y a pas de *lobby*!

Mr Speaker: Outside! Withdraw!

Mr Quirin: Il n'y a pas de *lobby*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Withdraw! Outside!

Mr Quirin: I'm leaving, I'm leaving.

Mr Speaker: Oh, then, I am naming you. You are disregarding my authority. I am naming you.

Mr Armance: He is leaving! Why are you naming him?

An hon. Member: Naming for what?

Mr Quirin: I telling you that I am leaving.

An hon. Member: *Ki tonn aksepte sa?*

An hon. Member: *Ey! Ale do!*

Mr Quirin: Mais je ramasse mes affaires et je m'en vais.

Mr Speaker: So, you continue?

Mr Quirin: What continue? I am leaving!

Mr Speaker: You leave! What are you doing? What cinema are you doing?

Mr Quirin: What cinema? I need to get my things.

Mr Speaker: You leave!

Mr Quirin: You want me to leave all my things here?

Dr. Boolell: He has to collect his personal belongings.

An hon. Member: That is what he is saying, he is leaving.

Dr. Boolell: He should be allowed to collect his personal belongings.

An hon. Member: He is collecting his belongings.

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. He is leaving. Why are you naming him?

An hon. Member: *Gagn dimal!*

Mr Speaker: Wait, before your point of order.

Mr Bhagwan: But he is ready to leave.

Mr Speaker: Wait! Wait! Wait! Wait!

Mr Bhagwan: No, don't name him!

Mr Quirin: *Ki sa sa?*

An hon. Member: *Pa name li! Pa name li!*

Mr Quirin: *Ey! 13 an mo isi mwa!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Anwar dan numero 17...

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

An hon. Member: *Anou met enn Pravind.*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Quirin: *Ale*, bonne continuation.

An hon. Member: *Ale! Apre 9 defet papa! Allez, bon repos!*

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! Order!

Mr Bhagwan: Why are you naming him?

Mr Speaker: So, we continue with the next orator. Hon. Bablee!

(4.42 p.m.)

Mr G. Bablee (Third Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): M. le président, après avoir écouté plusieurs orateurs des deux côtés de la Chambre, je me suis posé la question, aujourd'hui, on est en train de débattre sur le budget 2023-2024, qu'est-ce que j'ai entendu de l'autre côté de la Chambre ? On vient dire que l'inflation, c'est l'ami du gouvernement. Et, aujourd'hui, je me suis dit que je dois retourner en arrière pour comprendre ce qui s'est passé dans ce pays dans les années 80.

Quand je regarde dans cette Chambre, des deux côtés, je vois qu'il y a des jeunes parlementaires qui sont là, ici, à l'intérieur de l'hémicycle pour la première fois, mais est-ce qu'on se rappelle des années 83 ? Je dois retourner en arrière pour faire revivre un peu - je sais que peut-être parmi nous, ici, il y a eu à cette époque des parlementaires qui étaient jeunes même - la situation dans le pays du côté de l'économie.

On a eu les élections de 1982 où il y a eu l'alliance MMM-PSM qui avait remporté une grande victoire. C'était l'histoire - je me souviens moi-même, j'étais très jeune - le rassemblement qu'il y a eu après les élections au Champs de Mars, environ 200 000 personnes si je ne me trompe pas. Le peuple était là, derrière ce gouvernement, derrière cette alliance. Mais après quelques mois, sur des problèmes, sur une question de stratégie économique, dans quelle direction il faut emmener le pays, cette alliance s'est brisée.

Et après, en avril 1983 - je me souviens moi-même, j'étais très jeune, je crois que j'avais 28 ans - il y a eu la création du Mouvement Socialiste Militant. Je me souviens si je ne me trompe pas, je crois que c'était le 3 avril, quelque chose comme ça, à la place de la gare de Vacoas. Il y avait ce peuple qui avait mis un grand espoir dans cette alliance, qui commençait à se poser des questions : '*Ki pou pase la ?*' Un héritage avec 75 000 chômeurs ; deux semaines de devises étrangères pour l'importation. Un peuple qui avait faim, qui avait de l'espoir, qui attendait qu'il y aura un nouveau départ, qu'il y aura des développements, qu'il y aura des créations d'emplois – rien. On a eu des difficultés, mais il faut le reconnaître que le MSM, qui, aujourd'hui, sortant de 83, pour venir, ici, en 2023, ça fait 40 ans d'existence.

Et je vous le dit, dans cette Chambre aujourd'hui, le MSM à travers son leader Sir Anerood Jugnauth a conclu des alliances politiques avec tous les partis, qui sont là à l'intérieur de l'hémicycle, ici, là - le Parti Travailleiste, le PMSD. Il a travaillé ensemble, mais seulement à chaque fois, c'était lui le meneur, le visionnaire, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Quand aujourd'hui, on vient parler de 'l'inflation, c'est l'ami du gouvernement', je me pose la question et je me suis dit : est-ce que vous avez eu l'occasion de connaître ces années de détresses, de désespoirs, de braises ? J'ai voulu parler de cela pour faire revivre un peu l'histoire de notre pays.

Ce que corroborent d'ailleurs deux études menées en 2023, *l'Africa Wealth Report* classe l'île Maurice à la sixième position parmi les pays les plus riches du continent africain avec l'indice de bonheur le plus élevé parmi tous les pays de la communauté internationale d'Afrique.

Voilà, M. le président ! Voilà le bilan de ce gouvernement ! Et là, je viens de parler de 75 000 chômeurs et aujourd'hui c'est extraordinaire, la main-d'œuvre étrangère. Nous avons un problème ; c'est ça qu'il faut essayer de comprendre. Un pays qui sort de 76 000 chômeurs, qui aujourd'hui se retrouvent à la 6^{ème} position de ce que je viens de vous dire, un gros problème de main-d'œuvre – eh vous là ! Comme on dit en créole, *samem ki apel mirak !*

Alors, ce qu'il faut comprendre aujourd'hui, qu'à travers le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, comme je viens de dire, qui a travaillé avec ses alliés politiques et en alliance, parce que les alliances à Maurice, ça existe et ça va continuer à exister encore. Il a su emmener ce pays aujourd'hui où on est et là tout à l'heure j'aurai l'occasion de décortiquer le budget de mon collègue Padayachy pour expliquer que le MSM, je me souviens en 1983 le slogan –

« C’était unir pour bâtir. »

Et non unir pour diviser, unir pour bâtir ce peuple, ce pays et aujourd’hui, je peux vous dire que je suis fier d’être dans cette Assemblée en tant qu’élu, un des élus du MSM qui en même temps fait partie d’une grande alliance politique.

M. le président, je ne vais pas aller plus loin parce que vous savez quand on regarde la philosophie, le parcours du MSM, Sir Anerood nous a quitté mais je peux vous dire aujourd’hui avec ce qu’il y a dans ce budget, à travers le Premier ministre Pravind Kumar Jugnauth et le ministre des Finances Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, la relève est assurée.

M. le président, maintenant je vais essayer d’entrer dans les détails du budget 2023/2024. Je tiens à féliciter l’honorable Renganaden Padayachy, ministre des Finances, de la planification économique et du développement pour la présentation de son quatrième budget 2023/2024. Je tiens aussi à féliciter le gouvernement pour les aides sociales apportées dans la période difficile que nous traversons due à l’augmentation de l’inflation partout dans le monde.

En effet malgré les attaques, je dirais, mesquine et perfide de l’opposition, le gouvernement a eu le courage de puiser dans les réserves de l’État – je dis bien puiser dans les réserves de l’État – pour venir en aide à la population notamment aux plus démunis et cela il faut le saluer.

Dr. Boolell: La banque de Maurice, réserves de la banque de Maurice.

Mr Speaker: Don’t interrupt!

(Interruptions)

Don’t interrupt!

Mr Bablee: M. le président, la règle du sage pour gouverner est celle d’ouvrir les cœurs et d’emplir les ventres. Je laisse cette citation du grand philosophe chinois Lao Tseu à l’appréciation de tous.

Et là ce que je vais faire, M. le président, je vais entrer dans le domaine du social dans le budget, j’aborderais à présent le domaine du social, l’un des chantiers fondamentaux du budget 2023/2024. Depuis l’arrivée de ce gouvernement au pouvoir, de nombreuses mesures ont été prises pour venir en aide aux personnes inscrites au *Social Register of Mauritius* afin d’améliorer leurs conditions de vie. Je pense à ces personnes comme je leur avais dit dans le passé, *ki travay gramatin pu kapav manze tanto* et pour qui

j'ai une affection toute particulière. Je pense à ces femmes de ménage qui ne perçoivent toujours pas de salaire minimal malgré les mesures mises en place par le gouvernement pour la régularisation de leur statut, qui s'épuisent littéralement en cumulant des emplois chez des particuliers, parfois je dirais très malhonnête *parski bizin travay dan kat plas pu gagnn 2,000 ici, 3,000 laba, 4,000 ici, tanto inn reinte letem rent lakaz.*

Et moi je connais ces gens-là. J'ai l'occasion de les rencontrer, de parler avec eux, je les écoute comme je dis encore une fois, ces jardiniers travaillant au rabais *koup bambou ici tay gazon laba* pour avoir un peu d'argent pour vivre. Ces petit cordonniers peinant à joindre les deux bouts, ces sans-abris manœuvrant quotidiennement pour boire une tasse de thé au marché et manger un repas chaud avant d'aller se coucher sous les infrastructures publiques – je dis bien les infrastructures publiques – à même le sol ou sur des tapis de fortune. *Ou truv zot aswar pe ale ek zot karton ek dir zordi nu ale dormi anba pon metro.*

Voilà cette catégorie de citoyens en ces temps difficiles marqués par l'inflation et corollairement par la baisse du pouvoir d'achat. Je dirais que le budget 2023/2024 vient en quelque sorte étancher la soif des plus démunis. Soulignons que le seuil d'éligibilité au SRM passe de R 3 000 à R 3 575 pour un adulte et de R 1 500 à R 2 500 pour un enfant. Le seuil du revenu maximum des ménages passera de R 10 500 à R 14 650 à partir de juillet 2023.

Je tiens par ailleurs à remercier le Premier ministre pour le plan Marshall contre la pauvreté mis en place en 2016. M. le président, certaines familles mauriciennes ne disposent pas de revenus suffisants pour subvenir aux besoins de leurs proches. Dans le budget 2023/2024, le gouvernement prévoit donc plusieurs mesures pour que tous ces foyers vivant dans une grande précarité, je dis bien, vivant dans une grande précarité, bénéficient des aides sociales.

Je fais notamment référence aux mères isolées dont le conjoint ou le compagnon se trouve parfois en prison. Ces femmes très souvent au chômage, ont à leurs charges plusieurs jeunes enfants et ont un loyer à payer. Aux enfants maltraités, négligés parce que les parents sont sous l'empire de la drogue et de l'alcool ou se prostituent, aux enfants abandonnés à la suite d'un divorce compliqué et qui sont parfois adoptés par un membre de leur famille ou par un étranger. Aux personnes malades ou en situation de handicap.

Autrefois, seules les personnes avec une invalidité de 60 % bénéficiaient d'une aide sociale de l'État. Dans le budget 2022-2023, les personnes invalides entre 40 % et 59 % bénéficiaient d'une aide sociale d'un montant de R 2,500 mais le budget 2023-2024 se

montre encore plus altruiste car désormais toute personne amputée bénéficiera d'une allocation mensuelle pour invalidité, je dis bien invalidité, de l'ordre de R 11,000, M. le président. Et là, je salue la ministre, Madame Jeewa-Daureeawoo, et au nom de toutes ces personnes abîmées par l'existence, je vous dis une fois de plus merci cher collègue, Dr. Padayachy.

M. le président, en sus de la pension des seniors, que nous appelons communément la 'pension de vieillesse', sera de l'ordre de R 11,000 afin de permettre aux aînés d'acheter leurs médicaments et de payer leurs factures. Là aussi dans le budget 2023-2024, le ministre des Finances vient aussi rehausser la pension de nos seniors ainsi que les allocations perçues par les veuves, les orphelins et les personnes en situation d'handicap. Les pensions de base se verront augmenter de R 1,000 et les retraités âgés de 65 ans bénéficieront d'une pension mensuelle d'un montant de R 12,000 qui sera combinée avec ce qu'on appelle *CSG Retirement Benefit*.

Voilà ! L'inflation est avec le gouvernement. Quel slogan? Voilà avec l'argent de l'inflation ! Voilà ce que ce gouvernement est en train de faire avec l'argent même si on dit que c'est l'argent de l'inflation. L'inflation est à travers le monde mais nous à l'île Maurice, oui l'inflation a grimpé, oui il y a des taxes mais on retourne ça vers le peuple parce qu'on ne veut pas que notre peuple meurt de faim. On aurait pu ramasser, comme on l'a dit l'autre jour, *kash pe rantre, ramase* ! Non ! On ne ramasse pas, le peuple a faim, on doit lui donner à manger. Voilà la politique de ce gouvernement, ce gouvernement socialiste qui est là au pouvoir.

M. le président, je vais parler de la protection de l'enfance. Dans le budget 2023-2024, le gouvernement présente des mesures importantes pour renforcer la protection de l'enfant. Attentif à l'épanouissement physique et psychologique des enfants, le gouvernement désire tout simplement que chaque petit mauricien s'épanouisse sainement dans un pays où il se sentira aimer et protéger tout au long de sa vie. Ainsi pour les enfants courageux, luttant contre des maladies orphelines ayant besoin de traitement à l'étranger, pour les jeunes patients âgés de moins de 18 ans nécessitant des thérapies inexistantes à l'île Maurice, le montant maximum d'un million d'*Overseas Treatment Scheme* sera annulé car le gouvernement prendra à sa charge la totalité du montant des soins à l'étranger.

M. le président, là, je dois saluer encore une fois le ministre des Finances qui a travaillé en étroite collaboration avec le ministre Dr. Jagutpal ; je peux témoigner ici dans cette Chambre. Je me souviens il y a quelques années, je travaillais à la Radio comme

animateur de l'émission - *Explik Ou Cas* - je reçois un appel d'une dame dont l'enfant est en traitement en Inde ; je reçois un appel dont la maman m'explique –

« Monsieur Bablee, j'ai mon fils qui est sur la table d'opération, il a un problème au genou. Je vous téléphone pour vous dire qu'on a plus d'argent parce que c'est la troisième fois qu'il vient en Inde, il y a des problèmes. Je fais appel à vous pour vous demander si vous pouvez, à travers la Radio, faire un appel à la bonne volonté, essayer de trouver des bons samaritains ».

Et je me souviens, je lui dis –

« Madame, je vais essayer de prendre ça demain matin dans l'émission ».

Et je me rappelle le lendemain matin quand je suis venu à la Radio, à l'antenne, je fais un appel de solidarité pour expliquer le problème de cette dame et le lendemain matin, deux jours après plutôt, la dame me téléphone pour me dire –

« Monsieur Bablee, je vous remercie parce que sur mon compte, j'ai pu avoir R 450,000 ».

Et aujourd'hui quand le ministre des Finances vient dire ensemble avec le ministre de la Santé qui décide plutôt d'abolir le un million, comment vous appelez ça ?

On peut avoir des divergences politiques dans cette Chambre. Il y a des débats pour et contre mais quand on voit des mesures comme ça, dans l'intérêt des enfants qui n'ont pas le moyen de se faire soigner, je m'attendais au moins un applaudissement de l'autre côté de la Chambre mais c'est dommage. Par ailleurs, le gouvernement, a pour projet, d'accorder un CSG *Child Allowance* à quelques 48,000 enfants âgés de moins de trois ans; une mesure couplée à la gratuité des écoles maternelles qui ne manquera pas de soulager les foyers concernés. De même l'allocation mensuelle accordée à un enfant placé en famille d'accueil passera de R 8,000 à R 12,000. Le gouvernement proposera incessamment une allocation rehaussée de R 15,000 pour un enfant avec des besoins spéciaux. Voilà la politique sociale de ce gouvernement.

À présent, M. le président, je mettrai en exergue l'un des pires manquements aux règles de savoir-vivre au sein de notre société. C'est toujours avec une joie immense que les familles accueillent des jumeaux, des triplés ou d'autres mais nous savons aussi que les naissances multiples représentent un budget colossal. Toutefois, les critères de revenus pour l'éligibilité au *Multiple Birth Social Aid Scheme* n'ont pas été revus depuis près de 20 ans. Ce qui est tout bonnement incroyable. Dans le budget 2023-2024, le gouvernement

vient pallier à ce manquement déplorable, ce manquement au règle, cet oubli de convenance, je dirais même cette défaillance de la mémoire.

Ainsi, il vient augmenter le plafond des ménages éligibles aux *Multiple Birth Social Aid Scheme* de R 150,000 de ressource financière net annuelle.

Jadis, nous passerons à R 390,000, ce qui fait qu'un ménage avec des revenus mensuels de R 30,000 bénéficiera désormais de cette prestation sociale. Ce qui m'amène aux interrogations suivantes, M. le président, pourquoi certaines majorités au pouvoir précédemment n'ont jamais mis en place un budget comme celui que nous présentons aujourd'hui dans lequel le bien-être social est fondamental.

Les budgets présentés étaient souvent austères, durs, voire inhumains. À titre d'exemple, ces majorités - je dis bien ces majorités - avaient mis fin à la distribution gratuite du pain. Le pain des pauvres ! Le pain des pauvres dans les écoles, alors qu'une bonne majorité d'enfant venait toujours à l'école, le ventre cru.

Je m'explique, M. le président, dans les années 2005-2007, on avait présenté des budgets austères, sans cœur, dépourvus de tout sentiment humain. En 2005, sous la férule du ministre Sithanen, ministre des Finances d'alors, on avait stoppé la distribution des pains dans les écoles primaires sur une période de 6 à 7 mois.

Étant quelqu'un qui est dans le social, je me sens obligé de condamner cette décision qui a été prise il y a plusieurs années de cela parce qu'humainement, on n'a pas le droit de faire une chose pareille. Mais après la protestation des parents, la distribution avait repris dans les écoles primaires. Dieu sait à quel point certains enfants venant de ces milieux défavorisés attendaient ce pain pour apaiser leur faim.

Voilà, M. le président, pourquoi j'ai appelé cela un budget sans cœur. Nous avons aussi les frais d'examens qui étaient rendus payant alors que des nombreux foyers n'avaient pas les moyens nécessaires. M. le président, nous sommes toujours dans les années 2006-2007, toujours à la tête du ministère des Finances, M. Sithanen, toujours comme ministre. Alors, on décide que les parents auront à payer la moitié des frais d'examens de la *School Certificate* et du *Higher School Certificate*. Mais toutefois, il faut préciser que le ministère de la Sécurité sociale d'alors décide de payer la totalité des frais d'examens pour les enfants nécessiteux. Eh c'était comme ça. Il faut appeler un chat un chat.

Avec l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'Alliance Mauricien en 2014, le gouvernement vient corriger cette injustice. Les frais d'examens pour les élèves de la *School Certificate* et de

Higher School Certificate sont payés dans leur intégralité de 2015 jusqu'à ce jour. Voilà ! Voilà ! C'est ce qu'on appelle un gouvernement socialiste, M. le président.

Il me vient aussi un mémoire qu'on avait estimé qu'un agent d'entretien pouvait vivre décemment avec R 1,500 par mois. R 1,500 par mois *pou netway lekol, netway twalet*. En décembre 2007, le contrat avec la compagnie *Mauriclean* pour le nettoyage des toilettes dans les écoles primaires et secondaires expirait. Par la suite, c'est la PTA qui avait pris en charge le paiement du personnel du nettoyage. Ils étaient payés sur le nombre d'heures de travail variant en R 1,500 et R 3,400 par mois.

Mais, M. le président, en janvier 2016, selon la *Cleaning Enterprise Remuneration Order* de 2013, le gouvernement de Pravind Jugnauth a approuvé que le personnel de nettoyage soit employé à plein temps avec un salaire mensuel de R 8,500, qui a été augmenté aujourd'hui et qui est passé à R 13,575. Je n'entends personne du côté de l'opposition qui a eu le courage au moins de saluer ces mesures parce que c'est dans l'intérêt des *ti dimounn*.

Quatre ans ont atténué un peu les cicatrices laissées par certains de nos prédécesseurs, ramène ne serait-ce que l'esquisse d'un sourire sur les visages de nos compatriotes, surtout - je dis bien surtout - ceux écorchés par la vie depuis leurs naissances. *Se ban dimounn ki depi zot ine ne, komsi zot ine kondane pu trase*.

A présent, M. le président, je m'attarderais sur un chantier essentiel du discours budgétaire de 2023-2024, celui de la santé. Tout d'abord, je voudrais souligner que malgré la crise sanitaire que nous avons subie récemment, notre système de santé ne s'est jamais effondré grâce à la compatibilité et à l'abnégation constante de notre frère, de notre ministre de la Santé, Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal, qu'on doit saluer très fort.

Comme annoncé dans le budget 2023/2024, le centre oncologique de Solferino, Vacoas sera totalement opérationnel à partir de cette année et une somme de R 210 millions est prévue pour l'acquisition des équipements modernes destinée au centre. Je tiens, par ailleurs, remercier le Premier ministre, le ministre des Finances, ainsi que le gouvernement indien pour l'aide financière apportée à la construction de ce centre oncologique.

Ce nouveau centre, je l'avais déjà souligné l'année dernière, mettra fin à des années de vétusté, d'insalubrité, d'indignité et parfois même d'inhumanité.

Mr Speaker: Try to conclude.

Mr Bablee : Dans la prise en charge des patients souffrant du cancer.

Ce projet philanthrope montre à quel point le gouvernement œuvre chaque jour pour le bien-être de toute la nation, il serait d'ailleurs bien de rappeler que nous sommes l'un des rares pays au monde où les services de santé sont gratuits, je dis bien, totalement gratuit.

Dans son budget 2023/2024, le ministre des Finances prévoit de développer des mesures pour prévenir et du a des risques de cancer et prodiguer les soins appropriés à ceux qui sont atteints malheureusement chaque année. Une cinquantaine d'enfants est diagnostiqués d'un cancer dans notre pays et nous savons que cela est une véritable épreuve pour toutes les familles.

Mr Speaker: Final conclusion!

Mr Bablee: C'est dans ce sillage que le gouvernement a pris des mesures décisives. Et le Speaker me demande de conclure.

Pour conclure, M. le président, dommage, je ne peux pas compléter tout ce qu'il y a dans le budget concernant le ministère de la Santé. Dans l'ensemble, j'ai mis en avant les points saillants du budget 2023-2024. Nous pouvons aussi souligner la garantie d'un salaire minimum introduit en 2014 par la majorité au pouvoir. Le budget 2023-2024 prévoit une hausse de ce salaire minimum de R 11,575. Il s'élèvera désormais à R 13,575 auquel s'ajoutera...

Mr Speaker: Thank you very much. You were given 30 minutes by the Chief Whip. So, discuss with the Chief Whip.

For now, I suspend the Sitting for thirty minutes.

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

On resuming at 6.24 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please, be seated!

ANNOUNCEMENT

HON. QUIRIN – NAMING

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I named the hon. Quirin earlier for disregarding the authority of the Chair.

MOTIONS – S.O. 17(3) & S.O. 29(1)

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Quirin, I beg, under Standing Order 17(3), to take the time of the House for urgent business.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo) seconded.

An hon. Member: Point of order!

Mr Speaker: Wait!

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

Hon. Members: No! No!

Mr Bhagwan: *Travail sale!*

Mr Uteem: Can I have a point of order, please?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir...

Mr Uteem: This has to do with the motion!

Mr Speaker: No, wait!

Mr Uteem: This has to do with the motion!

Mr Speaker: Wait first!

The Deputy Prime Minister: A point of order?

Mr Uteem: Yes. You just mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, that you have used your prerogatives under the Standing Orders to name hon. Quirin for disregarding your authority. Before voting the motion, we would like to know what authority did hon. Quirin disregard. We need to know because that will affect the gravity and sanction and proportionality of any sanction. So, we need to know what authority has been disregarded by hon. Quirin so that we can decide that vote.

Mr Speaker: You finished with your point of order?

Mr Uteem: Yes!

Mr Speaker: I will come back to that!

Mr Uteem: But this has to do with the motion.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, having obtained your permission, I beg to move, under Standing Order 29(1), to present a motion without notice.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

The motion was, on question put, agreed to.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of your decision to name the hon. Quirin, I beg to move that the hon. Quirin be suspended from the service of the Assembly for today's Sitting and the next two Sittings unless unreserved apologies are tendered to the House.

Mr Toussaint seconded.

The motion was on question put, agreed to.

Hon. Members: No.

Mr Speaker: Thank you!

An hon. Member: La honte!

Mr Bhagwan: *To pa honter?*

An hon. Member: Trahison à son sommet!

An hon. Member: Trahison!

An hon. Member: Traître!

Mr Bhagwan: *Zida!*

Mr Bhagwan: *Zida! Traître! La honte!*

Mrs Navarre Marie: Shame!

Mr Bhagwan: *Lahont lor twa!*

An hon. Member: La honte!

Mr Bhagwan: *Zida!*

Amenn to rol tret mem twa!

Mr Assirvaden: *Ena pli boukou 'No'.*

Mr Ameer Meea: *Bisin ena division la.*

Mr Speaker: The next orator!

An hon. Member: *Demann division!*

Mr Bhagwan: Vous n'avez pas honte! *Zida !*

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *To leader ki zida!*

Mr Bhagwan: *Eta aler do ta!*

Mr Speaker: MP Yeung Sik Yuen!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Uteem, Order!

Mr Uteem: Did you hear what he said?

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Everywhere order!

Mr Bhagwan: He must be reminded there.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(6.27 p.m.)

Mr M. Yeung Sik Yuen (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Ce Budget 2023/2024 qui est le quatrième budget présenté par le ministre des Finances, je le qualifie de très décevant, irresponsable et sans direction. Ce budget est mon neuvième budget depuis 2010 et vendredi dernier, le ministre des Finances est venu faire l'annonce des projets et je constate qu'il y a eu beaucoup de répétitions des mesures annoncées dans les budgets précédents.

Et malheureusement, une bonne partie des projets annoncés dans le passé n'a pas été concrétisée. Nous nous sommes crus dans une classe de géographie quand le ministre des Finances citait les différentes régions de l'île concernant la construction de drains, les terrains de jeux et le projet pour le barrage de Rivière des Anguilles – quatrième fois cité en quatre ans par ce même ministre.

Il y a eu des fausses promesses dans le passé. Le projet des 12 000 maisons qu'avait promis ce gouvernement, aujourd'hui, 8 000 maisons annoncées. Malheureusement ce projet n'a même pas été commencé. De l'eau potable 24/7 ; l'usine de bicyclettes ; des emplois pour chaque mauriciens et la construction d'une piscine chauffante à Curepipe annoncée depuis belle lurette. J'espère que cette fois-ci la piscine ne sera pas qu'un effet d'annonce.

M. le président, le pays va mal et le peuple mauricien est en colère contre ce gouvernement. Comme l'a dit l'honorable Bablee, le peuple a faim. Et il ose dire 'oser et protéger'? Il n'y a rien comme mesures contre l'inflation; rien contre la dépréciation de la roupie ; rien pour soulager les plus démunis ; rien pour les personnes qui construisent leur maison ; rien sur la baisse des prix de l'électricité quand le prix du pétrole a drastiquement baissé au niveau mondial ; rien sur le combat de la drogue qui gagne du terrain depuis l'arrivée de ce gouvernement ; rien pour la relance de l'économie ; rien pour la création de l'emploi ; rien pour la sécurité alimentaire ; et rien pour encourager les jeunes à rester à Maurice car beaucoup de ces jeunes quittent l'île natale pour immigrer dans d'autres pays.

M. le président, il ose dire 'oser et protéger'? Notre économie aujourd'hui est sur pilotage automatique. 'Oser et protéger'? Ils ont dilapidé l'argent de la banque de Maurice. 'Oser et protéger'? Nous sommes excessivement taxés à travers les produits pétroliers, 50 % en forme de taxes. 'Oser et protéger'? Notre roupie n'a plus de valeur, notre roupie a perdu presque 50 % de sa valeur. 'Oser et protéger'? L'inflation à Maurice est devenue infernale.

M. le président, les différentes mesures annoncées dans ce budget ne vont pas résoudre les grands soucis de notre économie. Beaucoup d'entreprises ont malheureusement fermé leurs portes. La roupie va continuer à perdre sa valeur car ce gouvernement a trouvé comme unique solution la dépréciation de la roupie mauricienne pour qu'il puisse avoir des revenus additionnels à travers l'inflation. Les prix vont malheureusement continuer à flamber.

M. le président, je ne vois pas de vraies mesures pour relancer cette économie et revitaliser le secteur de l'emploi et je suis inquiet pour les PME qui représentent 44 % du marché de l'emploi à Maurice. La réputation de l'île Maurice a changé depuis 2015. Notre île était une référence et un modèle pour les autres pays. Malheureusement aujourd'hui, les pays voisins nous regardent d'un autre œil, voir, ils se moquent de nous.

M. le président, le ministère du Tourisme est au point mort et sans direction. Oui, il y a eu une augmentation de budget pour la MTPA concernant la promotion de la

destination île Maurice mais si on prend en compte la dévaluation de notre roupie, le budget additionnel n'est pas assez. Pire encore, le *passenger terminal fee* va augmenter à partir de janvier 2024. Ce qui veut dire que le prix du billet d'avion va augmenter. Il est important de faire ressortir que le billet d'avion pour venir à Maurice est déjà cher tandis que le billet d'avion est plus abordable pour les destinations concurrentes comme les Maldives et les Seychelles. Il faut améliorer le problème d'*air access*. Pas un mot du ministre des Finances concernant l'*air access*. Pas un mot sur Air Mauritius, pas un mot sur les bateaux de croisière !

Il faut absolument plus de transporteurs pour avoir une bonne croissance concernant le tourisme. Il y a des transporteurs comme Etihad et Qatar Airways qui sont prêts à nous prêter main forte. Je suis fier d'avoir participé à des négociations avec plusieurs transporteurs dans le passé comme Turkish Airlines, Lufthansa, China Southern Airlines, Emirates Airlines, Costa Croisières entre autres en tant que ministre du Tourisme. Il y a aujourd'hui comme un désespoir au sein des petits opérateurs dans ce secteur. Ils souffrent énormément. J'ai pris la peine de prendre contact avec plusieurs d'entre eux pour leur demander leur avis sur le budget alloué au secteur du tourisme.

M. le président, écoutez ce qu'ils m'ont dit. Ils m'ont dit –

« *Nou bizin debrouy tousel. Budget la katastof. Pa gagne kout main ditou. Mank de sekirite lor lamer et lor later.* »

M. le président, il faut continuellement revoir notre produit touristique, il faut continuellement s'adapter aux différents marchés et les nouveaux segments de produits pour avoir une bonne croissance au niveau des arrivées touristiques. Il faut absolument identifier nos faiblesses pour qu'on puisse les corriger. En tant que ministre du Tourisme dans le passé, j'ai beaucoup travaillé sur le segment mariage. Des milliardaires indiens, chinois, le segment MICE, le segment sport, le segment shopping etc. On a ajouté des *swimming zones* et des *speed limit zones* en mer car à l'époque, il y avait des cas de noyade et des accidents en mer. Il faut toujours se remettre en question et corriger où il faut.

M. le président, par exemple, les arrivées des touristes du Moyen-Orient sont aujourd'hui parmi les top 10 des arrivées de notre destination. Au lieu de s'adapter à ce marché et améliorer le produit touristique, le ministère de la Santé a cru bon de bannir les Shishas à Maurice. Par contre, il y a des *Shisha Bars* chez nos voisins concurrents. Le Shisha est un produit incontournable pour les touristes qui viennent depuis le Moyen-Orient. Est-ce que le ministère de la Santé a consulté le ministère du Tourisme ? Est-ce

que le ministère du Tourisme est d'accord avec une telle décision? Les opérateurs se plaignent aussi concernant les permis d'emploi pour les employés étrangers. Ils disent que les procédures prennent trop de temps. La sécurité des touristes laisse à désirer de plus en plus. Le taux de criminalité a augmenté, les cas de vol augmentent, les agressions augmentent. Qu'est-ce que le ministère du Tourisme et la *Tourism Authority* font pour remédier la situation ?

M. le président, rien. Chaque cas est un cas de trop. Chaque cas additionnel va ternir l'image de notre île Maurice. Chaque cas additionnel va ternir la réputation de l'île Maurice. La situation est grave et a dégradé énormément.

M. le président, je le dis en connaissance de cause, une fille de 11 ans a été sexuellement agressée hier à 15 heures de l'après-midi par un skipper de bateau à l'île aux Cerfs. Ce skipper de bateau a un *previous case* et le cas a été référé à la police de Trou d'Eau Douce. L'île aux Cerfs est l'endroit le plus visité à l'île Maurice par les touristes, jusqu'à 3000 touristes par jour pendant la haute saison. Et, j'ai pris des renseignements – combien des policiers ou des *Coast Guards* sont postés sur l'île aux Cerfs. Il n'y en a que deux, maximum trois *Coast Guards* pour 3000 touristes. Certains ont commis et vont commettre des délits de vol ou même des agressions sexuelles. Je lance un appel au Premier ministre, au *DPM*, au Commissaire de Police, au *Coast Guards*, à la Police du tourisme de bien vouloir remédier la situation. Je recommande qu'on envoie aussi les officiers de la *CID* en civil, de l'*ADSU* sur l'île aux Cerfs et dans les régions touristiques. Je recommande de faire des dépistages de drogue sur les personnes louches. Il faut préserver notre image touristique et il ne faut pas oublier que ce secteur emploie environ 20% de notre population.

Aujourd'hui, le ministre des Finances finance son budget grâce à l'inflation, et en fait, le ministre des Finances est content ; il est heureux quand les prix augmentent car il y aura plus de revenu à travers la TVA, à travers l'impôt sur le revenu, à travers les taxes douanières et à travers les autres taxes. La *MRA* a encaissé plusieurs millions en plus grâce à l'inflation.

M. le président, les automobilistes sont aussi des victimes de ce gouvernement car le prix de l'essence à Maurice est parmi les plus chers au monde. On est lourdement taxé, plus de la moitié du prix de vente génère des taxes au gouvernement. Le prix du baril était à 160 dollars américain au niveau mondial à un certain moment. Le prix était fixé à R 74,10 le litre et tout dernièrement, le prix du baril tourne autour de 70 dollars américains, soit 90 dollars en moins, mais à Maurice, le prix de l'essence est resté inchangé. R 74,10 le

litre jusqu'à le 2 juin 2023. En réalité, le prix aurait dû être au moins R 10 en moins sur les R 69. Ce gouvernement nous saigne à mort, ce gouvernement ne défend pas l'intérêt du peuple. Je connais des personnes qui préfèrent laisser leur voiture au garage pour éviter les dépenses sur l'essence.

Selon les prévisions de la Banque mondiale, le prix du pétrole brut, Brent, atteindra en moyenne 84 dollar américain le baril en 2023. La Banque mondiale prévoit une baisse de 26 % des prix mondiaux sur l'énergie en 2023. À Maurice, c'est le contraire. Quand tous les prix augmentent, le gouvernement va nous dire que c'est à cause de la Covid et de la guerre en Ukraine.

M. le président, l'avenir est très sombre et les jeunes sont très inquiets en ce qui concerne leur avenir Maurice. Nous sommes malheureusement en train de témoigner que les jeunes quittent Maurice pour d'autres pays comme le Canada. Une bonne partie des jeunes qui étudient à l'étranger ne veulent plus retourner à Maurice, car ils ont peur de cet avenir morose qui règne ici. Le taux de chômage pour les jeunes est assez fort, ça tourne autour de 30 %. Le *one-off payment* de R 20,000 pour les nouveaux adultes est définitivement une *bribe* électorale. Il aurait été préférable que le *one-off payment*, peu importe le montant, voire R 100,000 par nouveaux majeurs, soit payé pour commencer une *start-up* comme l'achat des outils ou même suivre des formations.

M. le président, les aînés sont aussi très déçus, car la compensation salariale pour ces quatre années précédentes était faible. Ils ont subi une hausse de prix sur les produits alimentaires et une augmentation vertigineuse concernant les prix des médicaments. Beaucoup de personnes n'arrivent plus à se procurer les médicaments pour contrer leur maladie, car ils n'ont plus de moyens.

M. le président, *sa gouvernman la finn pran 2 bef avek ou...*

An hon. Member: *Serf? Serf pa'nn pran?*

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *Li pran 2 bef avek ou e donn ou enn dizef.*

M. le président, oui, nous sommes pour une augmentation des salaires, mais il n'y a pas eu de mesures pour arrêter la dépréciation de la roupie et rien contre l'inflation. En d'autres mots, rien de concret pour soulager le peuple mauricien et surtout les plus pauvres.

M. le président, du côté de l'opposition, nous avons tiré la sonnette d'alarme depuis 2020, car le prix de la corbeille ménagère avait déjà énormément augmenté. Et

selon le ministre des Finances, en 2021, il a annoncé à la page 2, paragraphe 11 de son discours budget 2021-2022, je cite –

« Quant à l'inflation, elle a été maintenue sous contrôle. »

M. le président, ce gouvernement ose nous dire, 'oser et protéger' ? Le pouvoir d'achat des mauriciens a drastiquement baissé à cause de l'inflation. Les taux d'intérêt ont augmenté dernièrement. La situation est devenue très dure pour la plupart des ménages à Maurice et un désespoir concernant les pauvres. Bref, la qualité de la vie baisse quand les prix augmentent.

M. le président, je l'avais dit lors de mon discours budget depuis 2021-2022 –

« Le pouvoir d'achat des mauriciens va chuter suite à l'inflation et la vie deviendra précaire par rapport aux années précédentes. Les importations coûteront plus chères. Les aliments coûteront plus chers. Les médicaments coûteront plus chers. Et sans oublier les études des mauriciens à l'étranger coûteront beaucoup plus chères. Et malheureusement, certains ne pourront plus continuer leurs études vu que notre roupie se déprécie très rapidement.

C'est une sombre réalité qui, malheureusement, affecte notre quotidien. Et aucune mesure n'a été annoncée dans ce budget pour contrecarrer tout cela. »

M. le président, je l'ai prédit depuis 2021. L'opposition a archi prévenu ce gouvernement, mais il préfère faire la sourde oreille depuis toutes ces années.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances nous a affirmé à travers son discours budgétaire qu'il comprend que le coût de la vie est devenu très cher à Maurice. Je cite ce qu'il nous a dit à la page 88, paragraphe 513, 514 et 515 –

« 513. Nous sommes confrontés à une augmentation des prix à la consommation de 8,8 pour cent dans le monde.

514. À Maurice, cette situation a eu un effet d'entraînement sur les prix.

515. En tant que Gouvernement bienveillant, nous sommes conscients du poids de l'augmentation du coût de la vie pour des milliers de ménages. »

M. le président, le ministre des Finances annonce une baisse des prix pour les 15 produits essentiels de consommation courante selon lui. Je constate que la plupart des 15 produits, dont les prix ont baissé, on les achète moins souvent, comme les cahiers d'exercices, les crayons et les gommes, le dentifrice et les brosses à dents.

M. le président, *kaye, gom e kreyon napa ranpli vant ! C'est bien pour l'éducation, mais pour l'alimentation, pour se nourrir, pena boukou dimounn pe resi manze* correctement actuellement. Oui, pour les baisses des prix...

Mr Abbas Mamode: *Ti bizin pa bese !*

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Non, j'ai dit, oui, pour les baisses des prix, mais il fallait bien regarder l'alimentation aussi, baisser la TVA sur les produits alimentaires telles que les boîtes de conserve, serait mieux apprécié. Je n'ai jamais dit que ce n'est pas bon de baisser pour les cahiers, etc.

M. le président, mais le ministre des Finances a omis de nous dire qu'à Maurice, les prix ont drastiquement augmenté, non seulement à cause de l'augmentation des prix au niveau mondial, mais principalement à cause de la dépréciation de notre roupie mauricienne qui n'a plus la même valeur. Le dollar américain se vend, aujourd'hui, le 08 juin 2023, à R 45.51 et se vendait à R 32.16 le 08 décembre 2014. Notre roupie a perdu presque 50 % de sa valeur entre maintenant et 2014. Aux Seychelles et aux Maldives, leurs monnaies sont restées plus ou moins la même valeur.

M. le président, notre roupie mauricienne s'est dépréciée par seulement 12 % entre 2005 à 2014, mais sous ce régime, notre roupie a perdu presque la moitié de sa valeur. Conséquence directe, tout devient plus chère à Maurice. L'inflation tourne autour de 2.7 % aux Seychelles, et à Maurice environ 11 %. Les pauvres deviennent plus pauvres tandis que les riches deviennent plus riches. C'est pourquoi les gens peinent à joindre les deux bouts. Certains réfrigérateurs des ménagers sont malheureusement vides. Certaines personnes peuvent manger qu'une seule fois par jour. Certaines personnes travaillent le matin pour pouvoir manger le soir. Et cela fait mal au cœur quand on voit les personnes qui n'arrivent pas à payer à la caisse et qui demandent de retirer quelques produits alimentaires de leurs paniers.

La dépréciation de la roupie mauricienne affecte énormément le quotidien des mauriciens. Je cite quelques exemples, M. le président. Le lait en poudre en 2014, le lait *Farmland*, R 168 en 2014. En 2023, aujourd'hui, R 261.75, soit 56 % en plus, ce lait *Farmland* ; soit presque R 100 en plus pour un sachet de lait en 9 ans. Le sirop Benylin, sirop de la toux...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, I told you last time, you remember? You do not have the right to exhibit ...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay, no problem.

An hon. Member: *Fer enn tigit dite pou mwa.*

Mr Speaker: Don't try to complicate life. You are doing very well, continue with your speech!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay, I will continue.

Mr Speaker: You should be versatile enough in your language...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes, yes.

Mr Speaker: ...to demonstrate what you want to say. Continue!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: I remove the *sachet* and I put the picture.

Mr Speaker: You will go out!

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Is picture allowed?

Mr Speaker: You do not have the right according to Standing Orders.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: The picture is not allowed?

Mr Speaker: No, you do not have the right.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay.

Mr Speaker: You do not have the right. Come on, you come from a...

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Okay, no problem. No problem, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You don't know this? You have been a Minister.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Yes. Do not worry, it is already in the bag.

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

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Benylin, sirop de la toux en 2014, R 92.00. Et aujourd'hui, en 2023, R 210, soit 128 % en plus ; soit R 118 plus cher pour un sirop de la toux en neuf ans seulement. M. le président, *nu larzan nepli ena valer. R 2,000 finn vinn R 1,000*, et c'est la même chose pour les autres produits alimentaires et les autres médicaments. J'ai cité plein d'exemples lors de mes discours budgétaires des années précédentes. C'est pourquoi les mauriciens n'ont plus confiance en ce gouvernement. C'est pourquoi les gens sont stressés et en colère, et ce gouvernement ose dire 'oser et protéger' ?

M. le président, on a pris connaissance à travers la presse sur les incidents à Montagne Longue et à Malherbe, à Curepipe, *ou koze ou tase* aujourd'hui. Ou sort lor

kosion, la police vous arrête pour *roque and vagabond*. Si vous faites des reproches aux membres du gouvernement, malheureusement on vous arrête.

Je leur demande à travers vous, M. le président, d'aller lire les commentaires des internautes sur les réseaux sociaux. *Nou per pou zot. Bizin met zile par ros mem !* Mon collègue, l'honorable Bhagwan, *pou donn zot ladres magazin*.

Un député doit être à l'écoute du peuple car les temps sont très durs surtout pour les pauvres. Malheureusement, l'île Maurice est parmi les 10 pays les plus engagés sur les voies de l'autocratisation. Maintenant on comprend pourquoi il y a le renvoi des élections municipales. *Pa pe kapav marse lor terin*.

M. le président, concernant les projets de société dans la circonscription de Curepipe Midlands, qui ont été rares depuis 2015, j'accueille avec plaisir les projets annoncés dans la circonscription numéro 17. Mais j'espère que ces projets vont être réalisés car beaucoup de ces projets dont la piscine, ont été annoncés dans le passé et non pas été commencés.

M. le président, pour conclure, j'aimerais insister sur le fait qu'il ne faut pas se voiler la face. En ce qui concerne le tourisme et les PME, les choses peuvent être incertaines et ainsi, il faut se préparer à toute éventualité. Il faut continuellement se réinventer. Il faut avoir des tables rondes avec des opérateurs économiques. Il faut pouvoir se mettre en question.

Concernant l'inflation, la banque de Maurice aurait dû intervenir pour minimiser la dépréciation de la roupie pour pallier l'inflation. Je leur recommande, à travers vous, de se réinventer et de se remettre en question. De toute façon, la population va évaluer ce gouvernement à la fin de ce mandat.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(6.51 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Let me first and foremost thank you for the opportunity to intervene on the budget and at the same time, congratulate the Government and in particular, the hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for the presentation of a budget based on solidarity, equity, progress and inclusiveness.

I have heard till now opinions on both sides of the House. Let me share my own views. It is only one year since we recovered from the COVID-19 after our economy had been hit quite hard. It was really the worst economic damage. War between Russia and Ukraine is still on, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thanks to our Minister of Finance who had tried and succeeded to manage a good economic performance during the sad episode of COVID-19. On the other side, they want us to forget COVID-19 as they know for sure how the Government was embracing many policies that were entirely unprecedented or had never been used on this scale like largely direct income support among others during COVID-19. I repeat, how can they make us forget COVID-19? Despite this today, Mauritius *inn koumans à sortir la tête hors de l'eau ; inn koumans respire*. And what do we see, Mr Speaker, Sir? Am I dreaming? Our Minister of Finance has recently presented the budget.

Let me at the outset define the word ‘innovation’. Former President of the US, Barrack Obama’s definition of innovation is –

“Innovation is something fresh (new, original or improved) that creates value.”

For so many years, the Mauritian people had only this perception for welcoming a budget: tax on this; tax on that; societal projects; inflation etc.

Today, I repeat and repeat that this budget is unpredicted with so many avenues offered by a caring government under the spell of our Prime Minister. First is innovation. Second is innovation and third is innovation. Despite inflation – *en français, M. le président, hausse de prix*.

In a nutshell, what to gather? There are so many innovative measures that the Opposition is and will wholly beat around the bush to harp on the politics like favouring the rich. I was sick listening to Sik Yuen, when talking about *gomme, crayons, papier etc*.

An hon. member: Hon. Sik Yuen!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Hon. Sik Yuen – like favouring the rich and nothing for the poor. *Cela me fait rire, M. le président*.

In fact, the budget has responded to all walks of life. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius cannot aspire to its goal of securing a sustainable future for our children without an efficient education system. This is why, as announced by the hon. Prime Minister, as from 01 January 2024, preprimary education will be free for all and the new CSG Child Allowance for 48,000 children. My friend, hon. Bablee elaborated on it, so I will not repeat what has been said but from birth to university level, our youth citizens do have equal chances.

M. le président, l'honorable Sik Yuen ose nous dire *gom ek kaye pa ranpli vant, mais gom ek kaye* are what we need most so that our children have equal chances. And you know, education is where all starts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to help our elderly gain back their purchasing power, the Basic Retirement Pension is being increased by Rs1000 to reach Rs11,000. Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues on the opposite side of the House will tap on that *aret kouyonn vie dimounn*. How surely they are feeling jealous and even *ena pe mont lor twa pansion la pa ase*. But let me remind them that it is a MSM led government who has embarked on increasing the retirement pension from a mere Rs3,500 in 1914 when I was part of Government to Rs11,000 now.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to a historical and bold decision taken by this Government for the well-being and the development of our children. For patients up to the age of 17 who require medical treatment not available locally, Government will cover the full cost of overseas treatment for the patient. Thank you my dear friend, hon. Minister of Health, you are doing a marvellous job. So, continue with what you are doing in the health sector.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, each child diagnosed with cancer will be taken care of fully by Government until all care is given, that is, a financial assistance for the full cost of cancer care and treatment in foreign hospitals with the best expertise, and for parents who opt to avail for the treatment in local private hospitals. This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, is ensuring that every Mauritian child can aspire to a long, healthy and fulfilling life by removing from the parents all the financial stress which is linked with getting the right medical care and treatment for their wards.

To protect our citizens against the rising global prices, as from 01 July 2023, some 85,000 men and women working on a full-time basis will now have at least Rs15,000 of income at the end of each month. This is being made possible by the introduction of the *revenue minimum garanti*.

To provide relief to households affected by rising interest rates, a monthly allowance of Rs1,000 will be provided to individuals who have contracted loans of up to Rs5 m. for the purchase of their home. The CSG income allowance of Rs1,000 is being maintained for the next financial year for all those earning from Rs25,000 up to Rs50,000 monthly while for those earning up to Rs25,000 monthly, the allowance is being increased to Rs2,000, which means that 200,000 people will have their CSG income allowance doubled.

Mr Speaker, Sir, so much debate on minimum salary, some with calculations not to say manipulation but some years back, full-time employees were earning only Rs1,500. The Opposition would also say that we are not helping our citizens to cope with the rising price which, I remind each and every one, is a worldwide phenomenon and is linked to the global supply chain disruption and shock linked to the Ukraine-Russia crisis.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, which this Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has presented to this House, is giving back to the population what they have given to the country. This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, has made the choice to dare and to care for its people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to build the future our people deserve, this Government will not let any stone unturned and this is why this Budget will strengthen the foundation of our economy and continue the transformation of Mauritius into a sustainable economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to continuously improve our doing business environment and the decision to provide a unique identification number, be it for companies, businesses, registration, VAT, tax or employee number to ease the management of companies. Furthermore, the streamlining of the 38 existing licences for registration of different activities in the tourist sector would allow easier clustering of activities and make the tourist sector more efficient.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to help SMEs and MMEs to continue their actual growth trend and support those who are in need of a small boost to embrace on the same trend, the maximum grant under the SME Support Scheme is being increased to Rs250,000. The SME Interest Free Loan Scheme and the COVID-19 Special Support Scheme at the DBM are being extended to June 2024. The Rs500 salary compensation for SMEs is being renewed. The SME Employment Scheme is being extended by another year and DBM will write-off outstanding loans of more than 20 years and loans of deceased micro-entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to have flourishing businesses, we need to have an enthusiast and productive labour force. To ensure that we aim at full employment, not like Yeung Sik Yuen told us - hon. Yeung Sik Yuen - I beg your pardon.

Mr Speaker: Be careful!

Mr Abbas Mamode: I beg your pardon. My apologies to hon. Yeung Sik Yuen.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: *Topa enkor vinn PPS...*

Mr Speaker: Okay, no comments! He already apologised. No comments! Continue!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Le chiffre est de 7.5% au lieu de 30% comme il a dit, je pense.

To ensure that we aim at full employment and to enable those willing to enter the job market, in particular women, this Budget has a series of measures to connect women to opportunities and improve their financial independence. Public childcare centres will be set up in main areas under a PPP model. The child day care centres grant is being increased by 30%. Companies having more than 250 employees will have the obligation of providing workplace-based children care while all new shopping malls, office buildings and hotels will have to cater for a nursing room for women.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in view to promote gender equality at all levels, listed companies shall have a minimum of 25% of women on their boards. Furthermore, to encourage women entrepreneurs, SMEs will benefit from a 10% increase in the margin of preference for public procurement of goods.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government led by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is going a step further in its endeavour to ensure that women get access to employment opportunities. The *Prime à l'Emploi* Scheme will contribute Rs15,000 monthly for a period of two years for newly employed women or those who have been unemployed for at least a year. Furthermore, these companies will be provided with a 200% tax deduction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government also 'dare and care' for our citizens with disabilities. This is why the *Prime à l'Emploi* is being extended to persons with disabilities and those companies will also be provided with an increased tax deduction of 300% so as to facilitate their employment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is facing a shortage of labour in several sectors and in order to sustain high level of growth and develop new economic sectors, we need to open our economy to foreign talents and this Budget proposes to embark our country on a major reform of our immigration policy and to simplify the recruitment process for businesses.

Among these measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Occupation Permit will be streamlined with the lowering of the threshold for occupation permit for professional to Rs30,000. Applicant for occupation permit will be allowed a business visa of 120 days.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the process for obtaining a work permit is also being streamlined. The work permit application will made solely on the National e-Licensing

platform and a silent consent principle of 4 weeks is being introduced for work permit application. A new tier system will be introduced allowing companies with a good track record to avail from a streamlined process to recruit foreign labour under a work permit. The ratio of foreign to local employees is being removed for specific sectors and non-citizen on a tourist or business visa will be allowed to apply for a work permit. These measures, Mr Speaker, Sir, will allow our businesses to get access to skilled foreign labour more easily and efficiently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our fishers are a key component in the development of our blue economy, and this is why, this Budget proposes a grant of –

- Rs2,500 for purchase of hook and fishing materials;
- Rs5,000 for the purchase of material to construct fish traps;
- Rs300,000 instead of Rs200,000 for the acquisition of *canotte*, and
- the grant for acquisition of semi-industrial fishing boats by registered cooperatives is being increased to Rs6 m.

Thank you very much, hon. Sudheer Maudhoo for what you are doing in the fishery sector.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the safety of fishers is of utmost importance for this Government, and this is why, solar powered light will be installed at jetties to facilitate navigation at night and eight fish aggregating devices will be replaced around the island while fisheries post at Post La Fayette, La Preneuse, Mahebourg, Riambel and Grand River South East, and jetties and slipways at Trou d'Eau Douce, Grand Gaube, Poudre d'Or, Bain des Dames, Pointe aux Sables and Case Noyale will be upgraded.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has also increased the lump sum aid to fisherman aged 65 and above from Rs52,500 to Rs100,000, if they return their fisherman card or transfer it while the compensation for association returning their licenses is being increased from Rs105,000 to Rs200,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is a country with vast cultural and creative potential. Our unique local music art, cinema, theatre and performing arts can become the largest in the Indian Ocean. This is why, some weeks ago, the status of the Artist Bill was introduced in this august Assembly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will go a step further in its support to this industry and a professional in the Art Council will be set up as a one stop shop facility. Moreover, the grant to eligible artists is being increased by a minimum of 15% under the

National Arts Fund and to promote Mauritian literature, a Rs10,000 grant to all secondary schools for the purchase of books from local authors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the city of Port Louis is an area of significant heritage and historical value and to revitalise, preserve and promote the city, this Budget is providing for the creation of an artistic and cultural trail of 3.8km from Victoria Metro Station up to China Town in my constituency. Completion of the phase 2 of the intercontinental slavery museum at the ex-military hospital building and launching of the permanent exhibition, the big Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre at the Aapravasi Ghat World Heritage Site. Also, in my constituency, a creation of a vibrant mini forest at the centre of our capital city will be set up. Thank you, hon. Minister of Finance for having a thought for my constituency.

To further revalorise and protect the cultural landscape of the city of Port Louis, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Jummah Mosque area, in No. 3 will be rejuvenated, while the China Town area will be revitalised and the Allée Père Laval will be upgraded and up kept.

Mr Speaker, Sir, climate change has increase the frequency of extreme event resulting in unprecedented rainfall. Acute flash floods and rise in sea level which are creating significant risk to the life and life hood of our fellow citizens.

Some two years ago, the Government embarked on an ambitious flood mitigation programme across the island. So far, some Rs2.7 billion was invested to make some 400 high risk flood prone regions safer for citizen and businesses, and a further Rs2.8 billion have been invested in another 157 drain projects which are under construction. Thank you very much, hon. Minister Bobby Hurreeram for such a marvellous job.

I wish to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for including the following region of my constituency in this massive investment: Roche Bois, Plaine Verte, Cité Martial, Camp Yoloff, China Town. I have a special thought for the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Husnoo, and the PPS of our region, hon. Dr. Ismael Rawoo.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government's top priority is to ensure the continuous supply of clean and safe water to every citizen. So, increase for purchasing of tank by DBM.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now, come to my constituency. So many projects have been done during the past budget like –

- Synthetic football pitch at Cité Martial;
- Upgrading of Centre Idrice Goomany,
- The Quay D flyover.

So much disbursed by the Government and now the multi-gym. Some will say *ou pe dir pe rod soley a minwi*, but the fact is here. I have no regret to join the MSM. I have no regret to join this Government. To conclude, normally, the Opposition will *invant larou*. What *larou*? *Inflation, hausse des prix*?

The rise has been driven in large part after the pandemic and the Russian invasion. And what do we notice here? Innovative measures for all walks of life. The Opposition *pe fer nou plere ek riye en mem tan*.

Soon after the COVID-19, that is, last year in 2022, airports were opened. There has been a record of tourists amounting to a significant figure. The tourist sector, one of the most productive pillars was recovering; *ti pre pou tous enn milion touris*. Apart from inflation, *p donn ris*? What do have they to say? I heard one on the radio stating: *eski morisien pu satisfé si li rent dan enn sipermarse? Depan ki sipermarse*. I will reply like a child of tender age: *pri inn ogmente lor bann lartik mai gouvernman inn fer so zefor malgré le contexte international kot nu pa kapav kontrol pri lartik. Wi, nu pe soulaz la popilasyon en mem tan, ena bes dan sertein sipermarser*.

Li anvi bat de dan enn. Minister of Finance, there is one prosperous sector which I did not mention which is doing well and is tax free. It is the demagogy of the Opposition, *pile je gagne, face tu perds*. Some are behaving like actors but let me remind them – this budget will be etched deeply in the mind of the Mauritian people for many years as it is innovative and *ki li tibaba, zelev, zenes, fonksioner, vie dimounn, tou pe respire*. C'est sure on m'accusera de tous les péchés du monde et surtout celui d'avoir rejoint le MSM. *It is a trust with destiny to secure my mandate, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are so many projects in the Constituency that I do have no regret*. Qu'est-ce qu'on va m'accuser, d'être un transfuge? Allez-y parce que le fameux orateur qui se déclare fervent Labour Party, d'où est-il originaire ? Le fameux acteur, il a été le candidat du parti MSM en premier lieu en 1995 mais aussi le chef de file de l'aile jeune du même parti politique. Aujourd'hui, il dit 'pur-sang du parti Travailliste', vous-dites, pur-sang?

Bizin pren enn loup rode ! L'autre Monsieur, le président actuel du rouge, il a été conseiller... Non, l'autre Monsieur, je retire le mot « Monsieur le président actuel », l'honorable a été conseiller municipal pour le MSM. Il avait même traité le Parti Travailliste de voleur et aujourd'hui, il se vante d'être de pur-sang travailliste. Allez-vous voir dans le miroir avant de m'accuser.

M. le président, qui dans cette auguste Assemblée n'a pas fait d'alliance ? Les dirigeants du MMM, eux-mêmes ont l'habitude de dire que la meilleure alliance qu'ils ont

pu concrétiser est celle de 2000 à 2005. C'est cette alliance même qui a permis à leur leader de devenir Premier ministre et on n'oublie pas que c'est ce même gouvernement qui a honoré leurs promesses.

J'étais un militant et je resterai toujours un militant en honorant d'abord mes mandants. Ils ont été tous MSM avant moi. Je vous demande donc de restreindre ces critiques de bas étage et laissez-moi en paix. Laissez-moi faire mon travail et je souhaite encore une fois remercier notre Premier ministre pour tous ses accomplissements malgré les difficultés. Laissez-moi le féliciter pour l'égard qu'il a eu pour ma circonscription numéro trois mais cet égard fait des jaloux, M. le président chez mes collègues de l'autre côté de la Chambre car à leur époque, leur Premier ministre n'avait pas le même égard envers cette région de Port Louis. Je n'ajouterais pas plus. Les chiens aboient et la caravane passe.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: MP Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(7.24 p.m.)

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West):

Merci. J'ai écouté avec attention les deux honorables membres du gouvernement qui m'ont précédé. Je constate que l'honorable Abbas Mamode n'a fait que distribuer des mercis à tour de bras à ses collègues ministres y compris le Premier ministre. Est-ce que cela cache une promotion ?

An hon. Member: Ahhh !

Mrs Navarre-Marie : L'honorable Bablee a raison de parler de ces milliers de pauvres gens qui travaillent à leur propre compte, ces employés de maison, ces jardiniers, ces maçons, ces coiffeurs, tous ces *self-employed*. Durant la Covid, la MRA a répertorié plus de 250,000 de ces *self-employed* et le gouvernement leur avait donné un *Self-Employed Assistance Scheme* mais ils sont les grands laissés-pour-compte de ce budget. Alors que les employés, les salariés auront un revenu minimum de R 15 000, le ministre des Finances a tout bonnement choisi de les ignorer. Pourquoi n'ont-ils pas droit à un revenu minimum de R 15 000 ? N'ont-ils pas de famille à nourrir ?

L'honorable Bablee, il me semble à fait également référence au repas servi aux élèves et il s'est félicité que son gouvernement donne à manger aux *ti-dimounn* mais j'ai l'impression qu'il n'a pas lu le dernier rapport de l'audit qui déplore la mauvaise qualité de repas livrés aux enfants du ZEP. Est-ce justifiable ? Est-ce parce que ces enfants sont

des enfants des *ti-dimounn* ? Et malgré les plaintes, les contrats des fournisseurs ont été renouvelés à plusieurs reprises. Pourquoi ? *Zot pa kas latet. Bann dimounn mizer sa. Zanford mizer pena zorey.* Le gouvernement n'en a cure. Je laisse l'honorable membre tirer ces propres conclusions.

M. le président, vendredi dernier, le ministre des Finances a présenté son quatrième budget. Ce discours du budget 2023-2024 s'est avéré être un *non-event*. En effet, fidèle à ses habitudes, le ministre a encore une fois égrené un chapelet de bonnes intentions en citant plusieurs régions de chacune des circonscriptions et en s'évertuant à toucher différents segments de la population mais la population n'est pas dupe. Elle s'y est habituée. Nombreuses sont les mesures annoncées qui resteront lettres mortes – j'y reviendrai. C'est pourquoi je qualifierais ce budget de *non-event*.

Voyons d'abord les mesures annoncées et auxquelles le gouvernement ne pourra se départir. Le ministre annonce une baisse sur les prix de l'essence. Est-ce que cette baisse aura un impact favorable sur le panier de la ménagère ? La réponse est non. Mes collègues avant moi l'ont démontré. Cette baisse de l'essence n'aura pas les effets escomptés car la baisse n'est pas suffisante et le prix du diesel est resté inchangé.

On ne guérit pas le cancer avec du Panadol. Il n'y a pas eu de baisse de prix. Les prix de la bonbonne de gaz, le riz, le pain maison restent inchangés. Le panier de la ménagère reste léger car il n'y a rien à y mettre.

Quant aux personnes âgées, le gouvernement joue avec leurs nerfs et leur vulnérabilité et continue de les faire marcher en leur brandissant une carotte électorale. Au lieu des R 13 500 promises à la veille des élections générales, ils ont été laissés sur leur faim. C'est le cas de le dire. La vie est dure pour nos vieilles personnes, non seulement doivent-elles faire face à la montée des prix des denrées essentielles, mais également et surtout des prix exorbitants des médicaments, car il est un fait qu'il n'y a plus de médicaments dans nos hôpitaux depuis que leur pension a été augmentée en 2020. Les vieux n'ont plus droit aux chaises roulantes, ni d'appareil auditif, ni de lunettes gratuitement comme c'était le cas auparavant. Ils ont, à la place, droit à un voucher qui s'avère être bien en deçà du prix de ces produits. Ils doivent se débrouiller avec les R 10 000.

Et, le secteur de la santé est devenu un vrai business. Aujourd'hui, tous les prétextes sont bons pour s'enrichir sur le dos des vieilles personnes et des malades. Aujourd'hui, la société souffre d'un mal-être et nos jeunes ne sont malheureusement pas épargnés. Ils font face au fléau de la drogue, la drogue synthétique, les problèmes de la

violence, le chômage. Ils font face aux différents fléaux. Les R 20 000 annoncées par ce gouvernement ne vont pas faire disparaître ces problèmes. Il est impératif de revoir tout le système, à commencer par le système éducatif. Nous sommes appelés à voter près de R 20 milliards pour ce secteur. Je ne cesserai, M. le président, de faire le plaidoyer d'une assise du secteur. Il y a un manque criant, malheureusement, de communication dans ce secteur.

En attendant, voyons ce qui se passe actuellement dans le secteur éducatif. D'abord, le manque d'enseignants. Combien de fois n'avons-nous pas entendu le problème de manque d'enseignants ? Il y a eu plusieurs questions posées à ce sujet par mon collègue l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad. D'ailleurs, ces jours-ci, il y a eu plusieurs manifestations dans des écoles pour manque d'éducateurs ou même l'infestation de punaises ou violence à l'école. Pas plus tard que ce matin, il y a eu une manifestation à l'école de Gros Cailloux pour manque d'enseignants.

Le ministre des Finances annonce le recrutement de 200 éducateurs dans les écoles secondaires. Est-ce que nous avons la garanti que cela se fera dans les délais, vue les nouvelles exigences d'un *PGCE* ? Est-ce que nous serons en mesure de remplir des postes – ces postes – à la rentrée des classes ? Non seulement il y a un manque d'enseignants, mais il y a également le fait que les manuels scolaires et les tablettes tactiles scolaires ne sont pas distribués à temps. *Year in, year out*, c'est à chaque fois la même chose. D'ailleurs, le dernier rapport du PAC en fait état. Le rapport de l'Audit mentionne les tablettes volées, des tablettes défectueuses, le manque de formation d'éducateurs pour travailler sur les tablettes, le *Classroom Management software* non-finalisé, ce qui fait que les tablettes sont restées inutilisées alors que la date de garanti sur les tablettes expire après une année.

Le rapport de l'Audit précise qu'en novembre 2019, la décision avait été prise de distribuer les tablettes à partir de janvier 2020. Hors, les élèves du *mainstream* ont reçu leur manuel en mars 2020 au lieu du 6 décembre 2019, soit trois mois après. Et, les plus délaissés parmi ceux déjà délaissés par ce gouvernement sont les élèves de l'*Extended Programme*. Ceux-ci ont reçu leurs tablettes en août 2020 alors qu'elle aurait dû se faire en décembre 2019, soit huit mois après. Les éternels laissés-pour-compte.

Le PAC a aussi fait état d'un manque de transparence au niveau de la livraison de plus de 270 000 manuels à la PSEA. Dans certains établissements, il y aurait même des problèmes d'alimentation électrique ou de connexion d'internet, ce qui pénalise les enfants. Les enfants ratent leur cours et ne peuvent suivre leurs programmes d'étude, et ce gouvernement se vante que '*making digital inclusiveness a reality*', selon le ministre de

l'*ICT* en résumant les débats sur le *Mauritius Digital Promotion Agency Bill*, le 9 mai dernier.

J'avais mentionné au début de mon intervention que plusieurs annonces dans le budget seront lettres mortes et ne seront pas concrétisées. Par exemple, des bassins d'apprentissage pour quatre écoles primaires ; un montant de R 53 millions avait été voté dans le budget 2018-2019. Les appels d'offres ont été lancés en juin, juillet 2018, mais ils ont été rejetés et relancés. A octobre 2019, le projet n'avait pas été lancé et en août 2022, il n'était pas encore complété. Est-ce que c'est toujours le cas ? Idem pour le projet de construction de gymnases dans six SSS au coût de R 55 millions dans le budget 2018-2019. Le projet était toujours à l'étape de l'appel d'offres en juin 2019.

Comme l'*Extended Programme* n'est pas adapté aux enfants en difficulté scolaire, on s'attendait à une annonce pour le remplacer par un programme plus juste et équitable en prenant en compte que les enfants ont des intelligences et des aptitudes différentes et ont besoin de formation nécessaire pour leur permettre de mettre leur aptitude au développement du pays et de participer à son développement. Nous souffrirons moins du problème de *brain drain*, car le *brain drain* ne touche pas seulement les académiques, mais également des mauriciens ayant d'autres capacités et aptitudes. La formation permettrait l'embauche des mauriciens en échange d'un salaire décent et nous n'aurons pas à dépendre des travailleurs étrangers. Le gouvernement n'envoie-t-il pas le mauvais signal aux jeunes en annonçant la simplification du processus de demande d'*Occupation Permit* ? En contre parti, il n'y a pas de mesures pour retenir nos jeunes et arrêter la fuite des cerveaux.

Le ministre annonce un programme pour 6000 étudiants vulnérables. Quel est ce programme ? Qui sont les étudiants vulnérables ? Il n'y a pas suffisamment d'information sur cette annonce. Cela semble un *after thought* et je parie que c'est encore une fois un effet d'annonce. Même chose pour le budget de R 500 millions étalés sur cinq ans et qui ira à la construction de centres de soins pour les enfants en détresse. Pas de détails, aucune information.

Au chapitre de la scolarité gratuite au préscolaire, le ministre des Finances ne dévoile pas le montant et se contente de dire '*we are providing funds to make it happen.*' *How will this happen?* Mystère ! Encore une fois, pas d'informations. Souhaitons que ce projet ne soit pas bâclé et joue contre les intérêts de nos enfants. Toujours est-il qu'il faut éviter que les pré-primaires qui vont entrer dans le système de gratuité ne tombent pas dans la même situation que les collèges privés. En effet, la nouvelle *grant formula* de

2020-2021 est venue chambouler le secteur éducatif secondaire car il n'y a pas d'uniformité dans la manière de calculer la subvention.

Garderies et crèches au niveau des entreprises - les entreprises ayant plus de 250 employés doivent mettre en place des facilités de garderie. Comment le faire ? Est-ce que ce sera à travers une législation ? Quel *incentive* accordé à ces entreprises ? Quelle sera la sanction aux entreprises qui n'optèrent pas ? Est-ce qu'il y aura des amendes infligées ? C'est une très bonne initiative qu'il faut également étendre au secteur public. Louable initiative également concernant les 25 % des femmes au sein des *boards* des compagnies listées en bourse. Pourquoi est-ce que le gouvernement ne donne-t-il pas l'exemple en nommant 25 % de femmes sur les différents *boards* et *councils* des ministères et corps paraétatiques ?

Mais cela ne doit pas occulter le fait que le problème des ménagères reste inchangé. Que des femmes continuent à perdre la vie sous le joug de leurs conjoints violents, que des mères et autres vieilles personnes sont agressées par leurs enfants accros aux drogues synthétiques.

Je suis surprise de n'avoir rien entendu concernant les enfants de rue. À une question parlementaire de ma jeune collègue, Madame Foo Kune-Bacha, sur la question, la ministre du Genre avait répondu que son ministère ne s'occupait pas de ces enfants, vu qu'il n'existait pas de législation à ce sujet. A une question supplémentaire, elle avait répondu qu'un projet de loi dans ce sens allait être présenté *soon*. J'ai été surprise. Législation ou pas, M. le président, nous avons tous un devoir vis-à-vis de ces enfants, et l'État encore plus.

En 2003, le gouvernement avait recruté des *street workers*, qui ont été par la suite formés par un expert de la Réunion, et un travail avec ces enfants avait commencé. Je ne comprends pas pourquoi dans ce budget, il n'y a aucune mention de législations et de structures pour encadrer les enfants de rue ou en situation de rue. Appelez-les comme vous voulez, mais il y a des enfants qui sont dans nos rues et qui font face aux différents dangers.

Je vais maintenant aborder les mesures annoncées pour les artistes. De grands projets sont annoncés dans le budget, mais ne sont malheureusement pas mis en œuvre. Le ministre des Arts et de la culture avait annoncé l'année dernière une série de mesures en faveur des artistes, mais rien n'a été concrétisé. Je citerai le paragraphe 125 –

« Afin de promouvoir la créativité et d'encourager davantage de projets artistiques, de nouveaux programmes seront introduits, à savoir –

- (a) *Un Artist Incubator Scheme* pour soutenir les talents émergents ;
- (b) Un programme pour faciliter la participation des talents locaux aux cérémonies internationales de remise de prix, et
- (c) Un programme pour permettre aux artistes locaux de participer à des concours internationaux. »

Et au paragraphe 126, je cite –

- « (a) 20 millions de roupies sont affectées à la création d'un *National Arts Centre*, comprenant un studio d'enregistrement à Réunion Maurel, Petit Raffray ;
- (b) Le Centre de Formation Artistique sera réorganisé. [Or, le centre n'a jamais existé], et
- (c) Le Théâtre Serge Constantin et le Pointe Canon *Open Air Theatre* seront modernisés. »

J'ai vérifié avec les artistes. Ils sont surpris que toutes ces promesses n'ont jamais été réalisées. Tout cela n'est que la poudre aux yeux. Le ministre annonce que les artistes enregistrés auprès du futur *Professionals in the Arts Council* auront un plan de pension. R 2 millions sont alloués pour la mise sur pied de ce *council*. A partir de quand est-ce que ce *council* sera opérationnel ? Et il n'y a pas de budget sur le plan de pension.

Voyons maintenant, M. le président, le ministère de l'Économie bleue ; encore un secteur plat qui manque cruellement de vision et qui répète les mesures déjà annoncées presque mot à mot. Le président du syndicat des pêcheurs, éternel parent pauvre de notre République, déplore avec raison que des mesures annoncées l'année dernière ont été ré-annoncées cette année encore –

- compensation aux pêcheurs ;
- distribution des cartes aux pêcheurs professionnels, et
- *amnesty* accordé pour les emprunts ayant été contractés depuis plus de 20 ans auprès de la banque de développement. Cela a été annoncé une nouvelle fois.

Cela a été annoncé une nouvelle fois. D'ailleurs, cette mesure a été annoncée pour les autres secteurs également cette année.

Au sujet du *Bad Weather Allowance* qui sera augmenté par R 75, il dit ceci – *kifer pe donn sarite* ? Le syndicat s'attendait à un programme de formation pour la pêche en haute mer.

La décision d'augmenter la compensation de R 52,000 à R 100,00 aux pêcheurs qui retournent leur carte est un progrès, mais toujours pas suffisant. Le montant fixe et uniforme est refusé. Il aurait fallu calculer la compensation sur une moyenne du *Bad Weather Allowance* touchée par mois, multipliée par le nombre d'années passées en mer. Cela aurait été plus équitable. Cette formule doit être étendue aux pêcheurs malades qui ne peuvent plus aller à la pêche. Cela leur aurait encouragé à retourner leurs cartes et les cartes seraient distribuées et il n'y aurait pas lieu d'émettre de nouvelles cartes.

Je manquerais à mon devoir si je ne dis pas quelques mots sur les Chagos. L'année dernière, le ministre annonce au paragraphe 337 de son discours –

« Nous allons mettre en œuvre un programme de réinstallation dans l'archipel des Chagos. »

Cette année encore, le ministre annonce au paragraphe 351 –

« Nous continuerons à travailler à la mise en œuvre d'un programme de réinstallation dans l'archipel des Chagos. »

Qu'en est-il exactement ? Où en est-on avec ce programme ? Quand est-ce que le programme a commencé et quand est-ce que ce programme sera complété ?

M. le président, ce gouvernement pêche par manque de bonne gouvernance. Nous avons aujourd'hui une multitude de *councils* et d'autres entités qui engloutissent d'énormes sommes d'argent. Des entités ayant des *duplicating functions*, des *councils* à n'en plus finir sous différents ministères. Chaque projet de loi amène son lot de *councils* pour caser les proches et qui passent outre la loi très souvent en utilisant des *psos*.

Savez-vous que le dernier rapport de l'Audit mentionne 15 ministères sous l'intitulé *Governance Issues Non-compliance with legislation* ; 15 ministères qui violent allègrement les lois et *regulations* qu'eux-mêmes, ils ont voté ou font voter.

Ils font ce qu'ils veulent de l'argent des contribuables alors que les *ti-dimounn* continuent à souffrir et à tirer le diable par la queue. C'est une injustice et je continue de croire que les mesures énoncées dans ce discours du budget ne seront pas implémentées. Les promesses ne sont pas tenues, que ce soit la distribution d'eau 24/7 ou la pension de vieillesse à R 13,500 entre autres.

Promesses non tenues également comme le *Freedom of Information Act* plusieurs fois annoncé et qui n'est plus que lettre morte. D'ailleurs, le Premier ministre a lui-même annoncé que son gouvernement ne donnera pas suite à cette promesse électorale.

L'opacité est le maître-mot, le gouvernement est en disgrâce. Des millions de roupies sont engloutis dans des institutions qui ne servent à rien, que de caser des proches du pouvoir. Des gaspillages des fonds publics en termes de voyages et de salaires payés à ceux qui sont nommés à la tête de nos institutions. Tout le monde a été choqué d'apprendre les salaires du chef de l'ICAC et la population en a marre. La preuve : les élus du gouvernement qu'ils soient ministres ou PPS ne peuvent plus se présenter sur le terrain que ce soit à Montagne Longue, à la Cité Malherbes ou à Pailles ; ils sont hués. Quand les gens expriment leur mécontentement, ils sont arrêtés et mis en prison et lorsque le peuple manifeste son mécontentement, c'est la répression.

Aujourd'hui, la peur s'est installée parmi la population. Il règne un climat de terreur. La population a peur de représailles. La population a peur de ce qui est désormais connu comme le *planting*. La presse est menacée. Les journalistes défilent régulièrement aux postes de police. Nous vivons dans un état policier, la Gestapo est à l'œuvre. Heureusement, qu'il y a encore des *magistrates* courageuses et je les salue. Elles s'acquittent de leurs tâches *without fear and favour* et cela nous donne des raisons d'espérer. J'en ai terminé.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah!

(7.51 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. Koonjoo-Shah): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me the floor to bring my contribution to the deliberations on the Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill.

Allow me first in all good decorum, to commend my colleague, the hon. Dr. Padayachy for presenting this budget which embeds the core philosophy and the belief of this Government that our people must at all-time remain our priority, be it in good times and especially in bad times, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The budget reflects our government's commitment to inclusive growth, to social justice, to sustainable development. It's a budget that is comprehensive and very forward-thinking and to take up what the hon. Member who spoke before me just brought up, it is the usual picture of gloom and doom coming from the Member of the Opposition.

I found it extremely unjustified, the criticism, the mudslinging at Minister Balgobin and Minister of Education because she seems to have forgotten or has not appreciated enough that when the whole world was on its knees during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is thanks to those two Ministers and Ministries that our children were able to

carry on their schooling, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, I have heard, I have noticed that she used the word “*louable*” in her intervention many times and that word is a very good measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, of how the hon. Member appreciated the budget *louable* but without being very dismissive of all the proposals that she put forth some of them being very much worth considering.

Mr Speaker, Sir, that was all theory and we are lucky, the population is lucky that we have a Government, we have a Prime Minister, we have a Minister of Finance who is able to translate all these theories into reality and this is what this budget is doing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, coming back to my intervention, several speakers like I said from the other side of the House since Monday have been trying very hard to play down, to tear down the immensity of the positive impact that this budget is definitely going to be having on the thousands of lives of our citizens, because as much as they want to dismiss the reality that COVID-19 did happen, the reality that we are still suffering from the setbacks of a war happening between Ukraine and Russia as much as they want to put that at their back of their mind, the reality is the world has suffered and this budget comes in with the right measures at the right time. Mr Speaker, Sir, I don’t have a single doubt that the economy will continue to flourish given the measures that were elaborated very eloquently by my colleague hon. Minister of Finance during the presentation of the budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, perhaps the hon. Mrs Foo Kune-Bacha who is not here, is not quite privy to this information but we do happen to have a Happiness Index of 5.9. It’s not a secret, it is found in world’s reports. A Happiness Index, Mr Speaker, Sir, of 5.9, which puts Mauritius at the 59th position out of 134 countries. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius counts as one of the high-developed economies by the United Nations’ definition. This is the essence of our political philosophy; it is not just about economic indicators, it is about how we care for our people and caring means catering for the needs of not just a few but absolutely everyone from every segment of our population. This is very well reflected in the current budget, and this, Mr Speaker, Sir, is of seminal importance because this budget is a continuation of the people-centric approach that we have consistently demonstrated in the past budgets that were presented by this Government, under the leadership of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are undoubtedly witnessing an economic recovery and we make sure that an economic recovery is accompanied *pas à pas* by a social recovery. This is a *sine-qua-non* requisite condition for sustainable development and productivity. This is

why I note with a lot of satisfaction that the hon. Minister of Finance has come up with a panoply of measures to express the concerns for a better care in favour of our children, our women, our families and our communities. And, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to focus my intervention on these measures as they relate to the mandate of my Ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there has been an exemplary presentation of a budget that embodies the principles of gender-responsiveness and promotes the empowerment of women, which we all agree, is the cornerstone of true gender equality, especially in our current context. The provisions laid out in this budget are testament to the government's unwavering commitment to address these long-standing disparities and inequalities that our women face in our society. I, as the Minister in charge of this critical portfolio, I am extremely grateful to all the number of measures that were laid out in favour of our women and those were mentioned at the very start of the intervention of the Minister of Finance. They are all listed on page 7 of his printed speech for those who might want to refresh their memories. Mr Speaker, Sir, these measures go from providing enhanced opportunities to our women to enter the job market, to develop entrepreneurial skills, to increase their participation in decision-making and so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this budget is serving as a shining example of our government's commitment to create this inclusive and equitable society while we consolidate the fundamental rights of our women. I have listened carefully to the women folk on the other side of the House and I don't think it would be too much to set aside the political lens and have the so-called proponents of gender equality from the other side to come around and support this progressive endeavour and work towards the future where our women, in this nation, can thrive unfettered by gender based limitations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In the same line, I would like to acknowledge and highlight the continued allocation of Rs200,000 to all line Ministries for promoting and continuing the gender mainstreaming. My Ministry happens to be the National Gender Machinery and we view this allocation as a golden opportunity to further drive our mission so that we can integrate gender perspectives and ensure equal consideration of the interests and the needs of both women and men.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to assure the House that we are working diligently with all Ministries to ensure that these funds are used effectively and strategically.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would now like to draw your attention to a very significant development highlighted in his budget speech which, in itself, underscores the

Government's pledge to promoting women's entrepreneurship and economic empowerment. This is the designation of the National Women Entrepreneur Council as the apex organisation for all women entrepreneurs. This announcement, Mr Speaker, Sir, aligns seamlessly with the National Strategy and Costed Action Plan for Women Entrepreneurship Development, which was meticulously prepared by my Ministry and launched by the hon. Prime Minister himself.

The plan, Mr Speaker, Sir, fleshes out a very comprehensive road map which will review the functioning of the council so that the latter can respond more effectively in fostering an enabling environment for our women entrepreneurs. It lays out a very strategic framework that brings together various dimensions of support including access to finance, capacity building, mentorship, market linkages and advocacy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, by designating the National Women Entrepreneur Council as the apex organisation for our women entrepreneurs, we are consolidating efforts to provide targeted support and resources to women-owned businesses. This strategic move recognises the Council's expertise and a dedication to advancing women's economic empowerment, Mr Speaker, Sir. As the Minister responsible for the gender machinery again, it is my role and my responsibility to look at this budget through a gender-responsive lens and through this analysis, we are not only ensuring that men and women benefit equitably from the budgetary measures but we are also affirming our pledge to reduce gender disparities.

I commend, Mr Speaker, Sir, the inclusion of measures targeting increased financial independence of our women. The decision to double the financial allowance to Rs2,000, as we all know to all those earning up to Rs25,000 monthly, is definitely going to be benefitting so many women, who often occupy lower-paying jobs due to societal structural barriers; barriers which this Government is working tirelessly at bringing down, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The move to introduce the *Revenu Minimum Garanti* of Rs15,000 ensures that no individual in full-time employment will have a revenue of less than Rs15,000. This will benefit significantly many women and will help inch closer to achieving gender parity in income. This is a caring step to top-up incomes to this level and this will go a long way in improving women's economic independence which we all know financial independence is key to empowering our women and our girls and to promote the well-being of their families.

At this juncture, I think it is only fair, I am sure my other colleagues from this side

of the House have done so before and they should do it over and over again. It is only fair to jog the memory of some Members of the Opposition, hon. Shakeel if he were present here would have particularly benefitted from this stroll down memory lane but he is not here. Mr Speaker, Sir, I refer to the measly Rs1,500 that women cleaners mainly were earning not so long ago. So, we have come a very long way and it is a reality today because of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and nobody else.

Mr Speaker Sir, I am pleased to address the important issue of work-life balance, which is obviously a priority in all our efforts when we talk about promoting well-being of our citizens in particular, our women folk. We recognise the unique challenges faced by individuals in managing their work and care responsibility and the provision of this novel stand-alone leave of 5 days for workers who have experienced a pregnancy loss as well as the extension of the scope of sick leave usage to enable parents to utilise all their sick leave entitlement to care for their children, their parents, their grandparents suffering from health related issues. All these, Mr Speaker, Sir, are compassionate measures and by providing this flexibility, we are acknowledging the importance of intergenerational care and supporting our citizens in managing their family responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the subsidies provided to maintain the retail price of basic necessities, the increase in petrol allowance, decrease in the price of gas; all these will indirectly and directly benefit our womenfolk who are very often responsible for family logistics including school runs and shopping trips etc.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to child welfare, again it is not the picture of gloom and doom like Members of the Opposition are hell bent on trying to prove. The provision of a monthly child support of Rs2,000 to almost 50,000 children of our country up to the age of three years old, Mr Speaker, Sir, aligns with our commitment to early childhood development and protection. It means the moment you bring a child onto this soil all the way until the child attains maturity, 18 years, the State is there behind this child, next to this child, supporting this child and I think this is noteworthy *and c'est de la pure démagogie* to try to dilute this historic measure towards our children, Mr Speaker, Sir, and here, when I talk about this Rs2,000 allowance, I speak from experience as well because I know what it is like to have to leave your child in the *crèche*, in the *garderie*, so that you can take work after your postpartum period, after your delivery period. Therefore, this particular measure brings a huge relief to parents through the provision of safe, affordable and adequate facilities, Mr Speaker, Sir, as well as the removal of VAT on everyday consumption items; many of which I notice and the population notices as well, relate directly to child and family care. This is going to reduce the financial burden

from our families, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am particularly mindful of the contributions made by our office and the immense strides we have taken towards gender equality, child protection, family welfare, addressing gender-based violence and social and community development of our nation and I am very enthusiastic about by the establishment of public childcare centres, the mandate for companies to provide childcare facilities, the enforcement of nursing rooms requirements in new public buildings, the promotion of gender equality on the boards of listed companies because, Mr Speaker, Sir, all these measures directly address some of the challenges we face in our quest to achieve gender equality.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would now like to bring your attention to yet another crucial announcement made by my colleague, in his budget speech; the measure highlighted the Government's unshakeable pledge to address the pressing issue of domestic violence by proposing the establishment of a regulatory framework to govern residential care institutions for victims of domestic violence and their children. This, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a significant step and it reflects our dedication to providing comprehensive support and protection to survivors, ensuring their safety and fostering their recovery and empowerment. It is important that I talk about this regulatory framework because the hon. Ms Anquetil, in her intervention on Monday, seemed to have missed this Annex altogether from the budget. So, may be if you have some time, you can go back and read the part of the Annex that contains the provision for this regulatory framework, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This framework aims to bring clarity, consistency, accountability to the operations of RCI to cater for domestic violence victims and by regulating these institutions, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are determined to ensure that they meet the highest standards of care, we are guaranteeing the well-being and most of all, dignity of survivors and their children.

Having said all this, Mr Speaker, Sir, we also need to dwell on the need for the formulation of research based policy and they have to be backed by sound data.

In the Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance, underscored our commitment to strengthening the protection and care of victims of various forms of violence, abuse, and neglect by providing funds to come up with a comprehensive and centralized system which obviously is going to be playing pivotal role in coordinating interventions across different government agencies and NGOs as well.

Mr Speaker Sir, I think it is important for me as Minister in charge to clarify one thing to the House and especially to the population that the provisions for economic

empowerment of our women do not limit themselves to my Ministry only. There are several initiatives related to the agricultural sector, production of seeds, livestock rearing, and production of vegetables. There are so many measures that have been announced in this Budget that are going to be benefitting our women. Likewise, the budget speech highlights the Government's commitment to housing infrastructure, to renewable energy sector, to the environment sector.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, these measures engaged other Ministries as well and my role as a Minister in charge of woman empowerment is to ensure, and I will do so, such that our women capitalise on all the measures being put forward to them.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Government's commitment towards the establishment of a new cancer centre demonstrates again its pledge to ensuring the health of our nation and I would like to express my deep appreciation for the significant allocation of funds, as mentioned in paragraph 290 of the Budget Speech for the establishment of a new cancer centre.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this investment in healthcare infrastructure holds immense significance for men, women and children as cancer affects all individuals, but can have very specific implications for women's health. This initiative is a testament again of the Government's commitment to prioritising women's health and well-being.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now address the subject which is closest to my heart and that is our children. Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius was commended for its good work relating to child rights at the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 92nd session which was held in Geneva this year, in January. We should not take that for granted, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Budget comes in to allow us to pursue and consolidate the good work that this Government has initiated. As Minister responsible for children, I am delighted to note that the Budget translates into reality the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter of Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Mr Speaker Sir, we are very much conscious of the fact that shelters are meant to be only a temporary place of abode for children in situations of distress, vulnerability due to various reasons, and the need to provide for family like settings and environment are a much better solution. My Ministry is laying much emphasis on this. The increase of monthly allowance granted under the Foster Care Scheme in respect of a child from Rs8,000 to Rs12,000 shall no doubt alleviate the pressure right now endured by existing foster care parents. At this point, I would like to humbly thank my colleague, the Minister

of Finance who has favourably paid heed to my Ministry's request to increase foster care allowance, but moreover, the enhanced Foster Care Allowance of Rs15,000 for a child with special needs is a first and can only command loud applause, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This measure comes at a most opportune time when we are indeed putting on our child rights lens so that according to Article 23 and Article 13 of the both the UNCR and the African Charter on the Rights of the Child that we are ensuring that each and every child matters irrespective to their specific needs and abilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the earmarking of funds for the construction of family-like residential care institutions, what people normally know as shelters for children, the construction of those shall definitely promote the right of the child to a roof and a care in moment of distress.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again the decision of my colleague, hon. Dr. Padayachy to provide for a CSG Child Allowance of Rs2,000 to children aged up to 3 years is most commendable in the sense that it is safely promoting and domesticating Article 27 of the UNCRC, which states that the State, in its capacity of parent, has the duty to ensure that every child benefit from a decent standard of living.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget Speech goes further under ground-breaking initiative of assuming total responsibility for the provision of cancer treatment for children ensuring that no child is ever left without access to life-saving medical care due to financial constraints. If you will allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I should say that when I heard the hon. Minister of Finance announcing this during his speech, it took me back and I could recall very vividly that during one of my visits in the Paediatrician Unit in one of the regional hospitals of our island, I recall the heartbreak, the struggle of parents rushing around to get treatment for their kids. So, this comes as a huge relief to those parents. I remember and I would like to quote a very distraught mother at the bedside of her sick child at the hospital telling me –

“Madam, ou enn mama. Alor, ou pou kone ki mo pe dir, pou vine lor sa later la, ena enn sel fason. C’est par enn mama.”

That mother, right now, Mr Speaker, Sir, along with all the mothers in this Republic are blessing the hon. Minister of Finance for this immense measure. Thank you.

I am pleased to bring your attention to the provisions in the Budget that demonstrate the Government's attention to social welfare, Mr Speaker, Sir. There has been significant allocation of resources towards the enhancement of social welfare centres

across the country. These centres, we should never forget, play a vital role in providing a wide array of services and support to vulnerable individuals. In fact, they are the ones who are the voices, who are the first point of call to everybody in the community at grassroots level. Therefore, once again, I thank the hon. Minister of Finance for having put forward funds to that effect. We should also remember and thank all members of that unit of my Ministry, the Social Welfare Division, for all their help that they brought in with the distribution of food packs, whether it is helping out for the vaccination campaign during COVID-19 and so on and so forth. They are doing a fabulous job.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have tried in the best of my capacity to highlight as many measures in this Budget that are going to be affecting the lives, the livelihoods of our children, our women, our families and our communities. With your very kind permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to state my position and that of my Ministry to be given the chance to refute some of the points as put forward by the hon. Fourth Member of Constituency No. 16 during her highly entertaining intervention last Monday.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not my style nor is it my desire to stoop as low as that Member did in her nefarious, dire strife on Monday. I did listen to her. I listened to her intervention mainly with a bit of a *soupçon d'indulgence*, but mainly, I listened to her interventions with a good degree of patience - patience for her unparalleled mediocrity, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Allow me to put this in context. Allow me to put this in context. I listened to her!

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member: *Laise li koze! Laise li koze!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: *Incompetan bon?*

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: May I?

An hon. Member: *Al twalet! Al twalet!*

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order! According to Standing Order 41, any Member cannot impute improper motives on another Member. So, I will kindly ask the hon. Minister to withdraw the word 'mediocrity' towards hon. Ms Anquetil. As simple as that!

Mr Speaker: Remove that word. Remove that word.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: Whatever tickles your fancy, I withdraw.

Allow me to put this in context. I was called ‘incompetent,’ I did not ask anybody to withdraw anything. Allow me to put this into context, Mr Speaker, Sir. That Member was not satisfied. She was dissatisfied with the Budget. All the Members of the Opposition are unhappy with the Budget.

Well, it is tough luck, just too bad, because the population, Mr Speaker, Sir, is very happy with this budget and that is what counts.

That hon. Member went right outside the parameters of budget debates, which you, yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, pointed out on countless times. She stepped out of the parameters of the budgetary debates and demanded that the Prime Minister revokes me. For what? *La révocation de Kalpana*. For what?

- For his choice of a Minister who has successfully enacted a revolutionary Children’s Act after 26 years? For that? Not one but three pieces of legislations to better protect our children.

Révoquer Kalpana dites-vous? PTr would have done better, *vous dites*, for our children? *Comment? Rass dipin depi dan zot labous?* That would have been doing better?

- *Révoquer Kalpana* Prime Minister, for what? For his choice of a Minister who has successfully rolled out a blue print and a Costed Action Plan for women entrepreneur?

PTr would have done better, *vous-dites?* PTr’s definition of women entrepreneur is what, Mr Speaker, Sir? *To konn tous Sali, to pa plant kotomili! To kotomili vinn lor.* That is entrepreneurship according to PTr!

(Interruptions)

Let me speak!

(Interruptions)

- *Révoquer Kalpana*, Mr Speaker, Sir, for what? For his choice of a Minister who has successfully maintained around the clock 24/7 service for our victims of domestic violence and children during a lockdown period?
- *Révoquer Kalpana*, for what? For having launched the Gender- Based Violence Observatory along with my friend, hon. Balgobin?
- *Révoquer Kalpana*, for his choice of a Minister who has brought into operation One-Stop Support Centres for victims of violence, who is behind

an award-winning mobile application called *L'Espwar* for our victims of violence?

- *Révoquer Kalpana, M. le Premier ministre*, for his choice of a Minister who has successfully devised and started implementing the long awaited National Gender Policy?
- *Révoquer Kalpana*, who has sent the National Adoption Bill for final drafting to the State Law Office?
- *Révoquer Kalpana*, who has successfully obtained the funding for the recommended reform of the Child Development Unit?
- Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is asking my Prime Minister *de révoquer Kalpana*, who has successfully lifted reservations off the Maputo Protocol for which our Republic was criticised for decades.

Fire her, Mr Speaker, Sir! Fire Kalpana! Why? Maybe because I have intervened on more than 20 Bills during my time in this Parliament in good health or sickness, doing what I am paid for and living up to my responsibilities.

Fire Kalpana because probably unlike the hon. Anquetil, she has sat in this august Assembly until early hours of so many mornings? Go and ask yourself how many hours have you sat in this Parliament! *Rod twa pou tir foto pa gagn twa ! Mo rod twa pou tir enn foto mo pa trouv twa !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, *si ti ena impe* self-respect, *li ti pou retourn lapay. Al dormi lakaz toulezour boner!*

Ms Anquetil: *Twa ki dormi, mo pa dormi mwa !*

Mrs Koonjoo Shah: *To al dormi lakaz aköz sa to pa la !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't have long to go, don't worry. I am a product of a political party who has always inherited tough times. MSM-led governments have been trained; I have been trained in a school of hard knocks! I wear my colours with pride and I am built to ignore below the belts. I am built to ignore *ad-hominem* attacks especially when a woman is body-shaming another woman.

I, Mr Speaker, Sir, we, on this side of the House, we defend policies and measures. We do not attack people because that is petty, it is despicable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I invite that hon. Member to take a very long, a hard look into the mirror, if she happens to own one because I don't really think so because the way she

turns up here looking like something that cat dragged in. Never mind, if you don't have a mirror, use your phone. If you don't have a mirror, I invite her to use her phone. Go on the Internet, instead of playing Peeping Tom and taking unauthorised pictures in the House, use her phone and take a long, hard look at the results of the past two general elections where a certificate of incompetence was shoved down her throat, not once, but twice!

Mr Speaker Sir, it is clear that the ambit of this budgetary exercise has completely escaped the two functioning brain cells of hon. Anquetil, but I have racked my brains. I have thought about her intervention and I have come up with what is the most logical explanation for what this entire House and the entire nation had witnessed on Monday. We had witnessed how that Member chose to treat a fellow woman parliamentarian with very thinly-veiled vitriol, with so much hatred and only possibly because this is the only way she can conceal her limited command of a budgetary exercise. Maybe this is the only way she can conceal her incompetence, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is very clear, it is clear as a bell that this hon. Member harbours some obscure, personal grudge against myself and my Ministry. She has repeatedly, in the past and again last Monday, insulted the hundreds of public servants of my Ministry and they are not going to forget that.

And finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am inclined to agree with my dear colleague hon. Hurreeram who spoke yesterday. I am inclined to agree with him that perhaps hon. Anquetil doesn't like the way I speak, does not like the way I dress, my *accoutrement la derange*. I don't know what it is but there must be something that is not too good with her.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again referring to what hon. Hurreeram said yesterday, if I recall, he made a reference to the disrobing of Queen Draupadi who can very easily be called the first feminist of the Hindu mythology, if I can put it like that. His reference, Mr Speaker, Sir, depicted the actual behaviour of Parliamentarians of the other side of this House. You were clapping while hon. Anquetil was disrobing and stripping the decorum of this Parliament, you were clapping for her!

Hon. Members: Shame! Shame! *La honte!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: You were clapping for a leader, a leader who deserves the least recognition pour *la cause féminine*! You were clapping!

An hon. Member: *La honte!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: You were clapping for a leader who insults women in public. You were clapping! Clapping for that kind of leadership?

Mr Speaker, Sir, our women in this country do not want this kind of leadership. We reject this leadership! Leadership *à la kotomili nou pa le!* And we don't want people clapping for it either!

Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Yeah, I know he is my good friend.

What is demarcating, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government from other ones, is that this Government has not only got....

Mr Toussaint: *Tir navin met Ramful!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: What is happening on this side? The hon. Minister is speaking, what are you ...

An hon. Member: *Pena manier!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: I'm finishing. *Pe ouver lapeti!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is demarcating our Government from the other ones, is that we not only have got an absolute master of fiscal policy as our Minister of Finance, but the latter happens to have his heart in the right place as well. Unlike the Opposition, we are not always dreaming about the next elections. We are working for the next generations!

As much as they want to oppose it, as much we remain guided by this one principle only: we are consistent; we are led by a second to none Prime Minister. We are steering this nation to good horizons. *Opozision, komie bato, komie kapitenn, komie premie ministrab* – how many *kapitenn* do you have in your *bato*?

An hon. Member: *Boku!*

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah: *Boku? Komie? Ena kapitein dekapite! Kot li? Pa la. Kapitenn stepne.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, the population will recall that it does not matter what desperate ploy the Opposition will attempt, through cheap politics *de bas étage*. Whenever they have tried to deter the Government, they have failed. They have failed because the population can see right from wrong, they can choose right over wrong, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I will finish by: 'PTR would have done better'. *Vous dites?* Hon. Anquetil had dared to put forth that statement, that my Prime Minister, our Prime Minister, the current

Prime Minister *n'est pas à la hauteur* and that her leader, Navinchandra Ramgoolam would have done better! Mr Speaker, Sir, by any standard, this statement should go down as the most hilarious one in this current budget debate.

My Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, respects women. My Prime Minister, Mr Speaker, Sir, would not allow his female colleagues to be used like this, like her, to be disrespected because she might not see it, she might not be aware of it, this is what her Leader, Navinchandra Ramgoolam is doing to her! Sending her out here, feeling like a gladiator when, in fact, he sends you here with the lure of a ministerial position maybe if one day God forbid, your Party is ever in power – sends you here feeling like a warrior when, in fact, with the blessing of your own colleagues who are sniggering while you speak, he is sending you here as a jester, the Court's jester, your Party's jester. This is what hon. Anquetil comes here to do. *Koumadir* Manjulika, *konn* Manjulika *non*?

(Interruptions)

Samem! Samem! This is your better leader, Mr Speaker, Sir? Your lion, *lion*? My Prime Minister will walk into the den of your *lion*, will walk right up to him, will wake up your *lion*, will give him a fighting chance and will defeat your *lion* any day, anytime, anywhere, hands down!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, the women – I am done – of our Republic can see where their value, where their contribution, their dignity, where their respect is being upheld, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I know that for generations to come, children in this Republic will hear about marvellous and true stories of how this daring Prime Minister, this daring Government has cared for its nation. Who dares, wins! We will continue to win, as a successful nation.

I thank all of you for your attention. Thank you, I am done.

Hon. Members: *Bravo! Bravo!*

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I will break for one hour.

At 8.32 p.m. the Sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.38 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Please be seated! Hon. Ramchurun!

(9.38 p.m.)

Mr P. Ramchurrin (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, avant de commencer mon intervention sur le discours du budget 2023-2024, j'aimerais présenter mes sincères sympathies à ces 288 personnes qui ont perdu leur vie dans l'accident incluant trois trains en Inde. Je suis sûre que plusieurs de mes collègues parlementaires me joindront pour présenter nos sincères sympathies à toutes leurs familles endeuillées et au gouvernement indien. *I also wish the Holy Father, Pope Francis, for a prompt and speedy recovery after his surgery.*

Coming to my debate, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am grateful for the opportunity to address this august Assembly on the Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill. Along with many of my hon. friends from this side of the House, it will be our fourth budgetary intervention.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, pour commencer de féliciter le ministre des Finances. Après l'avoir écouté vendredi dernier lors de son discours, ce budget brille sur la vie de beaucoup de mauriciens comme un soleil chaleureux mais nous ne pourrions pas éclairer la vie de certains malheureusement, notamment ceux qui trouvent *nanye pa bon*. Et aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement, à travers ce budget 2023-2024, arrive à garantir les acquis sociaux pour supporter les plus faibles, les plus vulnérables de notre société, et comme un gouvernement qui non seulement se dit socialiste, pas que dans la théorie, mais aussi dans la pratique. Jamais, M. le président, depuis l'indépendance, on a vu autant de développements dans ce pays grâce à ce budget *ki pa get figir*, qui fait aussi part à l'épanouissement et la prospérité d'un peuple uni.

Mr Speaker, Sir, similar to my last year's budget speech, I conducted a brief text analysis of this Budget Speech. This year as well, the words 'support' and 'scheme' have been used the highest number of times in a substantive way. However, interestingly, the other mostly used substantive words after 'support and scheme' are: 'construction' - when we talk about construction, we talk about the NDU and hon. Bobby Hurreeram,- and 'income,' when we talk about income, of course, we think of hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, the Minister of Finance. Mr Speaker, Sir, the overarching philosophy of the Budget was clear from the beginning and has been widely accepted by the population at large. It is thus a budget of support to the population, a budget of raising the disposable income levels of all Mauritians and a budget to build the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, the Government injected massively in order to absorb much of the impact of the world recession in our country's GDP levels and to support our jobs, to successfully maintain the living standards

of our countrymen. As we speak through, the Ukraine-Russia War and its impacts on the world's supply chain and commodity prices are still not behind us. However, this Government has been able to protect the green shoots of recovery and thus our economy is starting to expand once again. For instance, according to the African Economic Outlook 2022 Report, Mauritius was one of the topmost performing countries in the southern Africa region in both 2021 and 2022. Hence, our Government's policy struck the ideal mix between taming the recession's large and sharp edges and keeping the reins on public budgets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the core components of this Budget is tax reform, which aims at modifying the tax code so that it is more equitable, long-lasting and supportive to economic progress. Ultimately, we want a system that recognises work, advances families and one that Mauritius may use to draw and keep talent. Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to rebalance the economy, put money in people's hands and motivate them to save more, we modified the tax structure. There will be undoubtedly a long-term advantage to this.

Taxes have a significant impact on investment and savings choices. It is true to admit that our country's past growth capability has been hampered by uneven tax rates. Additionally, there is strong academic evidence of avoidance which is mostly the result of ineffective tax rates. The package thus enhances the integrity and fairness of the tax system and guarantees that taxpayers will have comparable tax positions if their circumstances and genuine economic incomes are similar.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget also aims at providing better quality services to a more effective public sector, which will also ease financial and tax burdens on the rest of the economy. As a result, the majority of the Budget funds will go towards enhancing social services, health and education programmes and advancing science and innovation.

Our Government's social mandate remains prominent by providing more social safety nets such as increased pensions, taking care of health cost for cancer suffering children, refurbishing our schools and recruiting more staff for our educational institutions. The hon. Prime Minister has made it clear that this Government aspires to a system of economics that respects initiatives, rewards work, safeguards the weakest and fosters upward mobility for all.

If we come to the performance of the last budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, the 2022 Budget Exercise, which was done in an extremely difficult situation, was able to set a solid foundation based on which our country has once again been recognised internationally by awards and rankings.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to list only a few as there are so many of them –

- October 2022, Global Innovation Index - Mauritius ranked 1st African country and placed 45th out of 132 countries globally, with a high human development score and acknowledgement of growth in financial services, tourism and IT;
- March 2022, World Airport Awards 2023 - Mauritius ranked as the 5th best airport in Africa after Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, and Casablanca;
- May 2023, in the Chandler Good Governance Index, Mauritius is again in the top African position, with Rwanda 2nd and Botswana in the 3rd place,
- March 2023, the World Happiness Report, a publication of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network - 146 countries were assessed and Mauritius was ranked 1st in Africa and significantly ahead of all other African countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of all these international awards, recognitions, the Opposition still thinks that *nanye pa bon*. However, given their past severe symptoms of denial, I would suggest they take all those international organisations to court, given to their *nanye pa bon* illness. For them, *touzour nanye pa bon!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has always believed in the development and importance of giving responsibilities to our youth, given their maturity. This Budget has invested Rs53 million for the forthcoming Indian Ocean Island Games 2023.

I thank the hon. Minister Stephan Toussaint for the excellent job he is doing where he is hosting 450 athletes. More importantly, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is provision for the Paris 2024 Olympics and Paralympics Games by providing a monthly allowance of Rs 30,000 to 10 high-level athletes over a period of one year to adequately and professionally prepare for the games. Congratulations to all the athletes !

Before going to my Constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would say there is one more, *comme on dit cerise sur le gâteau. M. le président, pour ces athlètes, il y a des special cash prize qui seront alloués aux médaillés, notamment il y aura R 1 million de plus pour les médaillés d'or, R 700,000 de plus pour les médaillés d'argent et R 500,000 de plus pour les médaillés de bronze.*

Concerning Constituency 14, I would to thank the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Youth and Sports for the upgrading of Bambous and Chemin Grenier Youth Centres.

M. le président, il y a des honorables qui sont dans cette Chambre depuis 40 ans et moi, je suis là que trois ans maintenant. Je suis content d'entendre l'honorable Bhagwan hier pour son souci pour l'état de La Valette. Je suis content que l'honorable Bhagwan après 40 ans, ce n'est que maintenant qu'il est concerné par La Valette, après un long sommeil profond.

However within my first mandate, out of two years, nearly two years were impacted by the pandemic, with the support of the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, 240 housing units are now under construction at La Valette, with new infrastructures and amenities and this project will enable the relocation of vulnerable families living along the Banks of La Ferme Dam Bambous and these people of La Valette and all these citizens of the country will benefit from the amenities and those newly modern infrastructures in La Valette. Nobody did that before, 40 years back; in this first mandate, these jobs are being done over there.

I am also thankful to the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister for the rehabilitation of the NHDC and I am happy for my friends of NHDC Bambous and Palma, Quatre Bornes where after the rehabilitation, there will be fire escape staircases installed.

Some other projects for Constituency No. 14, which I fully welcome, are –

- Mini-soccer pitches at Baie du Cap, Bambous, La Gaulette, Beaux Songes and Le Morne ;
- Upgrading of Baie du Cap Football Ground;
- New Children Garden at Bambous;
- Upgrading of Children Garden at Petite Rivière Noire, Quatre Bornes and Le Morne;
- Upgrading of market at La Gaulette;
- Multipurpose Complex at Rivière des Creoles;
- New healthtrack at Grande Rivière Noire;
- Upgrading works at Petite Rivière Noire, Chamarel and Le Morne;
- Upgrading of Volley-ball pitch at Cascavelle, and
- Construction of new Open Gym at Bambous.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to tackle the impacts of climate change, which has in turn caused an increase in the frequency of disasters such as unexpected torrential rainfall, acute flashfloods and sea level rise causing lives and properties to be at stake, this Government has invested Rs2 billion for 400 high-risk flood prone areas safer for our citizens.

Another 157 drain projects around the island are actually being constructed. This year another Rs3 billion will be invested to make all regions across the country safer, including major drain projects at Bambous, Chemin Grenier, Coteau Raffin, Flic en Flac, Tamarin, Baie du Cap, La Gaulette, Bel Ombre, Chamouny, Pierrefonds, Bassin and Palma.

Pourquoi tous ces investissements par ce gouvernement, M. le président? Il ne faut pas oublier ce qui s'est passé en mars 2013. Le prix que notre pays et nos compatriotes ont dû payer suite à la gestion désastreuse du pays dans le passé, ne peut être oublié, surtout dans le cas des *flashfloods* de Port Louis où 13 personnes avaient disparu suite à non-fonctionnement des drains d'une cité capitale comme Port Louis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to consolidate the blue economy...

(Interruptions)

I said blue economy. I heard someone say 'blue label'. No?

(Interruptions)

No, I swear someone said.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to consolidate the blue economy, this Government has made provisions to enable fishermen to increase their produce by allocating a grant of Rs2,500 for the purchase of hooks and fishing materials. Thousands of my constituents are employed by the blue economy and have personally asked me to thank the hon. Minister of Finance and the Minister of Fisheries and Blue Economy for the following initiatives –

- (i) Rs5,000 for the purchase of materials to construct fish traps and Rs300,000 for acquisition of *canottes*.
- (ii) Installation of solar powered lights at jetties to facilitate navigation at night including at Case Noyale.
- (iii) Upgrading of fisheries post namely La Preneuse and Riambel among others.
- (iv) Increasing the lump sum paid to fisherman age 65 from Rs52,500 to Rs100,000, Mr Speaker, Sir.
- (v) Daily Bad Weather Allowance to Rs650 daily.
- (vi) 50% grant for construction of hatchery for shrimp farming to a maximum of Rs500,000.

- (vii) Finally this Government has dared to care for our community of fishers of this country by granting Rs6 m. for acquisition of semi-industrial fishing boats by registered cooperatives.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very recently, the Leader of the Labour Party, more precisely at Triolet last Sunday, criticised the increase of Rs1,000 in pensions. It was perhaps a reaction *à chaud*. Perhaps when he is *chauffé*, he does not think correctly. For instance, he forgot that he was paying meagre amounts of around Rs100 increase per year to pensioners. *R 100*, about *R 129 dernier* increase. In 2014, when we proposed a pension of Rs5,000, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam was the first person to say that he cannot and will not pay. Now, suddenly he is trying to *deklar enn piti ki limem ti refize!*

(Interruptions)

Ki tik? Kan nou nou kozer tik. Bizin areter sa zafer la ! Eoula!

The hon. Minister of Finance rightly chose his introductory words from President Jimmy Carter. This society never forgets the politicians who insulted women due to ‘*mikro la pa bon*’ or those politicians who use *baton* SSU against innocent women factory workers from the EPZ. The population must know and must hear. On Sunday, the unelected Labour Party Leader also claimed that his Government always increases pension by more than the inflation rate. Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2013, the Basic Retirement Pension was Rs3,494.

In his last ever budget as Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier Duval, who boasted loudly and all the PMSD and Labour Party MPs *ti tap latab* when he proposed to increase the pension in his 2014 budget by only Rs129. Mr Speaker, Sir, I know hon. Duval is an Accountant by profession but please allow me to wear my amateur accountant hat for two minutes. Mr Speaker, Sir, they increased the pension by only 3.7% whereas the inflation rate was 3.6%. As the Labour Party Leader said, it was more than the inflation rate but by how much? By how much?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was above the inflation rate by only Rs3 – Rs3 that is what an old pensioner was getting from him. So, in reality what all the PMSD and Travailliste MPs in 2014 did was to blindly *tap latab* for *enn gran zefor* of only Rs3, Mr Speaker, Sir. No pensioner will ever forget this humiliation of Rs3 to the pensioners in budget 2014.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have come a very long way as from Rs3,623 in 2014 under the Parti Travailliste-led Government. The Basic Retirement Pension is now at Rs12,000; an amount which has not been increased by a mere Rs3 but Rs8,377 per month. Or, if I may

wear my amateur Accountant hat again, it was by 231% over nine years. 231% increase over nine years!

Mr Speaker, Sir, our pensioners will not forget this humiliation, by the ex-Prime Minister, of Rs3. What we did was give our pensioners the dignity and respect they deserve. The theme of the 2014 budget was building a better Mauritius – *sanz lavi dan 100 zours*. Is this the better Mauritius version of the Parti Travailleiste?

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the unelected Leader of the Labour Party recently said –

“Thank you but no thank you”.

The same person wants to come back as Prime Minister; he wants. They have short memories, Mr Speaker, Sir, but the population does not want and will never want this last Prime Minister to come back and neither our parents nor grandparents want them to come back to get humiliated again because *aster ena chacha. Aster chacha!*

Mr Speaker, Sir, none of the Labour Party MPs raised even their little finger in 2014 to protect the interests of pensioners, orphans, widows and carers. What they did was only *tap latab*. This is the problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, when hon. X. L. Duval who is not here, hon. Mohamed who is not here and their Leader, Navin Ramgoolam, when they share the same old textbook of modern economics. I hope the MMM benchers who were then in the Opposition will not defend their new friends’ account.

Le Leader du Parti Travailleiste a aussi récemment dit qu’il voulait mettre notre gouvernement dehors. En revanche, M. le président, c’est la population qui lui a mis dehors et non pas une fois, mais à deux reprises ; *trwaziem p vini*.

Et trwaziem p vini if ever he is coming in the Constituency No.5 again, if he declares he is still the lion. There is a lion king waiting for him in No.5, and the lion king is PPS Sharvanand Ramkaun.

En revanche, M. le président ...

(Interruptions)

An hon. Member : *Banla mem p riye toi !*

Mr Speaker: Order !

Mr Ramchurrun : M. le président, même s’il fait le tour des 20 circonscriptions à Maurice.

Mr Speaker: Hey !

Mr Ramchurrin : Même s'il fait le tour des 80 circonscriptions a Maurice et celui de Rodrigues, il ne sera jamais élu et sera battu par l'honorable François à Rodrigues et M. le président, on dit souvent *vox populi vox dei* – la voix du peuple est la voix de dieu et dieu a parlé à deux reprises et parlera encore une troisième fois.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also unique. Indeed it will go down in history as the budget which has always left each inhabitant a winner, yes never has a budget been able to benefit directly or indirectly each of the 1.3 million inhabitants across our island. This budget is a patriotic one as it cuts across political boundaries, be it, you are a Labour Party, MMM, PMSD or Parti Malin supporter. None of the political leaders have denied that their supporters will not benefit from the VAT free baby products, the one to three year old financial support, the Rs20,000 grant for young adults turning 18, the increase in disposable income through our tax reforms or even the increase of the BRP for our pensioners. From birth to retirement age, this Government will support and empower the population irrespective of political colour.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to end by thanking the hon. Minister of Finance and saluting the able Leadership of hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who has an unmatched leadership which is inexistent in other side of the House. The hon. Prime Minister's hard work is exemplary but so courageous that he inspires us to work harder and be the best versions of ourselves for our constituents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we took a solemn oath to serve and protect our population and we will be by their side even in difficult situations. The overarching message of this Budget 2023-2024 is that by necessity and by belief, our strength lies in unity and our danger in discord. The challenges before us are daunting but we are facing them with confidence, conviction and solidarity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. Gungapersad!

(22.09)

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand Baie & Poudre d'Or):
Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for giving me this opportunity to address the august Assembly.

I think it is not a lapsus on behalf of hon. Bablee who is used to *koz koze ki bizin* and he has talked what he had. *Li fin koz koze ki bizin*. In one sentence, he has summed up

the whole Budget and has made my task easy so that I will not have to go through the economics of the Budget.

Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit? Qu'est-ce qu'il a dit? Le peuple a faim. Il faut interpréter cette phrase pas seulement littéralement, mais figurativement aussi. Le peuple a faim. Oui, de la nourriture qui est chère. Mais le peuple a faim pour la vérité, pour des crimes non élucidés. Le peuple a faim pour la justice. Pourquoi deux poids, deux mesures ?

Certains ont un traitement royal ici ou ailleurs, et certains sont vilipendés. Le peuple a faim pour la sérénité dans la société. Le peuple a faim pour la sécurité, pas seulement physique, la sécurité émotionnelle. On a écouté des jeunes parlementaires du gouvernement. On vient d'écouter un jeune parlementaire quelques minutes de cela, *and we listened to two other young parliamentarians from Government.*

It was a pleasure to see the transformation and the discourse of hon. Dr. Ismaël Rawoo, a sea-change I call it. I was struck by the intervention of a young parliamentarian, hon. Nazurally; philosophical, non-toxic. And it is this that we want.

An hon. Member: *Ti pou eklat latab...*

Dr. Gungapersad: This is what we want. Another toxic person is talking! You will listen to him.

Mr Speaker: No, no! Now you are pinpointing somebody.

Dr. Gungapersad: Let me continue.

Mr Speaker: Please, withdraw that.

Dr. Gungapersad: I remove it.

Mr Speaker: Withdraw that.

Dr. Gungapersad: I remove it.

Mr Speaker: You are becoming toxic.

Dr. Gungapersad: I remove it. I know it hurts, I remove it. I remove it.

I am saying that this august Assembly gives us the opportunity to share not only views, ideas for *tap tatab* effect. What we say has an impact outside and I am very careful about what I am saying. Because I know people will be listening to me and I have to be careful.

Tout à l'heure, je vais parler sur l'éducation, but in a non toxic way. Before I proceed any further, allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission to pay tribute to one

politician who was my opponent in the last elections 2019. He was my opponent. I wrote it on my Facebook post - and I went at his funeral also - I said I am paying tribute to a gentleman who left us early. He was a political opponent, not an enemy. A person for whom I have a lot of respect, and I will always talk good of him because we could run for an election and still hold our values high and respect.

I am paying tribute to late Ashit Gungah and I recognise even if he has been an opponent, he has contributed something for the constituency. No one can deny it. Why we live in this denial? Why? Everyone knows. Alliances are made, broken, and are made again. We have been friends. Why do we behave with so much of toxicity verbally and in other ways?

Hon. Balgobin, in his speech, was saying that the Labour Party is left only with a key, he was talking about the broken heart of MMM, etc. We are young. I am new in politics and these are young politicians. They have a career. They will be here for many years. It is important for them to be careful. What message are we sending to the nation?

It is not the Rs20,000 that matters all the time. It is the values by which we stand. Hon. Balgobin, hon. Ramchurrun and hon. Doolub are talking about a former Prime Minister's pills. Is this why we are here? Talking about this and that? I will not do that, be it Sir Seewoosagur, be it Sir Anerood Jugnauth, be it Paul Bérénger, be it Gaëtan Duval, be it all these people; we have to respect them.

Mr Speaker: Even the Speaker!

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes! Yes, it is earned very often.

Now, hon. Balgobin is saying Labour Party members are left with a key. You do not give the permission, and I know, I will respect you. You said we can't brandish pictures. I will not, but I am staring at a picture. What do I see? What do I see? His Prime Minister is holding the Labour Party flag.

An hon. Member: Yes.

An hon. Member: With pride!

Dr. Gungapersad: This is what we call in Bhojpuri *neki kar dariya mein daal!* Dr. Ramgoolam did it.

Mr Speaker: Translate it! Translate it!

Dr. Gungapersad: He offered his shoulders to have this person elected.

An hon. Member: Yes!

Dr. Gungapersad: He offered his shoulders. He offered his friendship. He offered his support. These are the values we stand for. Today, *qu'est-ce qu'on ne dit pas sur cet homme la?* He is not even present in this august Assembly. If I have to choose a leader, I will choose Dr. Navin Ramgoolam.

An. hon. Member: *Get so bilan avan!*

Dr. Gungapersad: Bilan, he has done a lot. What have you achieved? I have not achieved anything. These people have marked history; these Prime Ministers former, present and future.

We cannot. We are simple mortals. This is what hon. Nazurally said the other day in his beautiful conclusion when he said that we come here for two days and we will leave empty handed. We will leave empty handed. This is what I said in my maiden speech.

Mr Speaker: *Tende la?*

Dr. Gungapersad: And this is what I will maintain. We can be gentlemen. Hon. Ashit Gungah was a gentleman and I will always talk good of him in spite of being my political opponent. We never had any *accrochages*. I will tell you this because this is politics. This is a new way of doing politics. I do not think hon. Gilbert Bablee will disagree with me because he shares these values.

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to one issue which I had not prepared, but a press article today in the morning in *l'Express* has had an impact on my constituents and they have been sending me messages after messages. They are asking me *ki pe arrive dan Anse La Raie? Ki pe arrive dans Anse La Raie Youth Centre?*

For those who do not know it, may not know it. My good friend Dr. Ramdhany, the PPS, will talk after me, He is present and he must have heard it just like hon. Teeluck. They are asking me *eski pe kraz youth centre?* They are asking me. I don't have the answer. *Je ne suis pas dans le secret des dieux*. They are asking me: *ki pou ariv* what we call '*campement gouverner*'.

President of Shivalas of Petit Raffray, Réunion Maurel, Goodlands, Anse La Raie, Cap Malheureux have phoned me. Why? Because that place apart from being a recreational place, holds an important place in our heart because for each Ganesh Chaturthi, we go there for *Visarjan*. I go there with my family. This is how I have been brought up; this is the place I go. What will happen to that place? We don't know. When I read that article, I don't have answers for my constituents and these answers have to be given. Will this spot no longer be ours? Is it true that someone – blue-eyed boy or I don't

know, how Mr Ramchurrin calls it, I don't know. The different colours, he knows. What type of boy that man may be? Will that place no longer be ours?

We have already in Constituency No. 6, fishermen of Madame Azor talking to me. There was a question by hon. Navarre Marie in that sense about Baie de Rosnay; access is no longer given. There is another place in Pointe aux Canonnières. I made a request during adjournment time for access to the beach because many people no longer have access; they cannot get their little boats to the beach. I asked it to the Deputy Prime Minister, I requested it. The same is happening somewhere in Melville. We are gradually losing these prime places where we have been going since our childhood. Will this place also be no longer ours? I am talking, Mr Speaker, Sir, about page 36, item 212, page 37, item 219. If you ask me whether I am talking on the budget, yes, I am referring to these. How can we mitigate climate change when we are not protecting the little space that is left? Some people are asking – the senior citizens I have met in the constituency and one *dada* phoned me and he told me “*beta, hamar naathi ke mili laplaz?*” (Will my grandson get the opportunity to go to the beach?). And I told him “*hum pouch ke bolab*” (I will ask and tell him). I hope we get the answer.

There are many other things to be talked about the constituency No. 6. We have a PPS; he will talk about it. But week after week, whenever possible I have been asking things for my constituency. Whatever we get, we are happy. But one or two things, if it can be done immediately. I know it may not be done overnight but the flooding that occurs, the water accumulation that occurs after each rainfall in front of Doorgachurn Hurry Government School which has been my primary school, which has been the primary school of my kids. I have seen kids literally standing on bus shelters because it is completely inundated.

Nine years this Government is here, please do something. I know you will come and say you've done this, this and this but there are priorities. We have schools over there. We have Jugdambi SSS, we have Doorgachurn Hurry Government School, and we have One SEN school in Doorgachurn Hurry Government School. We have to use the main road, please do something for that.

Now, what logic is it? You come with great pomp, you go for the inauguration of the traffic centre in Poudre d'Or Village. Last Tuesday I went there for a *pooja*, *Ganga saagar thudam*, there is a Shivala there and we were there in the morning and it went until 01:00 hrs, and many senior citizens – the *dada* and *dadis*, the *nanas* and *nanis* told me “*Beta*, there is toilet there but we can't use it. It has not been opened”. And I made a

request in this august Assembly to have it opened. These basic things and we are talking about billions and billions, caring, *protéger*. Do these little things and you will get the blessings of these people. Not sending an SS afterwards, *kifer inn invit Gungapersad, pan invit lezot*. People have a right to love me. People have the right to love me. They may be whatever but don't harass these people, they will continue to invite me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to move to the core of my speech which is education. Now, before proceeding any further, today I will be quoting a few Ministers of Education – I am giving prior notice – of present, past of this country or elsewhere. Let me start with the first quote, the British Minister of Education – in the past, not now. And I have named David Blunkett. David Blunkett had this to say about education and I know, hon. Steven Obeegadoo knows that. He must have heard about it, he must have read about him. Yes, because he is a person of calibre and what he said time back –

“To compete in the global economy, to live in a civilised society and to develop the talents of each and every one of us, we will have to unlock the potential of every young person. By doing so, each can flourish, building on their own strengths and developing their own talents. We must overcome the spiral of disadvantage, in which alienation from or failure within the education system is passed from one generation to the next.”

This is what we will be talking. We have to prevent this alienation. From memory, I am saying, I may be wrong. From memory I am quoting Michael Harrington, an American sociologist and anthropologist. He says that –

“poverty has this ability to reproduce, recreate poverty, that is why generation after generation we go on in the spiral of poverty”.

How to break it? Education is important. And that is why I salute Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam who gave people like us, like me, the opportunity to be where I am today, coming from where I come. Free education; the possibility to compete in this country on the basis of merit and to get scholarship and etc. This is empowerment of youngsters; this is what Labour Party has done. Not only free education, he has given this broadmindedness, not only mine, like Gandhi says –

“Education should look after three Hs. The Head – the intellect; the Heart – the emotions; the Hand – the skills”.

And my education is the mixture of Gandhi and Tagore. But how many of you will be willing to listen to this? I will not waste your time by throwing these things to you but

suffice it today for me to say that I welcome the measures taken by for SEN schools. Yes, provisions have been made in the budget but does the public know that we have three types of SEN schools? I was not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir.

When I was a Rector, I had a twinning with one SEN School in Montagne Longue. In my village, in Goodlands, we have a SEN school in a Government school but there is also an NGO which runs a SEN school. And, I have been told – correct me if I am wrong – but, today I am vouching, I am requesting this Government, the Minister of Finance, I have been told that carers for NGO get only Rs9,700, drivers also etc., and once when these children reach the age of 20 in NGOs, they no longer get the grant.

In many of these schools that I have been visiting, it is not when they reach 20 that they have to go home. On the contrary, these children, they are happy in these schools. Please, make some provision – for NGOs I am saying. Sometimes it is difficult for them to make both ends meet. Let me be their voice today in this Parliament. I have seen these people, how they care. You know how difficult it is to look after these children? They are our children; those carers, those people who live with them. Do not get me into the new books of Economics, old books of Economics; I do not know these things. I am making a simple request, humanitarian request for these carers whether they are from Government schools or fee paying private schools or from NGOs. I have come to learn that there are three types of schools. Please, let us empower these people first and then we talk about *bel bel pake finn kasse* etc. Let us care for them. If we are not able to do that, my service, like Tagore says, will never be fruitful.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you have given us a ruling that certain words cannot be used but let me navigate. Let me navigate! Now, I will quote another Minister of Education. Before I start, let me tell you, when she was speaking, there was the Deputy Speaker on Chair – so, I will be quoting, it is not you. She, whatever she said, 17 November 2012 and she is addressing the Assembly –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the heard the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources stating that we now have less failures at the level of CPE and in spite of the declared intentions that we are going to phase out the CPE examinations, the hon. Minister came up last week stating that CPE results are not that bad.”

She continues –

“We should not be talking about 30% failure, we should be talking about some 15% failure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 15% failure at the level of CPE? This is

terrible and what is worse is that we are not taking any action to improve the situation. I keep on wondering why we wait for a child to reach CPE and allow a child to fail at the level of CPE before we think about taking some actions.”

Who said that? Hon. Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun on 17 November 2012 in Hansard. This is what I am quoting. You are not allowing us to use the expression ‘Extended Programme’, I will not use it.

Mr Speaker: No, listen. You said people have to show respect. Start by yourself. Practice what you say. It is not that I do not want you to talk about extended education but this topic has been canvassed and it is in the Standing Orders. Dr. Gungapersad, you are a fine intellectual.

Dr. Gungapersad: Thank you.

Mr Speaker: You know how to read...

Dr. Gungapersad: Yes.

Mr Speaker: ...and it is very easy for you to read and to learn your Standing Orders.

Dr. Gungapersad: We replace...

Mr Speaker: Maybe you failed there.

Dr. Gungapersad: We replace...

Mr Speaker: Maybe you failed there.

Dr. Gungapersad: No, no, no.

Mr Speaker: You should know your Standing Orders. You cannot criticise me and these are the same Standing Orders by Sir Harilall Vaghjee, Sir Ramesh Jeewoolall...

Dr. Gungapersad: We are not...

Mr Speaker: Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam; all these great people, great men used the same Standing Orders!

Dr. Gungapersad: We have to replace CPE *par* EP.

Mr Speaker: Whatever you do is not my problem but you cannot refer to the Chair.

Dr. Gungapersad: No, I am not.

Mr Speaker: This is showing disrespect. This is not being courteous to the Chair. The Chair gives a ruling and this is a standard. And, in all the Parliaments in the whole world, you will see the same thing.

Dr. Gungapersad: Now, when

Mr Speaker: You are not inventing Parliament!

Dr. Gungapersad: When 15% failure at the level of CPE was terrible, I ask the hon. Minister to tell us what it is today. This is what she said, and she goes further –

“Children have got their talents; they have got their capacities and their potential. We should try to tap this out of these children. We spend a lot on the education sector but we spend it wrongly.”

This is what is written there and today we are voting for Rs19.7 billion for the education sector. Rs19.7 billion for our kids and I am telling the parents of those kids, we are telling the parents of those kids, there is hope because one sub-heading of the Budget – the revamping of the education system, something like that. This is going to be scrapped by the next Government. This is a commitment; not just words in the Hansard because those kids deserve a skilled and competency based curriculum which is adapted to their needs. I go further, 20 November 2013, again by hon. Dookun-Luchoomun; she is saying –

“I have heard that just like in primary section, there will be an automatic promotion from 6 to 7, 7 to 8, 8 to 9.”

I am reading the verbatim –

“Are we not aware that the problem in primary sectors that sometimes students end up in the 4th standard, 5th standard and fail to write their names properly and fail to read a comprehension properly and still assessment is being made in these schools and they are being promoted, automatic promotion? Are we not extending this problem up till the 9th year?”

This is what I can read. What has been done? And, I will quote another former Minister of Education – 6 December 2010, hon. Obeegadoo, and what he says is very interesting –

« Pourtant ce CPE, c’est le passeport obligé pour accéder à un emploi valorisant ; c’est le passeport obligé pour accéder à la fonction publique. Ce sont les *Essential Learning Competencies* selon les sommités pédagogiques du MIE. 18% qui vont échouer! A qui la faute ? A ces enfants ? A plus de 3,000 jeunes enfants qui, chaque année, vont être éjectés ? Quel gâchis ! »

And, what follows is interesting –

« Cela est immoral; socialement, c'est dangereux. Allez voir à la prison de Beau Bassin qui s'y trouve ! Economiquement, c'est une catastrophe ! Ne venez pas me parler de gain de productivité, ne me parlez pas de juger du développement du succès économique de notre pays à l'onde de la mondialisation quand vous faites plus de 3,000 petits enfants échouer chaque année à l'examen du CPE ! »

I am not inventing the wheel. This is what we have. We are asking the 9+ students to take competitive exams.

They have not succeeded the PSAC, they have problems with numeracy and literacy, they cannot write their names, we give them the same exams as mainstream students? *Non, non*, I cannot sit down here - you are saying failing - I will fail if I keep quiet. I will fail! I will have to throw away my PhD degree if I do that. I will have to do that because I have not learned like this. I will have to throw away my MBA degree if I keep quiet today. *On ne peut pas jeter ces enfants, là où on est en train de les jeter.*

In Singapore, the school system is increasingly getting rid of grades. We have to come up with a system which empowers these kids. I have been with these kids - I am not talking just like that. Unfortunately, I cannot tell you which schools they are because I do not want the owner and the teachers of these schools to be repressed. I have been with these kids, I have met them. I have not only been at MGI and RTSS. Please, do not go under this illusion. No, *la traversée du désert de 2014 à 2019*, I know I have used it to learn from children and from their families. I have looked at their eyes and I know in those eyes, there is a streak of hope that tomorrow will be better. The 'tomorrow', we promise them, which is much more than Rs20,000 when they get 18. It is much more than those budgetary allowances. It is a hope of empowerment. It is a hope of a new curriculum. It is a hope of a new journey where we are going to hold their hands because we understand their suffering.

We are talking about all these things, and today, when I am talking to you, there is a shortage of staff in so many secondary schools. We are thumping tables over here in the month of June now when we are making provision for 200 educators now? Is the Scheme of Service ready for those educators? Jugdambi SSS: no Biology teacher; no Design teacher. I can go on with a list.

Someone sent me a message - some of you have developed this habit of reading - and they have asked me to say it here: '*Zanfan pa finn ekrir dan kaye, ki gom pe donn zot ? Ki zot pou efase ? Ekrir zot pas finn ekrir dan kaye,*' because they have had no

teacher since January. These children today are in our schools, they are our children, they are going to take NCE Examination, and they are going to take SC Examination. I do not know why the hon. Minister takes it so badly or personally when I come up with questions. Please, don't do so because we care for kids. You know, in her answer - I do not want to go again and mention exactly - 'the rectors will know how to handle the situation during shortage of teachers. *Non*, rectors can manage a few things, they cannot manage everything. What has the Human Resource Department been doing? What has this department been doing? Today, we are phoning retired educators, calling them: 'come, come!' And regulation after regulation, we have changed the recruitment criteria of educators. I have been saying to give them *un temps moratoire*. We would not have faced this situation.

I do not know what to quote and what not to quote because I feel something is amiss in our country. 2023 and yet the system of education in Mauritius is like this? *Non, ce n'est pas acceptable! On ne peut pas pénaliser nos enfants pour l'incompétence de certains. On ne peut pas le faire ! Lorsque je parle d'une aberration pédagogique, on est susceptible avec cette expression. On est en train de jeter certains de nos enfants vers un ghetto pédagogique. C'est pour cela que Sir Seewoosagur a donné l'éducation gratuite ? Pour ça?*

Let us sit together, this side and that side; these children do not know sides. These children do not know *gouvernement-l'opposition*. These children know that they need to get education. They need to get proper education. Hon. Dr. Padayachy has written it at page 45, Education, item 256 –

“Our country cannot aspire to its goals of securing a sustainable future for our children without an efficient education system.”

You are right, hon. Minister of Finance. You are right. To the one you are giving 19.7 billion, that person has to know how to manage it so that our kids do not suffer.

Moi, je ne vais pas tomber dans le débat de punaise ou pas punaise – ça non ! That is not my level. I will not talk about that. I will talk about curriculum, changes in policies, what we should do. Artificial intelligence – yesterday, you were talking about ChatGPT, these are things which interest us. I was telling a few friends on the other side that I would have liked to be lecturing in a university because many, not all, do not appreciate when you come with ideas. I would rather spend my time with the MA students, giving lectures and correcting their dissertation, preparing and empowering the students for the future of

our country so that they can become good rectors, deputy rectors, and good educators of this country. This is what we need.

You have been nice to me, thank you. This is what I had to say. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Thank you.

At this stage, I will ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Please be seated! Hon. Dr. Anjiv Ramdhany!

(10.47 p.m.)

Dr. A. Ramdhany (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to intervene on this Appropriation (2023-2024) Bill.

At the very outset, let me pay tribute to late Mr Ashit Gungah. He will be remembered as an inspirational leader with many qualities. I present my sincere condolences to his family and close relatives as the country mourns his loss.

It is with a sense of satisfaction that I take the floor to intervene on this Budget. Allow me to congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development as well as his entire team for the presentation and preparation of this Budget that has strongly anchored in this philosophy of putting the people first. I commend the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister who have, despite all odds, managed to live up to the expectations of the population and other stakeholders of our socio-economic landscape.

M. le président, la Chambre doit noter que dans le budget, il y a une allocation pour incontinence urinaire, pour certaines maladies, mais réellement, l'opposition doit bénéficier de cette allocation d'incontinence verbale.

M. le président, cette maladie est la frustration de voir ce gouvernement travailler pour le peuple.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the comments following the presentation of the Budget speak volume of the measures that have been announced. *Permettez-moi, M. le président, d'énumérer quelques reactions...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Allow him to speak, please! I want to listen to him. Continue Dr.!

Dr. Ramdhany: Un pêcheur de Grand Gaube vient de me dire, après le budget, *mo ti PMSD mai aster mone sanze kapitenn et bato parske ce governman la pe fer pu tou la kominote pêcheur*. Une dame, ex-membre de Parti Travailleiste qui vient de démissionner et il y avait les photos dans le journal tout ça, elle a dit, « *pa pu kapav continue vote sa macarena la mai boku dimounn pe dir bon travail sa governman pe fer* ». Un actuel membre de parti MMM, il dit, « *dan vilaz pena zot sans mo mem mo pa pu vot sa partie là.* » Il est membre du parti MMM.

M. le président, l'intérêt de nos citoyens demeure la priorité primaire de ce gouvernement. With regards to the investment and economic growth, it should be noted that, Mr Speaker, Sir, never before, so much effort has been laid and given to boost the production and services. I strongly believe in the soundness of boosting local primary sector 'Made in Moris' as well as the re-emergence of the tea sector. All these have a ripple effect on the economic growth and retaliate positively on the food crisis. The proposal to lower taxes on fuel products by about approximately Rs5 per litre is a welcome respite for consumers at large. Also, retail fuel, used as an input into production of other products, will help shave off a few digits off the projected inflation figures for the year 2023.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'exprimer mon incompréhension envers l'attitude et le comportement vis à vis les membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre par rapport au prix de l'essence. A ce qu'il paraît, ils sont tout à fait inconscients des défis multiples que le monde dans son ensemble a fait face durant ces dernières années. Ils font fi à la double choque de la pandémie et de la guerre russo-ukrainienne qui ont perturbé la vie de la population à travers le monde. Are they really cut off from the world, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? En effet, la réalité est que le budget leur a laissé abasourdi.

This budget has undeniably created a feel-good factor where it caters for the well-being of our young population while improving the quality of life, be it the public health services, *que ce soit le système de transport moderne*.

The Budget Speech delivered by the hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy has leveraged on the hard fought and remarkable economic fundamentals for the outgoing fiscal year to re-affirm Government's strategies and policies to maintain economic recovery and drive forward the transformation of Mauritius into a modern, sustainable and resilient country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budget lays emphasis on a more robust, resilient, inclusive, tax system, tackling economic and social inequalities and inequities. With indirect taxes accounting for the lion's share of tax revenues in Mauritius, revenue mobilisation will be enhanced through the wide array of reform measures.

Furthermore, the proposed measure to re-engineer the tax structure towards a more progressive format will greatly help in supporting revenue mobilisation efforts. We do not believe that the proposed structural changes will discourage foreigners to come and work in Mauritius due to the attractiveness of our destination that stretches well beyond tax advantages. Now, with an important segment of the population not paying income taxes that is, those perceiving an income of below Rs30,000, we believe that the revamped tax framework will help grapple with the ubiquitous brain drain issue among school leavers, whilst enticing high income foreigners citizens, through the abolition of the solidarity tax, to fill in those vacancies which require talent and know-how that cannot be procured domestically.

In continuity with the previous fiscal exercises, this inclusive Budget focuses on helping families, lower-income groups, as well as businesses, without losing focus on the country's resilience and long-term needs in an ever-changing economy and geopolitical landscape. The tax reforms are clearly the centerpiece of this year's budget.

The restructuring of the Income Tax regime is one of the key and bold fiscal reforms aimed at restoring the economic competitiveness and bringing about fairness and equity for earners. Income Tax will be imposed through the introduction of marginal step application of the rates, leading to a reduction in income tax paid. This reduction in income tax is expected to spur labour supply and increase consumption, thereby contributing to an increase of 0.6% in GDP and creating more than 16,000 jobs.

Let me come to my Constituency first and then I will go to the panoply of measures that have been announced in the budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: It's okay. Take your time!

Dr. Ramdhany: Wait, I will come with you, don't worry!

(Interruptions)

You like boys more? It's good.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now turn to what this Government has achieved and will achieve at the level of my constituency, together with my colleague hon. Avinash Teeluck. We will have projects in the constituency under the Indian Grant Assistance for the Implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects. I hereby express my gratitude and that of my constituents to the Indian High Commission and to the Government of India.

In last year's budget, the hon. Minister of Finance earmarked an amount of Rs3.8 billion in the next fiscal year to continue the National Flood Management Programme. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me start from the emergency drain project at Fond du Sac, whereby more than Rs300 m. have been earmarked and the project is near completion. The Phase 2 will soon be implemented by the NDU, under the aegis of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, hon. Bobby Hurreeram, whereby the drain will start from Morcellement Vue D'or to Grand Bay.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his initiative to implement such cut off drain and it is to be noted with satisfaction that during the last flash flood, the people of Fond du Sac did not face any predicament.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House should note before 2014, the Labour Party which was at that time *au pouvoir*, had the opportunity to build the drain but what they actually did Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we can still recall in 2013, about the disaster that was caused by the flash flood at Fond Du Sac, households affected by the rising of water, appliances damaged, old-people trapped inside and the list does not stop here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I would like to remind the House, the ex-Minister of Infrastructure even submitted a works order which never took effect. What about the safety of people of Fond du Sac? Hon. Dr. Gungapersad, what about them? Asking PQ about drain project is a good thing but why not ask question about your ex-Labour Minister, who did not do his work properly? *Mais quelle honte, M. le président.*

M. le président, l'honorable Dr. Gungapersad vient de dire qu'il a un grand respect pour l'ex ministre Ashit Gungah mais où était son respect quand il critiquait et dénigrail l'ex ministre à Fond du Sac ? Le peuple doit réaliser l'hypocrisie du membre de cette Assemblée.

Mr Balgobin : *Koz de langaz. Bez sa !*

Dr. Ramdhany There are many drain projects that will start soon at Pereybere, Grand Baie, Cap Malheureux and Poudre d'Or village. It has already reached the detailed design stage and now, we need to conduct investigative works *pour donner le feu vert pour kapav executer ce projet, M. le président.*

The NDU has already started to construct five absorption drains at Reunion Maurel that are already completed, two places at Goodlands namely, Verger Road and Ramsamy road and at Roche Terre, La Tour Road and lastly at Grand Baie. Furthermore, there is a drain project that will be implemented soon near Doorgachurn Hurry Primary School and King Savers Supermarket. The LDA and RDA have already worked in collaboration and came up with solution for a complicated drain work.

He is talking about school; he is talking about protecting the students but what about protecting the students of Doorgachurn Hurry School? What about them? You want to put a retention basin in the school, do you want this? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he was asking question about it; I have to answer. What did hon. Ms Joanna Bérenger say? *Manz bondie kaka diab ou kaka diab manz bondie* – I don't know and hon. Dr. Gungapersad, is asking about this project, but where was the Government in 2014? Where was the Government? Where was hon. Dr. Boolell?

(Interruptions)

Where did you construct this drain? Hon. Dr. Boolell?

Mr Hurreeram: *Enn bon dimoun.*

Dr. Ramdhany: At that time also, there was great issue. Then I was a private Doctor; no drain was constructed over there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and did you tell the *dada* and *dadi* –

« *Mo ti p protez misie verger la ?* »

You know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a verger over there. Who is protecting this person? *Misie la?* Who is protecting him?

Mrs Luchmun Roy: *Puchh ke batahiye* (please ask and tell me).

Dr. Ramdhany: *Puchh ke batahiye* (please ask and tell me) *dada dadi.*

Road safety measures implemented in Constituency No.6. As I already mentioned about the re-profiling of road at Roche Terre, there were more than 9 reported fatal accidents. The project has already been completed thanks to hon. Bobby Hurreeram –

thank you very much. And i have already requested the concerned authority to place a speed camera in the area for the safety of the inhabitants.

At Sottise, there was accumulation of water next to Bagueratty Store and it is good to note that we have already re-profiled the road easing the life of the inhabitants and road users.

An hon. Member: Bravo, *bien bon!*

Since a long time, we had an issue with the dangerous curve at Cap Malheureux pavilion near NHDC, where there was wastewater spillage on the road and many pot holes were present. With the help of the TMRSU, we constructed pavements, drains and even set a traffic light in this area.

A new bus lay-by will be constructed for the Jugdambi Secondary School at Goodlands for safety and security reasons by the TMRSU. Work order has already been issued and it will take approximately 3 months to complete at a project value of Rs15 m.

A bus lay-by with bus shelter has already been constructed at Grand Bay near library. Since a long time children and *dada and dadi* have been taking bus at Sunset Boulevard, which is not a safe place as there is a tendency of traffic jam. That is why we constructed the bus lay-by.

The Traffic Centre that hon. Gungapersad was mentioning about at Poudre d'Or village, is operational and even the issue of water connection has been resolved, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And soon people can use this facility. Hon. Dr. Gungapersad did not talk about his not elected Prime Minister. Did he care about the people of Poudre d'Or?

Are you going to clean the toilet, hon. Gungapersad? The District Council needs to hire someone to do the job. The *dada and dadi* did not tell you that I have even asphalted the Mandir way-in? Did they not tell you this? No! Let me tell you – Cap Malheureux bypass already completed and in good working condition. In the near future, for the safety reasons, together with the village councilors and all stakeholders, a new traffic centre at Grand Bay in front of Store 2000 supermarket will be built – future projects.

As the House may be aware of the construction of Kallee Road which connects Melville to Goodlands, it has been completed at a cost of Rs20 m. Now the NDU has already given financial clearance to construct Reservoir Road which connects Kallee Road and Goodlands and in this event, the inhabitants of Roche Terre will surely have a better bypass at a cost of Rs11 m.

Now, we talk about the amenities implemented in Constituency No 6. After due consultation with my fellow constituents, I have put up construction of mini soccer pitches around Constituency No 6. The advantages of having these mini soccer pitches are that the kids can show case –

- (a) technical ability and play longer;
- (b) enhances physical conditioning, and
- (c) improves socialisation.

Let me enumerate places where we have already implemented, ongoing and future project –

- (a) Sottise Village, mini soccer pitch already constructed;
- (b) Vale and Goodlands, funded by NDU, ongoing construction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the region of Doorgachurn Hurry Primary School at Goodlands is infested by drug users and we have started by pulling down an old building which was a haven for the drug users and even prostitution. We are constructing a mini synthetic soccer pitch at the cost of Rs12 m. and it is ongoing construction for the inhabitants nearby, for the school also, together with the hon. Avinash Teeluck.

With the help of the Indian grant, we will be implementing three mini soccer pitches at Poudre d'Or, again at Poudre d'Or, Cap Malheureux and Petit Raffray village also.

We have already started to construct a new beach soccer pitch at Pointe aux Cannoniers together with a parking space at La Plaine Coco. Since longtime, the youngsters of Pointe aux Cannoniers were waiting for the project and now it is an ongoing project, just started and will be driven by the Beach Authority. Thanks to the hon. Kavy Ramano and together with NDU, we have put up funds for the youngsters at Pointe aux Cannoniers.

Future projects on the mini soccer pitch will be constructed at St Francois, Grand Gaube and Roche Terre village. At Roche Terre village, we did not have any land to construct football ground or any sport facilities. Since it was announced in the previous budget, I talked with the Ministry of Housing, Land Use Planning, thanks to hon. DPM, to acquire land so that we can build a decent synthetic football ground for the inhabitants.

A PQ was asked by the hon. Dr. Gungapersad to the Minister of Local Government and Disaster Risk Management for the same football ground. I would advise him not to worry because I am already following the matter.

If he had an interest in the youth inhabitants of Roche Terre, he could ask this since long when he was elected in 2019. Not now in 2023! Let me tell him that the Section 8 is already being worked on for compulsory acquisition and soon it will be the State Land, and then we can construct the football ground.

Mais je me demande où étaient les questions parlementaires de l'honorable membre quand 9 personnes ont perdu leur vie à Roche Terre ? *Re-profiling of road. Where were your questions, hon. Dr. Gungapersad?* Où était-il? Ecoutez bien ! Où était-il quand son voisin à Ramasawmy Road, Goodlands souffrait d'accumulation de l'eau ? Où était-il ? Où étaient ses questions ? Où étaient les *dada, dadi* à cette époque-là? Etant le *shadow Minister* de l'éducation, où sont ses questions parlementaires sur l'éducation des enfants qui souffrent d'épilepsie ? Pas de scènes, pas d'autres, mais d'épilepsie. Où sont ses questions ? Où est la question de l'infrastructure pour l'école? Pour la sécurité de l'école, où sont ces questions-là? C'est grâce à la ministre de l'Éducation – bravo Madame - et au ministre des Finances que les parents maintenant dans ma région vont être soulagés pour la sécurité de leurs enfants.

Où était l'honorable membre quand il y avait des vols dans les lieux de cultes dans les *mandirs, shivalas, kovils* ? Où était le membre? Il pose tout le temps des questions dans le secteur de l'éducation, mais où était le membre ? Il est un député dans la région du No. 6. Il doit poser ces questions. Ce sont des questions importantes pour la Circonscription No. 6. Où était le membre quand la jeunesse de Sotisse et de Pointe aux Cannoniers voulait une place pour se détendre? Where is hon. Dr. Gungapersad when his own colleague, hon. Ms Anquetil was toxic vis-à-vis hon. Mrs Koonjoo-Shah? Are you the brother of 'Manjulika'? I do not know. I do not know!

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Ramdhany: It was a question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It was a question. I do not need to keep an eye on you by NSS or whoever. Please, do not forget, your people are disgusted by doing petitions against development every time.

Let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, when NSLD is going to be building houses, he is going to do petition. He, himself, is going to do petitions against development in Constituency No. 6.

Mr Toussaint: Shame!

Mr Dhunoo: *La honte!* Shame!

Dr. Ramdhany: Au dépens d'une communauté pour l'autre, *shame!*

An. hon Member: Shame!

Dr. Ramdhany: Où était le membre quand son propre parti chased him away in a procession of Cavadee in Petit Raffray? He showed a photo. I also have a photo in my laptop! I can see the photo. Where were you? It's not MSM, but Labour Party.

Let us come back again to the amenities on another football ground at Goodlands Belin that was in a deplorable state and the lights were not functioning. NDU funded the District Council to change the lights and the latter invested in leveling and turfing of the football ground. It is new and we are going to reopen Belin Stadium soon.

Furthermore, together with the village councilors of Grand Gaube, we are placing new lights for the football ground whereby work order has been laid out and the work has already been started. We have renovated and constructed new *pétanque* court around Constituency No. 6. Recently, we inaugurated an open gym and *pétanque* court at Fond du Sac.

Moreover, we have not forgotten about the cemetery at Grand Gaube where NDU has completed the renovation of two new pyres, shelters and water works at a cost of Rs7.5 m. Around 3 villages use this cremation ground, and it was crucial to upgrade this infrastructure. Same is being done for the cremation ground of Fond Du Sac where it has already been awarded. At Cap Malheureux, we have constructed a parking space and upgraded the *wazou khana*. I do not if he knows what is a *wazou khana*, but it was upgraded which was in a bad state.

My hon. friend, Dr. Rawoo and yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can tell him what is a *wazou khana* later on because he has confidence in you and the hon. Member.

The market fair at Goodlands is near completion which is a unique concept for market fair around Mauritius and it is the hard work of hon. Avinash Teeluck and myself. It is the hard work our late colleague Ashit Gungah and maybe my colleagues will be together in it. I will surely recommend the Government to put a statue of late colleague Ashit Gungah as a memorial over there.

A new multipurpose hall will soon be constructed at Goodlands - La Plaine Mason. The construction of the new market fair at Fond du Sac will start in the coming days, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have to acquire land from Mont Choisy Ltd - already acquired at the cost of Rs1 and clearances by LDA - to start the project. It is a Rs35 m. project including the market fair and sport amenities whereby it will benefit the region of Vale and Grand Baie also. I will also recommend giving enough transport facilities in this region so that all inhabitants can come easily.

Water connectivity issues have been resolved in Constituency No. 6. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the inhabitants of Constituency No. 6 are mostly satisfied, but nevertheless, we need to work more on the aspect of changing old pipes, asbestos or even broken pipes.

In the morning, I heard a PNQ from the Leader of the Opposition. He is talking about the building Emmanuel Anquetil. You know, we are changing all the old pipes asbestos and he wants to keep the old building asbestos over there. What is the dilemma in his head? He needs a consultation by the colleague, Dr. Jagutpal, a free consultation. The pipes have been there for more than 40 years. So, we have to change.

We have placed water tanks at –

- CEB Road of a storage capacity of 90m³ for 200 households;
- Plateau Road, Goodlands of a storage capacity of 60m³ for 100 households;
- Melville for a storage capacity of 90m³ for around 300 households to supply St Joseph and Nelson Road, Grand Gaube.

We should not forget, this region was dependent only on water tankers and it was scheduled for every 2 days.

We have connected new bore holes to the main pipes –

1. New connection from Ile d'Ambre, Grand Marais to Poudre d'Or village through containerised water pressure filter for approximately 2000m³ daily;
2. New Connection of Endemika Pépinière for a supply of 2000m³ daily to benefit inhabitants of Roche Terre and Gaube Gaube;
3. Commissioning of a new dugwell at l'Esperance Trebuchet approximately 1500m³ daily to supply Goodlands.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have changed some very old pipes and connected new pipes in the region of Fond du Sac, Morcellement Dilchand, Morcellement Purgass, Vale, Goodlands, where many houses are getting regular supply of water. CWA is changing old pipes in the whole region of Fond du Sac, Grand Gaube, Grand Baie and Camp Carol which is an ongoing project in order to replace broken pipes and asbestos pipes.

The educational system and school in Constituency No. 6, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Ramdhany, I am sure you are watching your time as well.

Dr. Ramdhany: How much time...

The Deputy Speaker: Time is over!

Dr. Ramdhany: Nearly over? Let me conclude!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sure you have confidence in me that I am not misleading you on time.

Dr. Ramdhany: No. 100%! Will you give me one minute?

The Deputy Speaker: That's why, I am enjoying that you are citing every project that has been done. It is very good. But I'm warning you so that I do not cut you right in the middle. So, try to be very concise and I am sure the Deputy Chief Whip will adjust your time later on, two or three minutes.

Dr. Ramdhany: Many other projects are there Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I will not have time. Overall, the budget aims to strike the right balance between doing enough to ease the economic situation of the most vulnerable and enhancing the position of the island as a competitive jurisdiction and attractive destination to work and live.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has presented a social and inclusive budget which addresses the current economic challenges. The Government led by the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has not only lived up to the expectation of the population but has actually exceeded those expectations. It is a budget *qui place les valeurs humaines au-dessus des autres valeurs*.

Merci, M. le président.

Mr Toussaint: Bravo!

Dr. Gungapersad: Paradis!

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much, Dr. Ramdhany.

Hon. Ramkaun, please!

Hon. Members: Lion king!

The Deputy Speaker: Let's hear him, please! Go on!

(11.21 p.m.)

Mr S. Ramkaun (Second Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the parliamentary jargon, it is a plain fact that as long as there is reciprocity between the people and the representatives under all circumstances, there is bound to be a way to dare and to care. Kudos to hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development who has, with the blessing of our visionary Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, presented the national budget for Financial Year 2023-2024 in this august Assembly on Friday 02 June 2023.

M. le président, le budget 2023-2024 traduit la vision de notre Premier ministre pour l'île Maurice moderne et équitable que lui et son gouvernement entendent bâtir pour notre nation et la génération futur. Cette volonté de faire primer la justice sociale, la méritocratie et la chance égale est omniprésente dans les précédents budgets présentés par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth lui-même ainsi que son gouvernement. Aujourd'hui en tant que Premier ministre, ces valeurs clés constituent la ligne conductrice de toute action gouvernementale. C'est le thème '*to dare and to care*' qu'enrobent les mesures que préconise le ministre des Finances dans le budget de l'exercice 2023/2024.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the population at large acclaim the budgetary proposals especially at this juncture when the country is facing hard times of COVID-19 and ongoing devastating effects of Ukraine-Russia war. Today, I seize the opportunity to echo the appreciation of the population of some multitude of positive measures proposed. The hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has focused on the three pillars which he describes as –

1. strengthening of the foundations of our economy;
2. continuing the transformation of Mauritius into a sustainable economy, and
3. building the future we deserve.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, among all the key measures from these aforementioned pillars, I wish to highlight certain key factors which will contribute in a great way towards not only creating a resilient economy but a resilient and sustainable economy.

One of the positive aspects of this budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the announcement of a number of initiatives towards gender equality. Women are a key pillar of our society and many measures have been taken to connect women to opportunities including listed companies to have a minimum of 25% women on their boards. The

initiative of the Bank of Mauritius to develop a carbon trading framework for both the blue and green credits is an excellent measure. To succeed, this will now need to be designed and implemented well through the participation of relevant stakeholders. Be it schools, hospitals and coastal infrastructures, all investments are key to better prepare us against unforeseen risks.

The announcement of public sector measures will infuse our economy with renewed vitality. This Government will continue to foster a trusted collaboration with the private sector to implement these laudable measures. Citizens' constructive engagement is very essential for this to happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many schemes for the Agro-Industry has been extended and others amended for the crop sector to flourish. Naming only a few, we have –

- (i) VAT refund schemes for planters.
- (ii) Extension of grants for sheltered farming.
- (iii) Subsidy on fertilisers; subsidy on potato seeds to SMEs and cooperatives.
- (iv) Increasing grants on equipment for Small Planters.
- (v) Increasing winter allowance for tea growers and maximum grant to micro garden.
- (vi) Subsidy on seeds for cabbage, *calebasse*, pumpkin, cucumber and carrots.
- (vii) Grants for SMEs and cooperatives engaged in potato processing.
- (viii) Setting up of seedling production.

Many more measures have been provided for the livestock sector, sugar sector, DBM Schemes and the blue economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in short, this Government has at heart all our people: our kids, our youth, schoolchildren, street children, senior citizens and even to be born babies. These measures clearly demonstrate the willingness of this Government, naming a few, as I said –

- (i) a minimum of 25% of women on the boards of listed companies;
- (ii) provision of CSG child allowance of Rs2,000 monthly for some 48,000 children aged up to 3 years;
- (iii) enhanced allowance of Rs15,000 for children with special needs;
- (iv) a grant of Rs20,000 for youngsters reaching 18;

- (v) increasing the Basic retirement pension to Rs12,000;
- (vi) subsidy of Rs4.5 billion to maintain the price of LPG, flour and rice.

M. le président, sous le leadership de l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, ce pays a connu un niveau de développement infrastructurel fulgurant. L'économie s'est démocratisée comme jamais auparavant permettant la création d'emplois et de richesse nationale. Nous demeurons aux yeux du monde un exemple à suivre en termes de *ease of doing business*, de transparence et de stabilité économique et politique.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, economic development is programmes, policies or activities that seek to improve the economy well-being and quality of life of a community and is therefore, a must for the well-being of our citizens. As a Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituencies No. 4 and 5, a long list of projects have already been undertaken in both constituencies and I will not take the time of the House to list them all.

Any Mauritian citizen coming back home from abroad after some four to five years can witness the extent of development taking place in every corner of Mauritius. The landscape along the motorway M1 has now changed completely to start with the new access road to the airport. The new link road from La Vigie to Beau Songes, Wooton flyover, grade separated junction at Phoenix roundabout, flyover at Hillcrest Quatre Bornes, new grade separator at the level of Caudan to access the city centre, flyover at Quay D completed and flyover at Terre Rouge roundabout which has already been started. Thank you, hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development, hon. Hurreeram.

We cannot, of course, forget our new transportation system, the Metro which has completely transformed the landscape from Curepipe to Port Louis and Rose Hill to Réduit. Engineers will all agree that the only solution to remedy daily traffic jam coming into and exiting Port Louis was mass transportation. Other national projects are the construction of the bridge of the Grand River North West to link Coromandel to Sorèze, A1-M1 Link Road and many others with the aid of the Government of India. All these projects taking place all around us have helped so many workers to get a daily livelihood in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic. I am sure that we, Mauritians, now clearly understand the objective of undertaking these projects.

So as to compare like with like, I have done some homework to see what infrastructural development have inherited the inhabitants of Constituency No. 5 by the previous Government under Navin Ramgoolam as ex-Prime Minister and two senior Ministers of the Labour Party Government in this Constituency.

(Interruptions)

In 2005-2006 Budget where hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth was the Finance Minister, a historic decision was made to make Mauritius a duty-free island. In the same budget, a comprehensive study of land drainage was tabled with 326 flood-prone sites identified, namely –

- (i) flooding at Chitrakoot;
- (ii) flooding at Vallée des Prêtres ;
- (iii) Cité La Cure, among others.

Other projects approval –

- (a) swimming pools at Flacq and Rivière des Anguilles.

Mauritius was effectively turned into a duty-free island but after the departure of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Government left nothing concrete to be undertaken. All projects stayed same.

In 2006-2007 Budget, the famous National Residential Property Tax and Campement Lease Site were introduced. In the Budget 2007-2008, the land based oceanic industry was introduced. However, nothing was realised. In the Budget 2009-2010, other historic decisions were taken namely, the creation of additional stimulus package to improve the quality of life of Mauritians but our citizens will judge if their lives had changed or the lives of *petits copains* had changed.

In the same year, the project of Harbour Bridge was approved. Other projects approved were the bus way infrastructure, Terre Rouge-Verdun Link Road, Verdun-Ebène road, East-West connected. Members on the other side of the House know how well and how many of these have been completed practically. The Terre Rouge-Verdun link road constructed on unsuitable base material collapsed even before the opening of the M3 motorway. Similarly, huge investments in the Pailles, Ring Road which collapsed just after the opening, thus, part of the Ring Road could not be opened to traffic up to now.

The 2010-2011 Budget provides for the access road to Jinfei, Triolet Bypass and Pamplémousses-Forebach dual carriage way. It is worth mentioning here that 500 acres of land taken from the poor planters were put at the disposal of Tianli, a Chinese promoter who did not even kickstart the project though huge investment by the then Government were done to connect utilities and access roads to this zone.

The 2011-2012 Budget mentioned the Harbour Bridge, dreambridge which has stayed as dream. 39 m² decent housings for every family, none of them had been constructed. The 2013-2014 Budget mentioned grade-separated junction at Phoenix and construction of tunnel through Signal Mountain to Champ de Mars but the citizens of Mauritius sent them to *la poubelle de l'histoire* even with the 40% and 40% during the 2014 elections.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, projects for Constituency No. 5 completed under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth after 2014 elections are innumerable. Just to name a few –

- (i) 500 acres of land from Tianli taken back and 175 acres given to Jinfei for development and 325 acres taken over by Landscope, the 325 acres given to local promoters for converting these into storage area for the Freeport. In the same line, a third lane was constructed to ease access and exit from the port area.
- (ii) Construction of an area health centre at Baie du Tombeau.

Thank you hon. Dr. Jagutpal for the trust you made. A long awaited project was the housing a rented building where not all facilities could be provided and more pitiful was the state of the rented building. The then Government had a special love for *petit copains* and also housed the District Courts of Pamplemousses and Rivière du Rempart. Pamplemousses Police station, Triolet youth centre, all in buildings of *petit copains*. It is only after this Government came in power after 2014 that new buildings were constructed to house the Pamplemousses Police station and District Courts were housed in Government buildings. Here I have to thank our Prime Minister and hon. Minister Stephan Toussaint for providing funds and following closely the execution of Triolet Multipurpose Complex, the Triolet arena for the residence of Triolet and nearby regions.

Same is the expected completion by the end of this year. This Government walks the talk and not as the previous Government putting a sign board for the construction of a multipurpose complex at the eve of 2014 elections. Can the previous Government talk of improving the quality of life of Mauritian citizens?

More than 150 families had their houses demolished by cyclone Hollanda of 1994. The then Government with Sir Anerood Jugnauth as Prime Minister constructed *longères tôle* for these families. After many of these *longères* were damaged with time, reconstruction of these houses after several rainy seasons went into the deaf ears of the ex-Prime Minister and two senior Ministers. When we came in 2014, with the blessing of our

Leader and Prime Minister, hon. Soodesh Callichurn and myself as PPS, provided all the necessary facilities for these families and decent houses at Résidence Tulipes were constructed in Baie du Tombeau.

So many projected completed in both constituencies, I said, I want a time in the House but our constituents will give testimony for works undertaken.

A total of 120 road projects for a total contract value of Rs260 m., amenities for more than Rs49 m., and drain projects of more than Rs606 m. had been completed as at 07 June 2023.

However, the effect of climate change has affected a lot the lives of our citizens. This Government has already completed several major projects. At Belle Source, as stated by the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development yesterday, the construction of an attenuation basin and proper concrete drains to channel the run-off water to Rivière Citron. Another attenuation basin and proper concrete drains being constructed at Pointe aux Piments and the surplus water will be channelled to the nearest outlet, that is, the sea.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as responsible Members of this Government, we are ensuring that these problems are not shifted to other areas. Other projects in the pipeline are: the drain at Kestrel Lane, Terre Rouge, attenuation basin at Baie du Tombeau and drains to the nearest outlet, without forgetting, of course, Morcellement Raffray, Cité La Cure, Cité Roma, Riche Terre and Vallée des Prêtres where some projects have already been completed and others are at tender stage at the Drain Infrastructure Company Ltd. Many other amenities have been completed and we are ensuring mini soccer pitches and health tracks in nearly all villages where land is available.

Coming back to the Budget measures, these have received acclamation from our mandates, particularly the following –

- interesting home loans payment scheme;
- writing-off of all loans made by DBM more than 20 years ago to planters, fishermen, small entrepreneur and those who are deceased;
- all items of musical instruments to be exempted from VAT;
- reduction in the price of fuel from Rs74.10 to Rs69 per litre;
- increase in the allowance paid to all appropriate and monthly pension to our senior citizens by Rs1,000 per month;
- minimum salary payable to be revised to Rs15,000;

- actual price of *pain maison* maintained at Rs2.60;
- actual price of *bonbonne de gaz* of 12kg being maintained at R 240;
- free education from kindergarten to university levels to all attending public institutions,
- all costs relating to the treatment of cancer attained children to be met by the State till recovery.

A million of facilities, incentives and grants have been provided to planters, fishermen, women entrepreneurs, tradesmen, self-employed, medium and small scale entrepreneurs, individuals covering all sectors as appropriate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, tourism is a fast expanding industry in Mauritius and Rodrigues. This sector needs the involvement of each Mauritian in one way or the other; the human warmth of the Mauritian hospitality, our cultural shows and celebrations, our cuisine, our multifaceted traditions and all our positive qualities already testimony of our richness as a nation. It is our duty to make the *séjour* of each and every tourist very memorable, loving and everlasting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know there are many hon. Members who will intervene after me, among others many will intervene as demagogue. *Nos adversaires font exprès de ne pas reconnaître, mais cette ascension inégalée de notre République s'est faite dans une conjoncture exceptionnelle. Personne de l'autre côté de la Chambre n'a eu à diriger un peuple pendant une pandémie couplée d'une situation économique chamboulée à cause du conflit russo-ukrainienne.*

Notre Premier ministre a fait preuve d'audace quand il fallait prendre les décisions en faveur de la santé et la sécurité de chacun de nos citoyens. Il a fait preuve de compassion quand il s'est assuré que durant les moments d'un grand défi, ceux au bas de l'échelle puissent continuer à vivre décemment. Il a fait preuve de vision quand il a veillé à limiter au maximum les pertes d'emploi injustifiées et à maintenir notre industrie et notre économie en vie. Face à l'adversité, notre Premier ministre a surtout su préserver les acquis des mauriciens tout en protégeant le droit de tout un chacun, de continuer à songer à un avenir meilleur. C'est cela le progrès inclusif dans un esprit de continuité.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before ending, allow me to convey on my behalf and on behalf of the people of Constituency No. 5, our congratulations to hon. Dr. Renganaden Padayachy, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development for having presented a top class budget for this Financial Year 2023-2024, under the prime ministership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

The population knows by now who is committed and who is not. The hon. Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development has presented his fourth budget, he said, but with the blessing of the Prime Minister and with our blessings, there are many more budgets to come in this august Assembly for approval. We are sure, not like others have mentioned. They are here for the 20 years. I remember on the first day when we were in this august Assembly, they told us to say *gagn to mask pou protez zot*. I think they will keep it for themselves. This Government will be here and will be here even for the next mandate. I think this will be all from me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you very much. Hon. Dhaliah, please.

(11.47 p.m.)

Mr R. Dhaliah (Second Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I thank you for the opportunity given to me to contribute to the debate.

M. le président, c'est avec un profond sentiment de fierté et d'enthousiasme que je me présente devant vous, aujourd'hui, pour vous évoquer les superbes réalisations de ce gouvernement. Je suis heureux de vous partager les résultats incroyables obtenus et notre engagement à combiner le bien-être social et la prospérité économique. Jamais dans l'histoire du pays, la population n'a autant été au centre d'un budget, et, M. le président, c'est cela la vraie démocratisation de l'économie. La distribution de la richesse est faite de manière équitable, et non d'une démocratisation qui ne bénéficie que d'une partie de la population.

Le budget présenté par le ministre des Finances témoigne de notre engagement inébranlable en faveur du bonheur de notre population et du progrès pour notre pays. Il reflète la vision et la détermination de notre gouvernement à construire une société qui profite de la réunion harmonieuse, de la réussite économique et du bien-être social. Les mesures économiques et les initiatives sociales sont les deux piliers fondamentaux qui soutiennent le fantastique succès de notre gouvernement.

M. le président, avant de poursuivre, je voudrais exprimer mes félicitations au Premier ministre pour sa vision humaine qui a toujours inspiré une stratégie judicieuse pour promouvoir le progrès économique de notre nation. Son sens de l'équité et de la croissance a eu un impact durable sur la croissance de notre pays. Et je suis sincèrement ému par son engagement inébranlable en faveur du progrès de chacun d'entre nous. Nous devrions tous être reconnaissants de son leadership qui a permis à notre pays de connaître une période de richesse et d'inclusion.

Au ministre des Finances, je dirais encore une fois bravo et je lui exprime ma sincère gratitude et mon appréciation pour les efforts remarquables qu'il a déployés dans la présentation du budget national. Je reconnais sa planification minutieuse et son utilisation judicieuse des ressources budgétaires. Son examen détaillé des différents besoins et priorités du pays témoigne d'une grande conscience des difficultés auxquelles nous sommes confrontés. Je n'en doute pas que ses efforts aideront notre pays à se développer, à prospérer et à s'épanouir davantage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, rarely in recent years have we seen a budget that's focused to the point and that addresses the pertinent issues of our time. The budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can be categorised into four main parts –

- 1) Alleviating the sufferings of the less fortunate;
- 2) Focusing on urgent measures to tackle the effects of climate change;
- 3) To move towards sustainable energy production, and
- 4) To revolutionise agricultural practices to mitigate impact of world affairs on our food security, especially with the Russo-Ukrainian conflict not ending soon.

M. le président, permettez-moi tout d'abord d'évoquer des réalisations qui sont bien réelles et qui ont transformé notre pays. Notre gouvernement a accompli des choses que l'on croyait impossible. Nous nous sommes engagés sur la voie de la transformation en nous attaquant de front aux obstacles et en saisissant les opportunités dès qu'elles se sont présentées. Nous avons consacré toute notre énergie et d'innombrables heures à la construction d'une base solide pour un pays florissant et à la défense des droits de nos citoyens.

Grâce à nos efforts constants, nous avons connu un formidable essor économique qui a même dépassé nos projections. L'économie de notre pays a prospéré et atteint des sommets. Nous nous sommes imposés comme un modèle de développement et de richesse sur la scène internationale avec un taux de croissance inimaginable qui a dépassé les prévisions les plus optimistes. Cette réussite témoigne à elle seule la pertinence des politiques économiques engagées et du formidable esprit d'innovation de notre gouvernement mais nos réalisations vont bien au-delà de la simple croissance économique. Nous avons donné la priorité au bien-être de nos concitoyens en veillant à ce que leurs besoins soient satisfaits et que leurs rêves soient à portée de main. Notre engagement en faveur du bien-être social s'est traduit par des avantages tangibles pour tous qu'il s'agisse

de revaloriser les prestations ou d'investir dans l'entrepreneuriat local. Nous avons consolidé le filet de sécurité pour les plus vulnérables d'entre nous en leur apportant le soutien qu'ils ont besoin pour mener une vie digne.

M. le président, voyons maintenant si vous le voulez bien les politiques économiques qui ont rendu ce succès possible. Nous avons mis en place des plans qui ont stimulé notre économie, revitalisé les industries et encouragé les investissements. Notre gouvernement a créé un climat de confiance qui soutient l'innovation, encourage l'esprit d'entreprise et permet de favoriser et d'encourager les investissements qu'ils soient nationaux ou étrangers. Ces mesures économiques ont produit des résultats remarquables. Des taux de croissance économique plus élevés ont permis d'accroître les possibilités d'emploi pour nos concitoyens. Nos recettes ont augmenté de façon spectaculaire ce qui nous a permis d'investir dans des secteurs vitaux tels que les infrastructures, l'éducation et la santé. Nous avons su créer une atmosphère encourageant l'expansion commerciale permettant aux entreprises de prospérer et de contribuer à la richesse générale de notre pays. Je dois ici souligner que nos politiques sociales ont posé les jalons d'une société inclusive plus juste et solidaire.

En termes de réduction des inégalités et d'aide aux personnes dans le besoin, nous avons réalisé des progrès significatifs. En rendant plus accessible les programmes gouvernementaux de soutien aux petites et moyennes entreprises, nous avons aussi donné aux entrepreneurs les outils dont ils avaient besoin pour accompagner leur croissance et aussi contribuer au progrès de la société dans son ensemble. Nous avons lancé des programmes qui accordent la priorité aux besoins des membres les plus vulnérables de notre société. Nous avons veillé à ce que l'aide leur parvienne en améliorant les critères d'éligibilité au registre social. Nous restons fidèles à notre engagement de veiller à ce que chaque citoyen ait un endroit où se sentir chez lui.

En outre, nous avons mis en place de vastes programmes d'aide aux personnes âgées afin que ce soit reconnu leur contribution essentielle à la société et d'assurer leur bien-être après des années de dur labeur. Notre administration a fait preuve d'une extraordinaire réactivité face à l'augmentation du coût de la vie, reconnaissant les difficultés rencontrées par nos citoyens dans tout le pays. Nous avons agi de manière décisive et rapide pour protéger leur pouvoir d'achat, ne négligeant aucune piste dans notre quête d'un avenir meilleur. Notre priorité absolue a été de veiller à ce que les familles soient protégées du fardeau des coûts croissants. Nous avons mis en place avec détermination des mesures fortes qui offrent une assistance et un soutien aux personnes qui luttent contre les pressions financières de la vie quotidienne. Nous avons directement réduit les difficultés

auxquelles les ménages étaient confrontés en augmentant des prestations et en mettant en œuvre des interventions ciblées ce qui a favorisé un sentiment de sécurité et de stabilité.

M. le président, nous avons toujours maintenu notre engagement en faveur d'une croissance durable. Nous sommes conscients que le véritable progrès consiste à donner à nos enfants des perspectives significatives ainsi qu'une richesse économique.

Nous avons intensifié nos efforts pour créer une atmosphère propice à la croissance durable et avons placé la création d'emplois au premier plan de notre action. Nous avons semé les graines d'un avenir plein d'opportunités en soutenant les petites entreprises locales et en procurant des moyens aux entrepreneurs en herbe. Nous avons renforcé le filet de sécurité pour les plus vulnérables d'entre nous dans notre quête d'une société qui vit de pouvoir, de compassion et d'objectif.

Avec empathie, nous avons concentré nos ressources et nos efforts pour veiller à ce que personne ne soit laissée pour compte. Nous avons tendu une main secourable aux personnes qui se trouvaient dans des situations difficiles en leur apportant les soins et l'assistance dont elles avaient besoin pour surmonter l'adversité. Ces actes témoignent avec évidence de notre engagement inébranlable à construire une société fondée sur la bienveillance et la détermination. Nous avons élaboré une stratégie globale qui répond aux différents besoins de notre société en alliant la complexité à un dévouement sans faille.

La croissance spectaculaire de notre économie montre à quel point nos efforts ont été difficiles et persistants. Il est indéniable que ces efforts ont produit des résultats exceptionnels permettant à notre pays d'atteindre des niveaux de développements et de richesses inégalées jusqu'à présent. Notre économie débordante d'énergies a progressé en registrant un taux de croissance stupéfiant de 8,7 % au cours de l'année écoulée; un exploit inégalé depuis plus de 35 ans. Grâce à ce résultat extraordinaire, nous figurons désormais parmi les 20 économies à la croissance la plus rapide au monde. Ce qui nous confirme le potentiel à l'intérieur même de nos frontières. C'est la preuve des stratégies dynamiques et créatives que nous avons adoptées et qui ont propulsé notre pays dans une nouvelle ère de vitalité économique et d'opportunités.

Notre volonté inébranlable de progrès et de prospérité a non-seulement stimulé la croissance économique mais a également apporté de réels avantages à notre population. Nous avons efficacement surmonté le difficile problème du chômage en relâchant son emprise dans notre pays. Grâce à des interventions ciblées, nous avons créé un environnement propice au développement de l'emploi et de la stabilité financière.

En outre, l'augmentation de nos exportations peut être attribuée à nos efforts continus pour élargir notre champ d'action et pénétrer des nouveaux marchés. Nous avons libéré tout le potentiel de nos secteurs promouvant la croissance économique et améliorant notre réputation internationale en établissant des partenariats commerciaux, solides et en tirant parti de nos atouts.

M. le président, notre gouvernement a fait preuve d'un dévouement sans faille à la gestion appropriée de notre dette nationale. Nous avons pris des mesures qui ont permis de gérer avec succès notre endettement en assurant sa viabilité et en minimisant son impact sur les générations futures. Notre stabilité financière a été protégée par cette approche prudente qui a également jeté les bases de notre réussite future. Ne perdons pas de vue le tableau d'ensemble lorsqu'on nous repensons à ces réalisations. Notre détermination à maintenir ce rythme et à viser toujours plus haut reste entière.

L'intensité de nos efforts doit nous motiver à rester flexibles et adaptables, prêts à affronter de nouveaux obstacles et exploiter des possibilités imprévues. L'attitude dynamique qui est en constante évolution de notre gouvernement, apparaît clairement dans la mise en œuvre de toute une série d'initiatives économiques. Notre administration a fait preuve de ténacité dans sa poursuite de la préservation et de l'accélération de la trajectoire de croissance de notre pays en faisant preuve d'une grande vigueur. Nos politiques économiques ont mis un accent stratégique sur la stimulation de l'investissement et l'attraction de l'investissement direct étranger qui a été l'une de leurs principales pierres angulaires.

Avec une volonté implacable, nous avons mis en place un cadre qui encourage les investissements nationaux et étrangers favorisant ainsi l'expansion économique et la création d'emplois. Nous avons fait de notre pays un lieu attrayant pour les investisseurs en adoptant des réglementations qui facilitent les affaires créant ainsi une multitude des perspectives de croissance économique.

M. le président, durant cette dernière décennie, l'augmentation des exportations a joué un rôle crucial dans le développement de notre économie. Nous avons vigoureusement encouragé et soutenu les entreprises à accéder aux marchés internationaux, leur permettant ainsi de présenter leurs biens et services à un public plus large. Nous avons dégagé de nouvelles opportunités de croissance grâce à des alliances stratégiques à la diversité des marchés et à l'innovation en matière de produits générant ainsi de la résilience et favorisant la réussite économique.

Nous avons engagé une somme considérable de R 3 milliards pour soutenir les efforts des agricultures, des planteurs, des éleveurs et des pêcheurs en reconnaissance du rôle crucial qu'ils jouent pour assurer la sécurité alimentaire. Nous sommes reconnaissants de l'engagement inébranlable de ces personnes à contribuer à nourrir notre pays. Nous assurons leur réussite pérenne en renforçant la sécurité alimentaire et en encourageant les pratiques agricoles durables en leur fournissant les outils et l'assistance dont ils ont besoin.

Les effets directs et perceptibles de nos politiques économiques montrent à quel point elles sont positives. L'augmentation des investissements nationaux et internationaux a donné vie à notre économie en créant des emplois et en stimulant l'activité économique. Nos exportations ont grimpé en flèche créant de nouvelles opportunités de croissance et permettant à notre pays de jouer un rôle majeur sur la scène internationale.

Nous avons adopté une stratégie globale qui facilite la procédure de demande de programmes d'aide gouvernementale en reconnaissance du rôle crucial que joue les PME et les PMI dans la croissance économique et la création d'emplois. Nous avons éliminé les obstacles et rationalisé les processus afin qu'ils soient plus simple que jamais pour les petites entreprises d'utiliser des ressources et l'aide offerte par le gouvernement.

Notre campagne actuelle, prime à l'emploi, démontre une fois de plus notre volonté d'investir dans nos travailleurs. Avec un sens aigu de la responsabilité sociale, nous avons lancé ce programme pour encourager l'embauche de femmes et de jeunes. En offrant une incitation non-négligeable de R 15,000, nous ouvrons la voie à de nombreuses possibilités en incitant les entreprises à valoriser la diversité, à donner du pouvoir aux jeunes et à promouvoir une croissance économique inclusive. Cet afflux d'aide ne donne pas seulement des chances aux gens de trouver un emploi ; il améliore aussi leur bien-être général et renforce le tissu social de notre communauté.

M. le président, notre gouvernement s'est engagé à favoriser l'inclusion sociale et la cohésion en plus de ces mesures économiques. En plus d'atteindre des niveaux plus élevés de durabilité au sein de notre société, nous sommes profondément convaincus qu'il faut générer plus de solidarité, d'équité et de progrès.

Nous avons pris des mesures pour maintenir le pouvoir d'achat de plus de 350,000 personnes, notamment en augmentant la pension de retraite de base et en mettant en place la CSG pour les retraités.

En outre, nous avons supprimé la taxe municipale sur la résidence principale pour environ 110,000 familles, ce qui a permis d'alléger la pression sur les foyers dans tout le pays.

Notre gouvernement est bien conscient de l'importance d'investir directement dans le bien-être de nos concitoyens. Pour aider les membres les plus vulnérables de notre société et réduire les inégalités, nous avons pris des décisions courageuses. Nous veillons à ce que la charge soit répartie plus équitablement en adoptant un régime d'imposition progressif et une réforme fiscale globale. Ainsi, en accordant aux enfants qui luttent contre les maladies graves nécessitant un traitement à l'étranger une aide essentielle.

En outre, nous nous engageons à fournir à chaque enfant atteint d'un cancer des soins et un soutien complet par le biais de programmes gouvernementaux. En outre, notre gouvernement relève la barre de l'éligibilité au registre social permettant ainsi à un plus grand nombre de personnes de bénéficier des programmes d'aide sociale.

Nous accordons une priorité absolue aux besoins des personnes les plus démunies de notre société en veillant qu'elle ne soit pas oubliée. Nous continuons à mettre l'accent sur le logement abordable et nous déployons des efforts considérables pour faire en sorte que tout le monde ait accès à un logement.

Now, let me come, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the effect that this Budget manages a beautifully, balanced socialist approach and economic growth. As former President Obama said –

“A budget is more than just a series of numbers on a page. It is an embodiment of our values. We feel that helping those at the lower end of the social ladder is the intrinsic value of this government.”

As this Budget was presented, a lot of critics spoke about the social spending will be akin to a less balanced budget. However, Nobel Prize winner and professor of Economics, William Vickrey, did mention how insane it is to balance a budget. The priority of the moment is to increase purchasing power and few would dare say that this Budget will not or hasn't achieved that objective.

For those who know the basic GDP equation, allow me to now explain how the measures mentioned above will strengthen the economy and pursue growth. The lowering of tax and Government's aid to lower strata of the society will allow more consumption with its spill over effect on the economy. The measure will have little impact on inflation as consumers have been prioritizing consumptions since the COVID-19 situation.

Incentive measures for agriculture and manufacturing - the measures announced will have 2 effects, namely imports substitution by encouraging more local growth, and

secondly, a boost in exports since there are incentives to produce and export. The effect will be to reduce the current account deficit.

Boosting of Government projects - Government's spending is a major component of GDP. Therefore, the project will have a positive effect on growth. Funds will be injected in the economy. Construction companies will continue to employ people, and therefore, there will be a positive effect on real economy. There will also be the economic effect of infrastructure projects like better traffic management with the extension of the metro line and for road upgrades.

Allow me to say a few words about the competitiveness of our global business sector. We are committed to show that Mauritius is a clean jurisdiction and one of substance. The new laws with regard to AML CFT will make sure that Mauritius remains a jurisdiction, in line with FATF guidelines. Secondly, the tax rebate of 95% will make Mauritius the most interesting destination for funds. Furthermore, with UAE, no longer being a tax-free jurisdiction, Mauritius can take advantage of that new change and become even more prominent as an IFC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in conclusion, the achievements of our caring and responsible Government are both numerous and significant. We have boldly – yes, boldly - protected households, fostered economic growth and enhanced social well-being. Our commitment to economic measures that adds to the quality of life to our people is a roadmap that we have and that we shall always uphold in this government.

Long live the Republic of Mauritius. Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you! Hon. Ms Ramyard, please.

Ms Ramyard: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now move for the adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Prime Minister seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday, 09 June 2023 at 4.00 p.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: Have a safe trip back home. I do not see any Adjournment matters.

At 00.17 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday, 09 June 2023 at 4.00 p.m.