



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 03 FEBRUARY 2020

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 02 of 2020

Sitting of Monday 03 February 2020

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology

- (a) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Tertiary Education Commission.
- (b) The Private Secondary Education (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 30 of 2020)

B. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

- (a) The Income Tax (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 25 of 2020)
- (b) The Mauritius Revenue Authority (Alternative Tax Dispute Resolution) (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 26 of 2020)
- (c) The Income Tax (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 27 of 2020)
- (d) The Economic Development Board (e-Commerce Scheme) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 28 of 2020)

C. Ministry of Social Integration, Social Security and National Solidarity

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit for the Special Fund for the Welfare of the Elderly for the year ended 31 December 2014. (In Original)
- (b) The Report of the Director of Audit for the Special Fund for the Welfare of the Elderly for the 18-month period ended 2016. (In Original)
- (c) The Report of the Director of Audit for the Special Fund for the Welfare of the Elderly for the year ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)

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

- (a) The Revision of Laws (Revised Subsidiary Legislation of Mauritius) (Volume 1 to 6) (Supplement – Issue 4) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 24 of 2020)
- (b) The National Agricultural Products (Amendment) Regulations 2019. (Government Notice No. 29 of 2020)

E. Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation

The Annual Report of the National Youth Council for period 01 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.

F. Ministry of Health and Wellness

The Reports of the Director of Audit for the National Agency for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Substance Abusers for the years ended 31 December 2012 and 31 December 2013. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**NOVEL CORONAVIRUS – SAFETY & SECURITY MEASURES**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (by Private Notice) asked the Minister of Health and Wellness whether in regard to the novel Coronavirus detected in Wuhan City in the People's Republic of China, he will state -

- (a) the safety and security measures and surveillance system put in place in the Republic of Mauritius as precautionary measures against any risks;
- (b) the number of times the multi-sectoral team has met and when the Rapid Response team has started implementing its services, and
- (c) the number of persons suspected of presenting the symptoms thereof who can be accommodated at the New Souillac Hospital.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, I wish to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for addressing his first Private Notice Question on such a sensitive issue which has an international dimension and is of great concern of one and all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House is aware, over the past few weeks, the world has witnessed an outbreak of the novel Coronavirus and this has quickly escalated into a public health emergency of international concern, with severe repercussions worldwide.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this health related threat should cut across party lines.

In reply to this PNQ, I seize the opportunity to inform the House and the public at large of the various measures which the Government is taking as a direct response to the global threat.

Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed I reiterate that it is our duty and responsibility as a Government to continuously inform one and all of the precautionary safety measures that are being implemented to protect our nationals, in Mauritius and abroad. The objective is to circumvent the backlash of a potential psychosis that people would otherwise succumb to.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to emphasize that we have been at the forefront and we have acted proactively to ensure public safety and well-being. And I should reaffirm that we are fully satisfied with the emergency response and the degree of preparedness of Mauritius to face the risks of a potential outbreak of the virus.

I would wish to reassure the House that our response strategy has been developed in line with the recommendations of the World Health Organisation (WHO) following thorough consultations with all the relevant authorities and stakeholders concerned.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all throughout, we have operated under the able guidance of the hon. Prime Minister who has chaired two inter-ministerial committee meetings to take stock of the prevailing situation and to take decisions as appropriate.

I would also have to place on record the invaluable support provided by my colleagues in our coordinated effort and also the World Health Organisation through its representative in Mauritius as regards the implementation of the recommendations outlined by the International Health Regulations Emergency Health Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as part of our overall response plan, we have also put in place a communication strategy to continuously inform the population through the media of the prompt preventative actions taken by my Ministry. The objective is to galvanize all efforts and ensure a concerted, proactive, and coordinated approach to effectively deal with this global health emergency and protect our population.

All throughout, we have been guided by the need to be transparent, visible and forward looking in our approach.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (a) of the question, I wish to reassure the House that all the required safety, security and surveillance measures have been reinforced by my Ministry as soon as the first alert was reported by the Chinese authorities.

For the benefit of the House, I am enumerating some of the main measures already in force -

Surveillance at SSR International Airport

- All passengers arriving from China are systematically being screened.
- Body temperature of passengers is taken individually in the corridor as they disembark from the plane.
- Body temperature is again taken by the Thermal Detector at the Public Health Desk.
- A dedicated desk has been set up at the Public Health Counter for all passengers arriving from China.

- Public Health Inspectors enquire about the health status of each and every passenger arriving from China.
- Health Declaration Forms are being verified by the Sanitary authorities at the Airport.
- The Airport Medical Post is on alert on a 24h basis.
- A dedicated and fully equipped ambulance service is on stand-by at the airport on a 24h basis to cater for any emergency.
- All health care providers at the Airport are fully equipped with personal protective equipment. Furthermore, protective equipment is also available in case there is any need to transfer suspected cases to Souillac Hospital.
- Exit screening of body temperature is being carried out invariably for all passengers travelling back to China.

Surveillance at the seaport

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the seaport, the following measures are in operation -

- Passengers travelling by cruise ships and private yachts are automatically subjected to body temperature check both on departure and arrival. The same measures are also applicable for staff members of cruise ships.
- Surveillance is being carried out for all crew members of cargo ships, including fishing vessels.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition, all passengers travelling from China are invariably and systematically put on surveillance (quarantine or isolation) for a period of 14 days. These passengers are closely monitored.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (b) of the question, I wish to inform the House that a Multi-Sectoral Team and a Rapid Response Team have been in existence for more than a decade within the structure of the Public Health Division of my Ministry. As such, following the outbreak of the Coronavirus, the Inter-Sectoral Team has so far met on two occasions. The Rapid Response Team, on the other hand, is on alert at all times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would wish to note that the two meetings were held jointly by my Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Furthermore, the Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service chaired a Coordination Meeting with officials of my

Ministry and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure a harmonized approach by all stakeholders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, furthermore, on Friday 31 January and Sunday 02 February 2020, the hon. Prime Minister chaired two consecutive High-Level meetings to take stock of the measures already in force as well as to take additional measures to contain the risks of the virus reaching our territory. During these two meetings, the World Health Organisation representative in Mauritius reaffirmed that the measures being taken by the Government of Mauritius are fully in compliance with WHO norms and standards.

Mr Speaker Sir, may I, at this stage, recall that, in April 2019, Government brought important amendments to the Immigration Act (Act No. 3 of 2019) to widen the definition of “prohibited immigrant”. These amendments were criticised by the then Opposition, who considered them undemocratic and unfair.

I wish to inform the House that pursuant to section 8(1)(n) of the Immigration Act, the hon. Prime Minister has the power to declare persons or classes of persons as prohibited immigrants if their presence in Mauritius is likely to be prejudicial to public health. This is the very situation in which we find ourselves with the Public Health Emergency of International Concern which the Novel Coronavirus represents.

Unlike countries like Singapore which had to enact regulations to deal with this public health emergency, this Government, with the foresight of the hon. Prime Minister, was ready. On 02 January 2020, the hon. Prime Minister, acting on reliable information and advice, took appropriate action under section 8(1)(n) of the Immigration Act to deem as prohibited immigrants passengers travelling from China or persons who, 14 days, prior to their arrival in Mauritius, had travelled to China.

As regards part (c) of the question, I wish to inform the House that the facilities for Isolation and Quarantine at Souillac Hospital were put in place in 2010 and were then designed to accommodate some 16 persons. These facilities have now been upgraded by my Ministry to accommodate up to 36 persons. Provision is also being made for an additional of 20 beds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is leaving no stone unturned to protect our citizens from such unwarranted risks that may be unleashed by such Public Health Emergency of International Concern. Thank you.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has been very extensive. I take it for granted that additional time will be allocated to us in a spirit of fairness. Now, I thank the hon. Minister, but I didn't expect him to be provocative. There was no need to introduce any element of political partisanship in the reply that he had given.

Let me impress upon the hon. Minister, upon the House, that this outbreak has reached a stage of pandemic and I would have expected Government to have reacted promptly. Can I ask the hon. Minister why is it that the Rapid Response Team did not react promptly? There was a late onset, there was no distribution of N95 masks to personnel working at Points of Entry, I mean, the sea and the airport, no protective dress, no goggles, no dedicated ambulance to ferry suspected cases, the number of patients who do not display signs and symptoms, and besides there are many carriers who have mixed at large with the community. Is he aware of this? Has there been a proper medical contact of all these people? Because these people have travelled to Mauritius and they have come since almost three weeks and, up to three weeks, nothing has been done and nothing effective has been done.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not know where the hon. Leader of the Opposition is living. We should all be aware that the outbreak started as from 06 January. Can you imagine, as from 20 January, we have already put in place all our mechanism to response for an emergency service. Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever there is a pandemic outbreak, we have to take three measures. One of the measures is the screening at the airport because the virus is not in Mauritius, the virus is abroad. It is the way we contain the disease in Mauritius. This is what we have been doing. We have also been doing the surveillance. Do you know that more than 3,000 passengers have been under surveillance for the last one month? This is an ongoing process. This process is being done by the Public Health Authorities. The Sanitary Division does that. The hon. Leader of the Opposition travels frequently. You have a yellow card. Before coming to Mauritius, in the flight, you have to fill up that yellow card and, in that yellow card, you have to write where is your destination in Mauritius, whether you are suffering from any disease. And do you know, it is in the Public Health Act, if you don't write this properly, you commit an offence. Measures are taken for the screening - proper measures. In the world, we are one of the countries which have acted proactively. It is not only so. Our surveillance is being done at a regular interval. All passengers coming to Mauritius, they have surveillance done on the next day that they reach

Mauritius, on the fourth day, on the eighth day, on the twelfth day. Besides this, the other surveillance is being done on the phone.

(Interruptions)

I wish they give me the opportunity. I am a new Member of the National Assembly and they are senior Members. That is the way they are reacting. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have all the measures. The WHO has already validated our systems of functioning and they have given us credit. We have been given credit for all the facilities we are making available. I think that answers the question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Dr. Boolell: Maybe the hon. Members, Ministers, you! So, does it mean that we have to allow him to sleep for another fortnight? When was the outbreak detected? On the 6th! And when did they start to react? On the 20th! On the Opposition side, we stated to the nation that measures had to be taken and we even impressed upon the hon. Prime Minister to set up the High-Powered Ministerial Committee. He failed to do so and the multi-sectoral committee met only twice and, in the meantime, there was delayed response from the Rapid Response Team, with the consequence that there are many people shedding the virus in the community.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who is a doctor, should know what the incubation period is. He should know that if somebody has contracted the virus, it will take only 14 days to have the manifestation. We are abiding to the Guidelines of the World Health Organisation. No country in the world has admitted patients as from the 21st.

We are the first country which has already put the quarantine measures. I think this is aberrant to see that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is putting such an argument. I am sorry to say that, taking him as a doctor, he should know the public health measures whenever there is an epidemic.

(Interruptions)

He should know how measures should be taken. He should know also what are the precautionary measures, what is important is the screening and surveillance, and now, at this point in time, not to make politics, not to make demagogy. I believe that they don't have the virus of demagogy, because the virus of demagogy is going to be very effective, and you have seen in the previous session, and I believe that they act responsibly. We are all here to

inform the population, to clarify - this is an important issue - and not to make a demagogy out of a subject which has an international concern.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hon. Minister aware that he should have been the last person to say that there is compliance to biosafety and biosecurity measures? Do you know that the hon. Minister went to the airport, he paid a visit there and he was not even wearing the protective dress? What he did was wearing his Pierre Cardin suit to take the temperature of patients.

(Interruptions)

Is this the job of a Minister? Is this the job of a Minister, to take the temperature of landing passengers? And he is here to teach us and to tell us what is the incubation phase? Is the hon. Minister aware that since three weeks, prior to the lunar festival, there are many passengers from China who have landed in Mauritius? Can I ask him what has been done in respect of contact tracing and medical surveillance? *Niet!* Nothing! Let me tell him, the way he is acting - can I ask him whether he is the type of person who is acting like an arsonist with a tinder box in one hand and a box of matches in the other hand? Is this the policy of Government? Is this the Government which is going to solve this problem?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I have to make an emphasis that in the airport, whatever be the protective you have to use is a mask. This is the only way. I have to remind the House the transmission of the virus is by droplets. Droplets means whenever you are speaking, whatever is coming from your mouth and if anybody else inhales that. This is the protective measure you have to take, and you do not have to wear the gown or any other suit. The protective measures have been taken. You know, you can't make people afraid at the airport and start wearing all types of gowns.

In Mauritius, one point has to be noted. We have not yet had one single case of the Coronavirus. There is no case of the Coronavirus. And why make this become an alarming situation that, as from today, people will start creating havoc? This does not mean to be responsible. This does not mean that you are acting as per what has been recommended by the WHO.

My second point, again, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are doing the screening. If ever the Leader of the Opposition is pointing out that passengers have been travelling for festive reason.

(Interruptions)

They have been travelling, yes, but there is surveillance. We already should have so many travellers having contracted the virus! Unfortunately not, because our surveillance system is working. Fortunately, there has been no passenger having the virus because we have a proper surveillance. For all passengers, there is surveillance. It is not new for us, for the Government to act now when the virus has come as a pandemic, as an epidemic issue.

Dr. Boolell: Fortunately, unfortunate Minister. Can I come to (c). Hon. Minister, when a patient is admitted, do we have the reagent to check the virus? *Niet!* No reagent is available, no PCR.

Secondly, as to the isolation ward, can the Minister tell us whether the isolation ward is a, what we call, negative pressure accredited ward? And he should know that if it is not a negative pressure accredited ward, therefore, it is not free from germs and the Government has to assume its responsibility - because as far as I know, and I would ask him again. Will he be able to inform the House whether the ward is an accredited negative pressure ward? If no, then you have to assume your responsibility.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, the WHO guidelines set out precautionary measures.

(Interruptions)

This is a new virus. In China, the virus was detected on 06 January, last month. So, you have to get time to get the reagents. It is a new reagent. And do you know that Mauritius has already received the reagent?

(Interruptions)

You have to be updated. The reagents are already available in Mauritius. The tests can be done as from today. We are already having the reagents.

Now, I will answer the second part of the question, the negative pressure room that should be available. This is in line. None of the countries in the African region is having such a room, except in Reunion Island.

(Interruptions)

It is going to take time for that. The Ministry is already working on the project to have the negative pressure room in our hospital.

Dr. Boolell: Can I take it for granted that we don't have an accredited negative pressure ward, which means that the risk of infection is very high? And I lay the blame, fair and square, on this Government, and there is Coronavirus in this country and they have to assume their responsibility.

(Interruptions)

Where is the answer to (c)? I am still waiting for the answer to (c). Where is the answer to (c)? He has chosen to run away, he has chosen not to reply and he has chosen, as a Minister, to fail, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I have to mention here, in the WHO recommendations, there is no imperative need to have an emergency, urgent procurement of negative pressure accommodation for those suffering from the nCoV virus. It is more important to address our issues in screening and in surveillance. No quarantine measure in USA, India need negative pressure room. Why should we say that the negative pressure room is so important? At this stage, I still consider it is important to see that the screening is being done and, again, the surveillance is done perfectly.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the Minister to see to it that all information is relayed to the public. From the replies the hon. Minister has given, it stands to reason that Government has not lived up to the expectation of the people. They took time to set up the Rapid Response Team. They took time to set up the High-Powered Committee and they have done nothing in an effective manner. Can I impress upon him to make up for time lost, to address the matter in an effective and reliable manner? Because it is the interest of the public that we have to serve, and it is the interest of the public that is at stake here, Mr Speaker, Sir. And as far as (c) is concerned, again, the public has to know that he has not replied to the question.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jagutpal: I again stress on the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I have addressed all the questions and I have put it a point. Already, the Ministry has been communicated with a very broad approach; public is very much aware what is the situational analysis in Mauritius; all information is being given in a transparent, straightforward and in an active manner. The Mauritian public is fully aware what is the status in Mauritius. I, again, reassure the House, I, again, reassure the Mauritian public that we do not have any Coronavirus disease in Mauritius and, for that, we have to thank the coordinated approach of

the Government, of all the stakeholders, of the personnel working in the Ministry in order to combat the entry of the virus.

Dr. Boolell: Can I impress upon the Minister, if he is really caring of medical personnel and paramedic personnel, can he see to it that they have the N95 protective mask, that they have protective dress and wear, that the reagent is available? The reagent is not available. And can I ask him to reply to the question (c), which he has failed to do so. In so doing, can I reiterate what I have said? This Government is putting at risk the health status of the people of the Republic of Mauritius, and I will say it again, this Government has failed to live up to the expectation of the nation.

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, I will reassure the House that we have more than 8,000 masks in the Ministry of Health. We have already procured 5,000 masks and we have already ordered 7,000 masks. It is not the first time that we are having an outbreak of an epidemic disease. We know it with Ebola; we know it with Dengue. We know it, we have a huge experience and how should we face it. The country is prepared to face such a situation. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should know. Recently, we had the Ebola outbreak; before, we had the MERS-CoV and not far away, we had the SARS virus also. They are supposed to know very well; they should know better what is happening. The personnel is fully equipped. We have all the equipment for them, and I think that the personnel of the Ministry of Health is doing a wonderful job and they are doing all whatever should be done at the screening and the surveillance level. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, before I give you the last question, a few Members have expressed their wish to put a few questions. If you allow, please.

Dr. Boolell: Can I impress upon Government, since this is an issue that is cross-cutting and is of national and international interest, I would have expected Government, as a responsible Government, to invite Members of the Opposition to sit in the Committee because this is an issue that cuts across political barrier, but they have chosen to make it a partisan issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

Mr Armance: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to know from the Minister whether he is aware of the report of the University of Southampton stating that Mauritius is the third country most exposed, receiving airline travellers from 18 high-risk cities in China.

Has he dared to find out how many Mauritians are exposed in China regarding the virus and if there is any Mauritian who has already contacted the virus in China?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am fully aware of the report of the Southampton University, classifying Mauritius as the third most vulnerable country in Africa. Obviously, we will be vulnerable because we have an open economy. We have flights everywhere; the volume of passengers travelling, coming to Mauritius and back is huge. Obviously, we do not need any study to know that. They should congratulate us. Even though we are among the most vulnerable countries, yet we have not a single case of Coronavirus in Mauritius. I also have to add here that all measures have been taken, especially to screen passengers at the airport and the port. Now, I also have to address that I have to table this document to see what are the different equipment for the personnel that we do have in the Ministry of Health. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Armance: On a point of order. My question was about how many Mauritians are abroad in China and if ever there is any Mauritian contaminated. He has not answered my question, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: This is not a point of order. Please, resume your seat. Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, if I can take this question. Can the hon. Minister give us an update on Mauritian nationals living in China and more precisely in Wuhan? What is the situation for these Mauritian nationals?

Dr. Jagutpal: About the Mauritians living in China, we have around 180. This has been informed by my colleague, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Now, about the Mauritians in Wuhan, there were 20 Mauritians in Wuhan. Out of them, three were already in Mauritius. Twelve Mauritians have decided to come to Mauritius. Arrangements have been made through the French Embassy and those 12 Mauritians are already in France where they are going through the quarantine and then they will be coming back to Mauritius in two weeks, hopefully.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know from the hon. Minister what are the special security measures taken at the Souillac Hospital, which has now become a centre for

Government, especially in terms of security and equipment - there are new equipment - but also the use of Souillac Hospital as an eye hospital? It was being used as an eye hospital. What are the new measures taken for patients who are not going to Souillac Hospital now and especially the security measures for the personnel and the people of the region in Souillac?

Dr. Jagutpal: Mr Speaker, Sir, Souillac Hospital has been validated to accommodate patients suffering from any contagious disease from a long time back. In 2014, the hospital was already validated by the WHO to have all the precautions and equipment needed to face any epidemic disease. Now, at the Souillac Hospital, there is one floor where there are 16 beds. Those 16 beds are meant for isolation. Isolation means for treatment as well. Out of them, there are acute resuscitative apparatus for four patients. Now, we have additional wards. As the situation is going to be presented, we are going to have other wards for accommodating patients. Besides this, if ever there is need to convert the whole hospital as an isolation quarantine hospital, the Ministry will move to do so. I have to remind Members that in such a situation, what is more important is how to isolate patients. Not everybody is going to need acute resuscitative measures. But, if one day, we have to give appropriate treatment to a patient, we have to ensure that patients are safe. There is no moving out of the patient and those patients are fully isolated. This is the most important thing and this has been done, is being done at Souillac Hospital.

Mr Speaker: Last question, Leader of the Opposition!

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister to escalate and step up biosecurity and biosafety measures? Because as matters stand, Mauritius has been categorised as a very high-risk country. We know very well also that the outbreak has now become pandemic.

Dr. Jagutpal: In Mauritius, the Government has taken all the measures. I could remind the Members that yesterday, the Prime Minister had an inter-ministerial, a high-level committee, where important measures have been taken to ensure the safety of the Mauritian population. I reassure again that Government is taking all measures to screen passengers who might be or who are suspected to have the virus. I think Government is doing a very good job and all measures are being implemented in a widespread intention.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTIONS

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(12.13 p.m.)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS - MOTION OF THANKS

Mrs M. A. T. Diolle (Fourth Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the motion standing in my name on the Order Paper, namely -

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

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to, first of all, congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the National Assembly. The Speaker has the responsibility to maintain order and to ensure fairness during debates. It will be your impartiality during the five years to come that we ensure and determine how constructive the debates of this House will be. I have no doubt that the reach of your experience and your sense of fairness will luster this House.

Des débats, M. le président, que nous l'espérons, se feront dans le respect de l'esprit de notre rôle de parlementaires qui est de débattre et de légiférer pour la construction d'une nation mauricienne et d'un pays arc-en-ciel.

I wish to sincerely thank the hon. Prime Minister, Leader of the House, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and the Members of the Parliamentary majority for having entrusted to me the presentation of the motion of thanks in response of the Presidential Address. It is indeed a great honour bestowed on me.

C'est pour cela, M. le président, si vous me le permettez, je commencerai de façon peu conventionnelle. Je voudrai prendre quelques minutes, si vous me le permettez, pour

expliquer mon engagement, mon parcours et les choix que j'ai faits et qui m'ont amenée aujourd'hui à me tenir debout devant vous en tant que membre de *l'Alliance Morisien*.

When I look back, Mr Speaker, Sir, I think that my journey has been fuelled by this one quotation by Voltaire that I have learnt at a very early age in my French Literature classes. It is not our condition, Mr Speaker, Sir, but the caliber of our soul that makes us happy. Mr Speaker, Sir, this quotation is everywhere to be found in my life, be it about me on Facebook, on my WhatsApp status, on a piece of paper in my purse. Why is it so, you may ask? Simply because every day I want to be reminded that what makes me happy as a human being, as a politician is what I do to nourish my soul.

Je ne suis pas parfaite, M. le président, je ne recherche pas à l'être. Croyez-moi. Je célèbre cette imperfection chaque jour que Dieu fait. La vie serait tellement ennuyeuse si j'étais parfaite et que je ne commettais pas d'erreur. Imaginez-vous, je n'apprendrais jamais. Si c'était le cas, je serais incapable de compassion, M. le président. Les gens qui sont parfaits sont souvent incapables de compassion. Comment comprendre ce qu'on ne connaît pas. C'est mon imperfection qui me permet aujourd'hui de faire preuve d'humanité. Je ne veux pas être cette personne qui monte sur ces grands chevaux et qui se permet de traiter ses adversaires de pourritures ou qui ose même juger ses adversaires. Je pense profondément qu'être parfait c'est une maladie, une maladie de rigidité, une maladie qui s'approche de la mégalomanie. N'oublions pas qu'être parfait veut aussi dire qu'on ne fait pas grand-chose dans la vie puisque nous rejetons tous ceux qui souffrent, qui sont différents parce que nous souffrons nous-mêmes d'un complexe de supériorité. Comme l'enseigne l'essence de la pensée politique de Saint Augustin, qui lui-même se voulait en contradiction avec les penseurs de la Grèce antique, qui eux disaient que l'homme d'État devait être un homme de virtuosité exceptionnelle, qu'il devait être d'une rigidité exceptionnelle. Saint Augustin, lui, pensait bien différemment. Il pensait que c'est notre compassion et c'est notre condition humaine qui nous permet de gérer à bien la cité. Je me nourris chaque jour de mes rencontres, discussions et échanges avec celles et ceux qui pensent autrement et qui font des choix différents. Je les respecte parce que je sais que sur terre nos cheminements ne seront pas les mêmes puisque, comme me l'a enseigné l'honorable Gano, *each and everyone of us has his own sole agenda*. Chacun d'entre nous avons notre *sole agenda*, M. le président.

Mon parcours et mon engagement depuis l'âge de 13 ans m'ont poussé à faire des choix, comme je vous l'ai dit, et j'ai intégré *l'Alliance Morisien*. Pendant que d'autres jeunes voulaient découvrir le monde et s'amuser, en troisième année d'université, j'ai fait un

plaidoyer à ma mère pour qu'elle me permette d'intégrer un groupe des jeunes universitaires qui vont en Inde, justement pour se confronter à la pauvreté et faire du travail social. Ce qu'on appelle de l'humanitaire. Je serais toujours reconnaissante de cette expérience. Premier vacance hors du pays, sans toilette, sans salle de bain, sans électricité, à vivre avec des villageois, tout en essayant de les enseigner l'Anglais. Beaucoup se sont découragés, mais pour moi, c'est une révélation. Ces genres d'expérience m'ont permis de comprendre que le bonheur ne se trouve pas dans les choses mais dans nos expériences, notre vécu et nos relations humaines. Mais ce sont nos valeurs, notre idéal de ce que doit être notre pays et notre société qui devrait guider nos choix en tant que politicien, M. le président, et non pas notre intérêt personnel ou même notre mépris de nos adversaires. C'est pour ça que je fais un appel à nos adversaires et quand je parle d'adversaire, je ne parle pas que de l'Opposition Parlementaire, je parle aussi de cette opposition extra-parlementaire pour qu'ils reviennent à de meilleurs sentiments et de s'engager dans une opposition plus constructive.

M. le président, la vie est une grande opportunité. Chaque jour que Dieu fait c'est une opportunité de faire ce qui est juste. Depuis très jeune, j'ai suivi un idéal tout en recevant des coups terribles mais cela ne m'a jamais empêché de continuer mon chemin. Une opposition - et comme je vous le répète, je parle aussi d'une opposition extra-parlementaire - qui se contente de critiquer ce qui est invisible est loin d'être une opposition constructive. C'est une opposition, je dirais stérile. Je dirais même une opposition qui s'enterre dans des contradictions tellement profondes qu'elle souffre d'incohérence. Un signe d'un mal être profond, j'imagine, M. le président. Un exemple, boycotter un discours programme puisqu'on dit que les résultats n'étaient pas valides. Mais comment se fait-il qu'on boycotte un discours programme mais qu'on continue à bénéficier des privilèges parlementaires alors qu'on estime que les élections n'étaient pas valides tout en dénonçant les privilèges des membres de la majorité. Cela me fait réfléchir, M. le président.

Pendant ce temps, nous, les membres du gouvernement, nous travaillons. On ne recule devant rien pour faire avancer les choses. Mon expérience dans l'humanitaire en Ethiopie a été un tournant dans ma détermination de lutter pour éliminer toutes formes de violences à l'égard des femmes et notamment des jeunes filles. J'ai été confrontée à la vulnérabilité féminine à un niveau inimaginable. Je travaillais pour une ONG qui œuvrait dans le domaine des droits de l'enfant. J'étais confrontée au quotidien à des jeunes filles qui ont été kidnappées, violées, vendues, abusées mais aussi rejetées par leur famille parce qu'elles ont été violées. Des jeunes filles qui souffraient de *fistula* parce qu'elles ont

accouché beaucoup trop jeune et qu'elles n'avaient pas droit aux suivis médicaux appropriés. La tâche n'était pas facile mais chaque jour qui passait, chaque cas où je contribuais même de façon minime à résoudre un problème ou à soulager une famille me remplissait de joie.

M. le président, cet engagement a suivi son parcours, a grandi, a changé de stratégie et aujourd'hui, elle nous mène dans l'Assemblée Nationale. Un choix que j'assume et que je considère comme le bon. Il est vrai que l'honorable Ganoo, moi-même de d'autres membres de notre parti étaient dans l'Opposition. En tant que telle, nous faisons notre travail qui était de proposer constructivement des solutions à des problèmes qu'on considérait étant majeure. Personnellement, je me suis beaucoup engagée pour les femmes victimes de violence domestique et j'ai formulé plusieurs critiques à l'encontre du système de *Protection Order*. Une semaine après certaines critiques que nous avons fait, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth et son équipe avaient mis sur pied un comité interministériel justement pour étudier la question et revoir le système. Aujourd'hui, dans le programme du gouvernement, cette question est *high on the policy agenda*. Je cite section 136, M. le président –

“Government will be relentless in its fight against all kinds of violence, including domestic violence.”

Et cela se concrétise par la section 137 –

“A high-level committee chaired by the Prime Minister will formulate a new strategy to eliminate gender-based violence. The legal framework will be strengthened and a new national sensitization campaign implemented.”

M. le président, la Tania Diolle qui était dans l'Opposition l'année dernière ne peut être que satisfaite de cette évolution sur la question. Je voudrais même faire quelques propositions pour qu'on introduise dans le nouveau *legal framework* le concept de *femicide* comme l'a déjà fait d'autres pays avant. Il faut aussi légiférer je pense et je crois fermement pour que le *duty to report* devienne une provision du *Domestic Violence Act*.

L'autre section qui aujourd'hui me satisfait dans le programme du gouvernement est la section 138 –

“Victims of domestic violence and their dependent children will be provided with access to a wider range of help and support, including shelters, professional counselling and legal assistance.”

Section 138 me tient particulièrement à cœur, M. le président. N'oublions pas que l'année dernière, l'État mauricien a reçu énormément de critiques du comité CEDAW pour avoir été incapable d'investir comme il le fallait dans les infrastructures et autres services pour permettre aux victimes de violence domestique de sortir de leur mutisme et d'avoir l'aide approprié face à un drame qu'elle subisse au quotidien.

M. le président, je suis persuadée, je sais que ce gouvernement a la firme intension de pallier à des décennies de manquement dans ce domaine.

Je fais confiance au Premier ministre, et je sais que cette promesse deviendra une réalité beaucoup plus vite qu'on peut l'imaginer. C'est pour cela que la population lui a offert un autre mandat après tout. Personne ne peut nier le sérieux du Premier ministre dans son travail, son engagement pour la cause féminine.

M. le président, l'autre point sur lequel j'étais très à cheval, en tant que membre de l'Opposition est l'unité nationale, l'importance de reconnaître notre histoire, c'est-à-dire d'honorer la mémoire de nos ancêtres. M. le président, la Tania Diolle qui marchait pour le comité du 01 février du diocèse l'année dernière pour que le musée intercontinental de l'esclavage devienne une réalité, ne peut pas être plus enchantée, quand on voit les avancées sur ce dossier. Une entité privée a été mise sur pied pour la gestion et la conceptualisation de ce musée. Le *soft launch* se fera incessamment.

Notre invité d'honneur pour la commémoration du 185^{ème} anniversaire de l'Abolition de l'esclavage, le ministre des Arts et de la culture, Abdoulaye Diop a dit une chose au sujet de notre ministre des Arts et de la culture, qui m'a frappé et en même temps réconforté pour l'avenir. Il a dit que c'est le ministre des Arts et de la culture qui est l'agent de la cohésion sociale. Je ne peux pas être plus d'accord avec son Excellence Diop, et on ne peut pas imaginer mieux que notre collègue, l'honorable Avinash Teeluck, pour remplir cette lourde responsabilité. Il n'hésite pas à faire appel à ses collègues, l'honorable Sandra Mayotte ou moi-même pour l'organisation du 185^{ème} anniversaire de l'Abolition de l'esclavage. Il nous écoute, il agit efficacement, il fait l'effort de comprendre. N'est-ce pas l'attitude que nous recherchons cher ministre, qui a la lourde responsabilité de gérer notre diversité sociale et culturelle.

N'oublions jamais, M. le président, qu'on dit que le monde a besoin de plus d'artistes et de poètes. J'affirme que nous en avons besoin. On oublie trop souvent que les émotions que nous véhiculons, en tant que peuple, a besoin d'une forme d'expression. C'est cette

expression qui nous permet d'avancer, de réfléchir, de comprendre ce qu'on ressent, de rire de nos défauts et au final, d'avancer. Ouvrir la voie à l'expression de nos cultures, nos souffrances, nos états d'âme et nos frustrations, fera de nous un grand peuple. Une société, qui a l'opportunité de se confronter à ses contradictions à travers l'art, est une société qui cultive son humanité et la tolérance. Honorable Avinash Teeluck, nous comptons sur vous et votre sensibilité pour aider notre société à avancer et vous pouvez toujours compter sur nous, comme les jeunes Mauriciens le disent : *'Touzour nou pe la.'*

M. le président, si vous me permettez, j'irai sur un sujet plus sérieux idéologiquement et profondément. M. le président, je vous parlais d'une Opposition stérile plutôt, une Opposition qui souffre d'une maladie profonde. Je pense avoir compris les sources de ce mal-être. Je soupçonne que c'est une question de positionnement idéologique. Que ce soit le Plan Marshall ou les différents rapports de la Banque Mondiale sur la pauvreté, ils font tous référence au *Household Budget Survey* qui a été fait par *Statistics Mauritius* en 2012. Ce *survey* donne une indication numérique et non qualitative de la situation de la pauvreté à Maurice. Il est important de garder ça en tête. Donc, en 2012, il y avait 9.8% de la population qui vivait avec un revenu de moins que R 5,652 par mois.

Quand on parle de pauvreté à Maurice, M. le président, si on parle de *absolute poverty*, on parle de 10,000 maisons, 10,000 *household*, comme on dit, ou 34,000 personnes. Si on parle de pauvreté absolue et relative, on parle de 33,600 maisons, ce qui veut dire 122,700 individus. M. le président, ce chiffre ne serait pas le même si nous n'avions pas un Etat de providence, en anglais ce qu'on appelle le *Welfare State*. Comme on dit, tout ce qui est *social protection, free health services, education and free transport*, selon la Banque Mondiale et les études qui ont été faites sur ce sujet, ont joué un rôle important à ramener le chiffre de la pauvreté beaucoup plus bas qu'il ne devrait être. Par exemple, *according to the World Bank Reports on inequality*, et je me réfère au rapport de 2018, *without these services poverty would have showed to more than three times its level. In 2012, the proportion of poor household would have been 38% instead of 9.4%.*

Ce qui veut dire que c'est les services sociaux, c'est notre Etat providence, c'est notre *Welfare State* qui fait le taux de pauvreté à Maurice reste sous contrôle. Ce sont des chiffres que j'ai, moi-même, cités, et tant que membre de l'opposition extra parlementaire, lors de plusieurs conférences de presse. Je me suis engagée dans plusieurs plaidoyers pour que le gouvernement agisse. Une situation qui me préoccupait particulièrement, était la vulnérabilité

des femmes *cleaners* et le chômage parmi les jeunes. Trois mesures phares, M. le président, ont été introduites par le gouvernement précédent entre 2017-2019.

Ces mesures ont permis d'attaquer les problèmes d'inégalité par la régularisation de la situation des femmes *cleaners* et d'autres métiers précaires par le *National Remuneration Board*, la revue du *National Remuneration Board*, mais aussi à travers ce qu'on appelle des *income transfers* qui sont le *negative income tax* et l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse. Ce sont ce qu'on appelle les *income transfers*, qui aident et continueront à aider, à faire reculer l'écart entre les riches et les pauvres. Pour citer la Banque Mondiale sur ce qu'on appelle le *Social Safety Net Programmes*, qui, si on veut dans des termes plus simples, ce sont les pensions et autres mesures gouvernementales pour transférer l'argent à la population. *Social Safety Net Programmes create opportunities, empower families to invest in human capital and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty and in many cases create resilience so that families can manage risk, cope with shocks, and continue to invest in their children's education.* Un exemple concret de ce genre de politique qu'on appelle le *Social Safety Net Programmes* c'est la pension de vieillesse.

M. le président, depuis 2015, je faisais appel au gouvernement pour que l'humain soit au centre des politiques publiques, mais aussi de notre développement. Vous savez, toute personne, qui prône ce genre de politique, est normalement inspirée par les écrits d'auteur tel qu'Amartya Sen, qui parle d'oublier les indicateurs économiques, mais de se focaliser sur le développement humain. Il est un pionnier, un révolutionnaire, il a eu le Prix Nobel. Il a le mérite d'avoir influencé les chefs d'Etat tel que Jacinda Ardern, aujourd'hui qui prône que le développement humain doit être au centre de toutes les politiques publiques. Certains chez nous citent ces grandes idées et concepts sans connaître leur origine ou même l'essence de leur philosophie. Je pense que ça veut simplement dire que ces idées ont fait leur chemin et qu'aujourd'hui beaucoup sont sensibilisés quant à la nécessité pour les gouvernements d'encadrer le développement afin de cesser l'exploitation de nos populations.

M. le président, les mesures que j'ai mentionnées plus tôt démontrent que la population, malgré tout, a affaire à un gouvernement qui fait du bien-être et du confort de la population passer avant les indicateurs économiques. Il y a eu beaucoup de scepticisme quant à ces mesures sociales. Et aujourd'hui, en lisant le *Cabinet Paper*, vendredi, j'apprends que le *second Report of the National Wage Consultative Council on the impact of the introduction of national minimum wage* fait état du fait qu'à aucun moment, par exemple, le *minimum wage* a impacté l'inflation. Donc, quelque part ça démontre que, adopter les mesures sociales,

faire l'humain passer avant tout, n'est pas forcément contreproductif, ou ne va pas forcément contre l'économie. Tout cela dépend de la façon dont on gère les choses. Et, en effet, la cerise sur le gâteau a été l'introduction du *Workers' Rights Bill* par notre collègue, l'honorable Soodesh Callichurn, qui, quand l'honorable Ganoo, moi-même, et les autres membres du parti étaient dans l'Opposition, avons applaudi cette mesure. Alors que nos *senior citizens* bénéficient d'une part plus juste de la richesse, ils ont contribué eux-mêmes à créer, à travers l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse, les jeunes de notre pays peuvent retrouver le goût du travail pour faire avancer notre société et notre économie. Le *Workers' Rights Bill* redonne sa dignité aux travailleurs, le *minimum wage* redonne sa dignité aux travailleurs. Gardons en tête, M. le président que les travailleurs c'est nous les jeunes après tout.

Je pense que cette tournure foncièrement socialiste que le gouvernement a pris, je pense que c'est ça qui fait que l'opposition se retrouve en crise identitaire idéologique. Comment quand on se dit un parti qui milite pour les droits des travailleurs opposait la liste de politique que j'ai ouvertement listé surtout quand on a une histoire que est née dans la lutte des travailleurs et qu'on emmène une loi du travail totalement opposé à ce que je viens de vous décrire M. le président. Ce qui fait qu'on ne représente plus les travailleurs.

Mais est-ce qu'ouvertement on peut afficher son positionnement ? Non. N'oubliez pas que l'identité de ces partis vienne de cette lutte. Donc, je comprends la contraction à laquelle souffre l'opposition. Et comme je vous ai dit plus tôt, je ne parle pas que des partis politiques, je parle aussi de ce contre-pouvoir qui a longtemps oublié c'est quoi un contre-pouvoir et qui est devenu une opposition. Je pense qu'il y a un manque d'inspiration, M. le président. Malheureusement, nous les membres de la majorité, nous subissons le dénigrement personnel, comme je le disais plus tôt des critiques sur ce qui est invisible puisqu'il sera difficile de critiquer ce qui est visible.

Si vous me permettez, M. le président, je vais utiliser une expression bien de chez nous pour illustrer ce que je constate et observe depuis que je suis au gouvernement. Forte heureusement pour la population mauricienne, nous ne sommes pas de *l'homme ek femme des zes, ki zis faire conférence de presse* comme le dit si bien une personne chère à mon cœur. Nous sommes dans l'action et dans le concret, nous avançons de jour en jour. Nous connaissons nos responsabilités et nous les assumons.

M. le président, si vous me permettez, je parlerai de l'environnement. En ce qui concerne l'environnement, je ne peux pas être plus enchantée que quand je vois le sérieux

avec lequel l'honorable Kavi Ramano gère ce dossier. Je constate et j'observe que l'honorable Ramano est un convaincu, comme il le dit souvent, l'écologie et la préservation de notre environnement sont des valeurs que nous devons inculquer à notre population, des valeurs que nous devons vivre au quotidien. Mon éveil écologique ne date pas d'hier ou même de cette après-midi, M. le président. Ce n'est pas la montée du mouvement écologique parmi les jeunes européens qui m'inspire, mon éveil écologique a débuté sur les bancs de l'université pendant mes cours de philosophie politique. Deux auteurs m'ont marqué, le philosophe Rabindranath Tagore et le penseur politique. Ces deux hommes dans leur pensée et écrit ont donné une dimension incontournable à la nature. En fait, il nous faut comprendre que le développement intégral de l'être humain ne peut se dissocier de la nature et du travail de la terre. Nous ne réalisons pas que notre bien-être est dépendant d'un écosystème. Cet écosystème nous permet de nous développer au maximum. Si nous commençons à menacer les différentes composantes de cet écosystème, nous menaçons notre survie, M. le président. C'est pour cela, que Rabindranath Tagore reste un philosophe cher à mon cœur. Il m'a appris à travers ces écrits à rester connecté avec ma sensibilité humaine et grâce à lui j'ai compris que mon confort spirituel et intellectuel dépend de la préservation de la nature. *To quote Rabindranath Tagore in Gitanjali –*

“The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures.”

Cette ligne nous rappelle le fait que nous faisons partie de cet écosystème. Comme je vous disais le monde a besoin plus de poète, parce que les poètes nous font voir les choses différemment et nous ramènent à notre sensibilité humaine.

C'est avec plaisir, M. le président, que je constate qu'à la section 32 du programme du gouvernement cet aspect de l'environnement a été pris en considération. Je cite section 32 –

“Government will further upgrade primary school infrastructure to accommodate additional art classes, playgrounds and a green and endemic corner to inculcate in our children the culture of conservation and protection of the environment.”

M. le président, il y a de quoi être alarmé quand on voit l'ampleur que la menace du changement climatique prend. Cette éveil écologique s'est transformé au fil du temps en inquiétude. Une inquiétude qui demande des mesures fortes, mais aussi un changement de mentalité drastique. Cette nouvelle décennie qui débute en 2020 sera le témoin de plusieurs bouleversements au niveau international. L'appel du mouvement international des jeunes

environnementalistes qui se préoccupent de leur future mené par Greta Thunberg mais aussi la tenue de la COP 26 alors que lors de la COP 25 les gouvernements ont été incapables de trouver un consensus sur plusieurs domaines incluant les émissions de gaz à effet de serre alors que si on implémentait les recommandations d'expert, on serait toujours à 38% de trop d'émission de gaz, et maintenant si on n'applique pas les recommandations d'expert, imaginez ce qui va arriver, M. le président.

N'oublions pas aussi qu'il y a un retard et que l'utilisation de *fossil fuel* ne cesse d'augmenter et que l'adoption des énergies renouvelables est en retard. Fort heureusement le programme du gouvernement prévoit déjà que –

“Government will implement measures to protect our oceans, its marine resources and our beaches.”

Dans le programme du gouvernement, les sections 162 à 166 prévoient la protection de nos ressources océaniques. Je viendrai sur les énergies renouvelables incessamment.

Cependant, il nous faut rester connecter et suivre les débats et considération qui seront soulevé lors du dialogue scientifique qui se tiendra en Allemagne en juin 2020 sur les mesures que nous devons prendre pour la mitigation et adaptation du changement climatique. Plus que jamais les différents techniciens des ministères devront assumer leur responsabilité face aux nouvelles données qui devront être pris en considération dans notre stratégie de développement comme le stipule clairement le programme du gouvernement. Section 142 –

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

Le gouvernement prévoit aussi de donner la chance à ce nombre grandissant des jeunes qui ont pris conscience de l'importance de participer à la vie publique et de s'engager pour notre avenir. La section 159 du programme prévoit for a *National Youth Environmental Council* sous le leadership du Premier ministre qui permettra et donnera l'opportunité à ces jeunes qui ont compris l'importance de la participation à la vie publique. Je ne veux surtout pas manquer l'investissement du gouvernement dans l'utilisation des énergies propres, comme on dit *clean energies*.

Sections 145 à 148 font état des différentes mesures qui ont été prises pour promouvoir l'énergie renouvelable et je trouve la section 148 particulièrement intéressante, M. le président –

“Government will further promote the setting up of photovoltaic system for households, SMEs, cooperatives, NGOs, small planters and breeders.”

Ce que ça démontre, ce que l’honorable Deputy Prime Minister a compris que la seule façon pour que l’énergie renouvelable gagne du terrain, ce que les gens l’adopte, qu’elle fasse partie du quotidien de la population et ce sont ces genres d’initiatives qui sont louables, on peut légiférer autant qu’on veut, mais tant que l’environnement ne devient pas une valeur qu’on vit au quotidien, les choses n’avanceront pas. C’est pour ça que la section 148 est particulièrement intéressante et j’ai hâte de voir son évolution et l’impact qu’elle aura sur notre société.

Le ministre de l’environnement a pris l’engagement de divulguer le plan directeur de son ministère quant à la stratégie environnementale à partir de février. Nous attendons tous avec impatience, alors le ministre de l’énergie a déjà commencé à agir. Nous voulons avec impatience voir le plan directeur pour les nouvelles bases qui seront jetées pour une politique environnementale meilleure.

M. le président, si vous me permettez je changerai de sujet drastiquement et je vais parler de la situation de la drogue à Maurice. Je ne peux pas continuer à observer ce qui se passe sans en parler, M. le président. Les jeunes qui sont touchés aujourd’hui par le problème de la drogue sont mes contemporains, sont les jeunes avec qui je vais devoir faire pour les décisions future, c’est la main d’œuvre de demain. Chaque jour qui passe, M. le président, où on n’agit pas c’est un jour de perdu pour notre pays et notre avenir. Le gouvernement a déjà fait beaucoup quant à la lutte contre la drogue, beaucoup d’investissements ont été fait jusqu’à l’heure, mais je fais un appel pour que la société civile et le gouvernement travaille ensemble. Je ne veux plus citer des chiffres. En tant que *PPS*, je suis alarmée désormais par ce que je vois chaque jour dans les circonscriptions où je véhicule. Le problème de drogue doit être résolu. On ne peut pas le faire totalement, mais il faut faire reculer la problématique de drogue. Les jeunes sont l’avenir de notre pays et nous ne pouvons pas rester insensibles à cette souffrance grandissante. Cependant, je suis consciente que ce problème gagne du terrain dans le monde entier et cela ne touche pas que l’île Maurice. Mais c’est à nous, nous sommes suffisamment petits pour faire preuve d’innovation et s’assurer que nos jeunes soient bien dans leur peau, suffisamment bien qu’ils ne se détruisent pas avec la drogue. C’est pour cela que je fais un appel au gouvernement, à la population et aux ONG ; il faut agir vite.

M. le président, avant de conclure, je voudrai répondre à certaines critiques que l'honorable Ganoo, l'honorable Ramano et moi-même avons reçues au sujet du Metro Express. Quoi vous dire ? A ce qu'il parait, nous étions contre le projet du Metro Express. J'étais très surprise de l'apprendre. Si je me souviens bien, j'étais la première à dire lors de l'élection partielle de 2017 que la population n'est pas contre le Metro Express. J'ai revu les déclarations, et je ne pensais même pas que c'était nécessaire de l'honorable Ganoo, de l'honorable Ramano. La question qui a souvent été soulevée c'était autour de la planification, autour du métro. Cela n'a jamais été une opposition au métro. Et c'est là le problème, M. le président, si on ne fait plus la différence entre une suggestion constructive, une analyse et une suggestion, et une opposition. Donc, à chaque mot qu'on va dire pour améliorer un système, si ce sera perçu comme une opposition, je pense qu'on est mal parti. On a cinq ans à aller, à continuer ensemble. Donc, en toute âme et conscience, je sais très bien quand on a fait la manifestation sous le leadership du Leader l'Opposition à Quatre Bornes, à aucun moment, que ce soit l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell, l'honorable Ramano ou moi-même avons manifesté contre le Metro Express. Nous faisons un appel à l'honorable Bodha pour qu'il vienne à Quatre Bornes et nous expliquer le projet. C'est cela la nuance. Mais quoi vous dire ? Cette opposition qui se voulait un contre-pouvoir à une époque, aujourd'hui ne semble même pas intéresser à relater avec véracité les propos, l'essence même de nos positions, nous les politiciens. Il nous faudra, avec le temps, s'y habituer mais cela reste très malhonnête.

Pour conclure, M. le président, je voudrai faire un appel. Nous nous retrouvons dans une situation aujourd'hui où l'Opposition ne se contente plus d'être parlementaire. J'entends des commentaires, j'ai lu des commentaires tel que le discours-programme était décousu, d'autres pensent que c'était réchauffé. D'autres ne semblent pas comprendre la vision derrière. Quoi vous dire ? Si vous me permettez, je vais ajouter un peu de culture pop à notre Assemblée. Ce n'est pas pour niveler le niveau vers le bas, mais je voudrai citer Rihanna, une des chansons de Rihanna, qui permettra de mieux comprendre c'est quoi les *social safety nets* qui ont été mis sur place. Elle dit –

“(...) When the world has dealt its cards;

If the hand is hard, together we'll mend your heart (...)”

C'est cela qu'on veut dire par '*ensam tout possible*'.

“(...) Because when the sun shines, we shine together (...)”

C'est cela l'inclusivité du programme M. le président.

*“Told you I'll be here forever
 Said I'll always be your friend
 Took an oath that I'm a stick it out 'til the end
 Now that it's raining more than ever
 Know that we still have each other
 You can stand under my umbrella (...)”*

Et le *umbrella* c'est quoi ? C'est ce discours-programme qui a une série de mesures, qui a pour but de protéger le citoyen moyen de population mauricienne face à tous les risques qu'il encourt dans sa vie chaque jour. Comme je vous l'ai dit, tout n'est pas parfait, mais au moins nous assumons nos responsabilités.

Mr Speaker, Sir, quand je vois la tournure que prennent les choses, je veux dire à la population : N'hésitez pas, venez nous voir. Quand l'Opposition n'est plus constructive, nous sommes toujours intéressés à savoir ce que vous pensez. Comme je l'ai dit, chaque jour que vous nous parlez, vous faites de nous de meilleurs êtres humains. L'interaction est nécessaire. Si vos représentants vous faillissent, nous sommes là et nous sommes les députés de la République de Maurice. Et quand je vois la tournure que prennent les choses, je ne peux m'empêcher de penser à Michelle Obama et la fameuse phrase qu'elle a sortie quand son mari faisait face aux pires bassesses qui existent en politique –

“When they go low, we go high.”

I feel that for the next five years we will be flying very high, *Mr Speaker, Sir*. Very High!

Et je saisis cette occasion, avant de conclure, pour présenter mes sympathies à la République de Chine face à ce drame qui les afflige en ce moment. Nous sommes en toute solidarité avec eux. On prie pour eux, on espère que les choses iront pour le mieux, mais en ce qui me concerne, en tant que citoyenne mauricienne, je me sens protégée par l'honorable ministre Jagutpal qui s'assure que nous ne souffrons pas, que cette tragédie ne prendra pas la même ampleur.

J'ai terminé. Merci, M. le président.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

(12. 51 p.m.)

Mr G. F. David (First Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like first of all to congratulate hon. Mrs Tania Diolle for her maiden speech. Given the time, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we are close to 01.00 p.m., may I humbly suggest that we move my intervention after the lunch break?

Mr Speaker: I think I can accept it. So, I suspend for one and a half hours.

At 12.52 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.28 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. David!

Mr David: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an honour for me to be given the opportunity to deliver my maiden speech in this august Assembly as a young freshly elected Member of Parliament. I stand here in an endeavour to represent the people of Mauritius, including of course those of my Constituency, No. 1, Grand River North West and Port Louis West, to the best of my abilities while at the same time upholding the principles of the Labour Party and its socialist values.

Et je tiens à dire, ici, pour rassurer l'honorable Tania Diolle que j'exprimerai mes valeurs socialistes sans aucun malaise idéologique mais bien avec du pragmatisme politique. Si vous me permettez, M. le président, j'aimerais adresser quelques mots aux habitants de la circonscription No. 1, je les sais nombreux à nous suivre cet après-midi à la télé ou sur leur smartphone. A ces électeurs qui m'ont fait confiance, aux autres qui n'ont pas voté pour moi et à ceux qui n'ont pas pu le faire parce que leur nom n'était pas sur les listes électorales, je tiens à vous dédier cet après-midi cette intervention.

The ambitious title of the Government Programme 2020-2024: "Towards an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius - Forging Ahead Together", promises a series of measures for taking the country forward for the next five years. This Government Programme contains some valid suggestions, but, as we all know, translating suggestions into practice is challenging and can sometimes be frustrating and impacting when promises are not kept.

How are we going to finance all announced measures when our public debt has reached Rs327 billion, representing 65% of our Gross Domestic Product? How can we be an inclusive nation when according to Statistics Mauritius, 88% of the unemployed persons last year have been looking for a work during a full year?

Regarding the high-income society target, while the minimum wage has been raised, on the other hand, the prices of many basic commodities like rice, milk, cheese among others, have gone up, making our people's wallet lighter.

Concerning Green Mauritius commendable vision, please let me stress that the Government Programme is targeting 35% electricity generation from renewable sources in 2025; actual share being 21%, as compared to our sister Reunion Island that aims at having an electricity generation based on 100% renewable energies by 2030.

In the Government Programme, I have to admit, I was initially tempted to see the setting up of the Economic Research and Planning Bureau, section 89, at the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development as a potential redundancy of the Economic Development Board. But still, I want to keep a positive view on this new body and on the announced Economy Advisory Council at the EDB to advise on matters relating to the development of the economic landscape. To add to this policy setting, I would make an appeal that members of the Economic Advisory Council consist of economists of international recognition who would design a new economic model to guide the Economic and Planning Bureau in the creation of a coherent action plan and an appropriate timeline that will spearhead economic growth.

It is important to remind the House and especially the population about the structure of the Mauritian economy. Mauritius imports the majority of the goods relative to what it exports, which makes it a country with large trade deficit. Coupled with stagnant private investment and poor quality of foreign direct investment over the past years, this means that the country does not produce enough to sustain its economic growth. Instead, the country relies mostly on consumption which by definition has a fading effect on growth. As a matter of fact, growth statistics for 2019 have been revised downwards from 3.8% to 3.6%.

Paradoxically enough, the Government Programme highlights at paragraph 53, that, due to progress made in the past 5 years, our country is now on track to cross the high-income country milestone in the coming years and take its first step as a first world nation. The Government has argued that we are only a few hundred dollars away from the high-income bracket. I would remind the Government that it is not only a matter of joining the lead of high-income countries. With the numerous challenges ahead, Mauritius should be a high-income country driven by vibrant economic sectors in the field of high-tech manufacturing, blue economy, green energy and information and communication technology to name a few.

And the results should be felt by the people on the ground and seen in the numbers with much higher levels of employment and a rate of economic growth above the 5% mark. Similarly, I commend the fact that Mauritius has been ranked 13th globally in the Ease of Doing Business of the World Bank in 2019 but, again, the rubber has yet to meet the road. We have to translate the Ease of Doing Business into high levels of investment that will drive employment and growth.

High-tech manufacturing is a sector which has a great potential for employment and growth in Mauritius. Please allow me to inform or to remind the House that a country like Rwanda has against all odds started the production of smartphones, computers and cars. Obviously, Mauritius should follow its own path, but we should be inspired by such examples and forge our way ahead. I propose that Mauritius follows a gradual approach until it fully harnesses its high-tech manufacturing potential. At the beginning of our industrial revolution, I humbly suggest that Mauritius vertically integrates with the best high-tech firms in the world. Joint ventures with the best in the world will allow extensive transfer of knowledge from abroad to the local economy.

With a vast sea zone of 2.3 million square kilometres, the blue economy alone has the potential to transform Mauritius. The ocean should account for a major share of renewable energy sources and become a significant pillar of our economy. Mauritius straddles the great conveyor belt that moves massive undercurrents around the globe and is positioned at a vantage point to exploit the mineral and nutrient-rich, cold deep-sea water flowing in these undercurrents.

The temperature of the water which drops to about 5° C at a depth of 1,000 metres is also ideal for the implementation of cost-efficient sea-water air-cooling projects that would as well contribute to the reduction of green-house emissions. Favouring a joint venture driven approach between Government, private sector and foreign world renowned firms, the Deep Ocean Water Applications Sector has the potential to create numerous new industries and job prospects ranging from the Sea Water Air Conditioning, Green Data Centres, high-end aquaculture, pharmaceuticals and thalassotherapy, among others.

In terms of green energy, the country should absorb knowledge from abroad in terms of the production and distribution of renewable energy. It should define a clear timeline with a strong set of incentives that will help to accelerate the energy transition and make Mauritius close to 100% renewable. Again, I would like to inform the House that many countries have

already achieved this very important milestone, like for example, Uruguay which is now almost 100% powered by renewable energy after less than ten years of concerted effort. This country invested heavily in wind and solar energy, rising from just 40% renewables as recently in 2012 and their secret, clear decision-making, a supportive regulatory environment and a strong partnership between the public and the private sectors. Mauritius, I am convinced, should increase its investment in solar farms, wind parks, energy storage and smart grids.

In the ICT Sector, the cyber city of Ébène needs to be transformed into a dynamic tech hub. At the moment, I have the impression that we still rely a bit too much on call centres which do not have much potential for growth. In that respect, we need to create a new business model initiated by the Government for the setting up of a software and hardware sector which will create a vibrant environment to foster the use of technology and encourage learning. The opportunities in the ICT Sector with artificial intelligence, robotics, blockchain and internet of things should be clearly identified and translated into tangible high value-added activities that will increase the share of this sector in our national GDP.

In its national development strategy, while embarking on the creation of those emerging sectors, there is urgency for Mauritius to have a skillful labour force that would sustain the growth in those sectors. The philosophy of inclusive economic growth not only includes the allocation of a minimum wage or the benefit of negative income taxes, but, very importantly, requires that while the economy is growing, people are also growing together with that economic growth. This can only happen through a large training and reskilling programme that would ensure that we have the right kind of labour force to work in those emerging sectors.

I have taken note of the appeal that the Prime Minister has made at the UK Africa Summit to encourage professionals in the UK to come to Mauritius. This is a step in the right direction that a clearer strategy with sector-wise targeting needs to be implemented to ensure that the local labour force absorbs the maximum amount of knowledge from those experts.

Please allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to spend a minute to address some problems facing our Small and Medium Enterprises Sector as their contribution to employment and growth remains substantial. On a macro-scale, the setting up of Government led SME incubators for a closer monitoring of SMEs, combined with gradual finance while improving access to markets, are measures that should be implemented to boost that sector. On a micro-scale, I

would urge the Government to reconsider its support framework around the minimum wage. While we obviously acclaim the revision of the minimum wage to Rs10,200, we cannot ignore that many small business owners, for instance, in my Constituency, struggle to pay their employees. Some factories and Small and Medium Enterprises have laid off employees in order for their business to survive. The load that the minimum wage puts on SMEs, I am afraid, can lead to higher levels of unemployment.

As a socialist, I commend the efforts the Government is making for the poorest and oldest in the Mauritian society, but to me what is alarming is the absence of a coherent plan to raise revenue to finance those social measures. The use of the Special Reserve Fund of the Bank of Mauritius is a wake-up call for the Government to rethink very seriously about new ways of generating revenue, and it must realise that this can only come from high level of economic growth. This is where the economic research and planning bureau should implement a very well thought-through action plan based on a new and well-designed economic model proposed by competent members of the Economic Advisory Council to finance those social measures and more broadly for the payment of the high level of public debt.

Nous voyons bien, M. le président, le défi de concilier les dimensions économiques et sociales de notre développement auquel se rajoute l'obligation de préserver notre environnement. Ce sont en fait les trois aspects du développement durable qui se définit comme un développement qui répond aux besoins du présent sans compromettre la capacité des générations futures à répondre à leurs besoins. Alors, on retrouve dans cette définition le concept de « besoins », et plus particulièrement des besoins essentiels des plus démunis, à qui il convient d'accorder la plus grande priorité. En tant que jeune socialiste convaincu, je soutiendrai dans cette Assemblée toute mesure qui vise à redonner de la dignité à nos plus démunis, à protéger nos plus vulnérables, à intégrer ceux qui se sentent exclus et à corriger les inégalités.

Selon le dernier rapport disponible de *Statistics Mauritius*, qu'a d'ailleurs mentionné l'honorable Tania Diolle, les chiffres sur la pauvreté sont sur ce qu'ils sont, 33,600 foyers, 122,700 mauriciens dont 42,100 enfants qui vivent sous le seuil de pauvreté relative. Au final, derrière ces chiffres se trouvent des drames humains, des hommes et des femmes désespérés, souvent des enfants déscolarisés, des situations où il faut trop souvent choisir chaque fin de mois entre acheter à manger ou payer le loyer. Je salue ici, M. le président, le travail abattu par plusieurs ONG et travailleurs sociaux qui luttent avec leurs

moyens auprès de ces familles pauvres, et je prends bonne note à la section 19 du programme gouvernemental de l'intention d'intensifier la mise en œuvre du plan Marshall contre la pauvreté.

Toutefois, je déplore que dans le discours programme, pas une ligne n'est consacrée à la transformation de nos infrastructures pour les rendre accessibles aux personnes en situation de handicap moteur. Nos bâtiments publics se présentent pour la plupart avec des marches sans rampes d'accès, les ascenseurs sont étroits et ne peuvent accommoder un fauteuil roulant, il y a un nombre bien trop insuffisant de toilettes adaptées et je préfère ne pas évoquer les surfaces inégales de nos trottoirs lorsqu'ils existent et bien que notre pays soit signataire de la Convention relative aux droits des personnes autrement capables, permettez-moi, M. le président, au nom de Bella, de la Tour Koenig, et de Stéphane, de Cassis, qui se reconnaîtront, d'exprimer dans cette Assemblée mon souhait que nous révisions nos lois sur la construction, l'aménagement urbain, l'habitat et les routes afin d'offrir une meilleure accessibilité aux personnes autrement capables.

En ce qui concerne l'égalité des genres, je suis heureux, comme plusieurs au sein de cet hémicycle de faire partie du *Parliamentary Gender Caucus* et, à ce titre, nous avons eu le plaisir de rencontrer jeudi dernier, 30 janvier, Madame Nicole Ameline, ancienne ministre de la Parité et de l'Égalité professionnelle, sous la présidence de Jacques Chirac et membre de la Convention aux Nations Unies sur l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination à l'égard des femmes. J'ai été particulièrement frappé par l'obligation formulée par Madame Ameline pour que cette nouvelle décennie 2020/2030 soit celle de l'égalité afin de construire une société égalitaire et paritaire.

J'ai noté dans le discours programme l'objectif de promouvoir l'égalité des genres et la mise sur pied d'un comité présidé par le Premier ministre pour élaborer une nouvelle stratégie, renforcer le cadre juridique pour éliminer la violence faite aux femmes et pour lancer une campagne nationale de sensibilisation. Je rajoute à cela qu'il nous faudra impérativement, en tant que Parlementaires, faire preuve d'innovation politique pour accélérer l'émancipation économique et sociale des femmes et des jeunes filles ainsi que le renforcement de leur participation à l'élaboration des politiques et à la prise de décision à tous les niveaux de la société.

M. le président, je voudrais, dans la dernière partie de mon intervention, nous interpeller sur le pragmatisme politique dont je souhaiterais que nous fassions preuve, et je prie

cette Assemblée de n'y voir de ma part aucune démarche démagogique, mais bien l'objectif de répondre de façon pratique aux attentes de la population et aux besoins de notre pays. Notre pays est frappé de façon indéniable par les effets du changement climatique. Selon le dernier rapport mondial sur les risques, l'île Maurice fait partie des principaux pays les plus exposés au danger naturel. Nous le constatons déjà : les cyclones, les pluies torrentielles, les *flash floods*, les orages et les éclairs sont de plus en plus fréquents et intenses. Or, nous n'avons toujours pas de système efficace pour l'évacuation de l'eau de pluie, et je me demande combien de nos bâtiments sont équipés de parafoudre. J'ai pris bonne note dans le programme gouvernemental de l'introduction d'un nouveau *Climate Change Bill*, à la section 158, et j'ai hâte de prendre connaissance des douze mesures à mettre en œuvre à court terme, qui seront annoncées dès ce mois-ci par le ministre de l'Environnement, de la Gestion des déchets solides et du Changement climatique.

Par ailleurs, je salue également la mise sur pied d'un *Land Drainage Authority*, mais il nous faut, sans attendre, planifier et intensifier l'entretien et le suivi des drains existants, et construire des drains efficaces, là où ils se font cruellement attendre, comme par exemple, à Bonnefin dans ma circonscription. J'y ai effectué une visite récemment lors des dernières pluies torrentielles et j'y ai constaté des maisons construites en pente, où l'eau de pluie, à défaut d'être évacuée, s'est infiltrée sous ces maisons et a commencé à fissurer les structures. Il y a à Bonnefin une urgence, et je sais que c'est le cas ailleurs également, urgence à consolider et à protéger ces habitations. Alors que le programme gouvernemental fait mention à la section 116 de la phase 2 du projet de tout-à-l'égout pour la région de Pailles, il serait souhaitable que davantage d'informations ciblées soient communiquées aux habitants des localités concernées, simplement sur les étapes, l'étendue et le calendrier des travaux ainsi que sur les inconvénients attendus.

Encore du pragmatisme politique ! Tout en construisant le secteur de l'économie bleue à grande échelle, économie dans laquelle je crois fermement, nous ne pouvons oublier d'y intégrer la communauté des pêcheurs qui manquent d'infrastructures adéquates et de moyens pour exercer correctement et vivre de leur métier. Je pense notamment aux pêcheurs de ma circonscription, en particulier à ceux de Bain des Dames et de Pointe aux Sables, qui ne disposent toujours pas d'un débarcadère adéquat pour ranger leurs équipements ou simplement pour vendre leurs poissons.

Comment évoquer le développement d'une économie circulaire alors que nos foyers ne sont nullement équipés de poubelles de tri des déchets et que les filières de recyclage à

Maurice sont quasiment inexistantes ? Le gouvernement, selon la section 115 de son programme, encouragera l'utilisation efficace de l'énergie, ce qui est une nécessité absolue. Je suggère, donc, que nous donnions l'exemple en instaurant une véritable politique d'efficacité énergétique déjà au sein de ce Parlement et au sein de tous les bâtiments publics, afin qu'ils consomment moins et mieux l'énergie. Des solutions techniques existent, comme l'éclairage LED évidemment, le *Building Management System* ou la climatisation solaire et des mécanismes de financement sont également disponibles pour accompagner de tels projets d'amélioration énergétique.

Alors que le gouvernement parle de fournir des installations plus nombreuses et de meilleure qualité - ça aussi je l'ai noté - pour promouvoir l'excellence dans le sport, nous ne pouvons ignorer que beaucoup de jeunes joueurs de foot doivent encore s'acquitter d'une somme, et je l'ai vérifié, pouvant aller jusqu'à R 450 de l'heure pour utiliser certains terrains relevant de la *Mauritius Sports Council*. L'idée de mettre en place des pistes cyclables, à la section 49, cette idée est évidemment louable. J'ai pour ma part passé 15 ans de ma vie à Lyon, où les voies cyclables et les vélos publics en location sont devenus pratique courante. Mais, encore une fois, avec l'approche pragmatique, avant de mettre en place des pistes cyclables, ne faudrait-il pas commencer par avoir des voies tout simplement praticables ? Et là, je ne parle pas forcément de nos autoroutes généralement en bon état, mais surtout de notre réseau routier secondaire. Combien de nos routes - et nous en souffrons nous aussi - sont trop souvent trop étroites, endommagées ou cahoteuses ?

A un autre niveau et sur un sujet beaucoup plus grave, plus alarmant, actualité oblige, M. le président, c'est ce même pragmatisme dont nous devons faire preuve pour protéger nos ressortissants et nos frontières alors qu'une crise sanitaire mondiale frappe à notre porte. Soyons donc pragmatiques et offensifs face à ce nouveau virus.

Avant de conclure, M. le président, je veux dire à cette auguste Assemblée, que malgré nos divergences, malgré nos différences, j'ai envie de croire que ce qui nous rassemble est plus grand que ce qui nous divise. L'intérêt de notre population, de notre pays, de notre diaspora et des générations futures doit être constamment notre priorité et, encore plus, dans ce contexte d'urgence économique et écologique. Et surtout, ne nous déconnectons pas de la réalité au quotidien des mauriciennes et des mauriciens, car ils attendent de nous que nous soyons à leur écoute dans un cadre de démocratie participative, et surtout, cela plusieurs des habitants de la circonscription No. 1, surtout des jeunes, attendent de nous que nous soyons exemplaires dans la façon dont nous allons confronter nos idées, ici, dans cet hémicycle.

Evidemment notre pays, notre population attend de nous que nous soyons des accélérateurs du changement, un changement vers une société plus juste, plus durable et plus égalitaire. Soyons donc nous-mêmes le changement que nous voulons voir.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(2.55 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender equality and Family Welfare (Mrs K. D. Koonjoo-Shah):

Mr Speaker, Sir, from the very outset, allow me to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and his team for the presentation of a highly commendable and visionary Government Programme 2020-2024 for our Country and our Nation.

Allow me also, Mr Speaker Sir, to thank you for having given me the opportunity and honour to be the first Minister to deliver my views on the Government Programme.

Traditionally, maiden speeches are very short and uncontroversial with some warm words about the new MP's predecessor and a favourite cause. I was elected as a candidate for Constituency No. 7 and everybody knows that Piton and Rivière du Rempart has been represented in our august Assembly for many decades by a real giant of the Mauritian politics. I am, of course, talking about Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

No one could possibly argue with the fact that he is a man of enormous stature and presence, who has taken our island from the shambles it used to be in to the unprecedented high standards that we often take for granted. The most recent of which is his major intervention at the UN on the Chagos issue and which has won Mauritius the support of so many countries against giants like the UK and the US.

Therefore, let me thank him for all that he has accomplished and, in particular, let me thank him for his guidance and his advice during the electoral campaign, especially to someone like me who had never before spoken in public and who is new to politics.

Let me also thank our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for showing inordinate courage in selecting so many new faces as candidates during the last elections and winning them democratically. The facts speak for themselves. Mr Speaker, Sir, we keep talking about the lack of female representation in this Assembly, but let's take a look around us now –

We have 10 female MPs on this side of the House and on the other side, we only have 4, but at least it highlights the noble intent of the Prime Minister to bridge the enormous gap in gender equality in this august Assembly.

Allow me to also thank him for making this political neophyte a Member of his Cabinet, and I pledge to do my best to justify his confidence in me.

This Government Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a testimony of our Prime Minister's vision to take the country to new heights to achieving an inclusive, high income and green Republic of Mauritius.

In this programme, Mr Speaker Sir, I am very happy to note that another dimension of development, namely turning Mauritius Green, is being emphasised to the higher proportion it so rightly deserves.

The Government Programme -

- builds on the unbelievable achievements accomplished during the 2014-2019 mandate, and
- it also provides the best recipe for an unmatched sustainable development for the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on 07 November 2019, the population gave a clear mandate to this Government to continue the excellent work it had already started in its transformative journey since 2014. And today, I fail to understand the presence of hon. Members of the Opposition on the other side of the House when they chose deliberately to boycott the very same Presidential Address of this Government's Programme on 24 January. I think it is a dishonour on their part. It is a dishonour to the principles of our highly valued democracy, and it is a dishonour to the democratic choice made by the citizens of Mauritius to elect a Government. I think, along with me, the entire nation is failing to understand the logic behind this behaviour. But people say that the least common of senses is common sense. So, this may be an explanation to their behaviour, Mr Speaker, Sir, because the Opposition, by boycotting the Government Programme, has aptly demonstrated that common sense is not that common.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a newcomer to this House, to share a bit of what many, since the advent of live television coverage of our proceedings, have seen indecorous fiascos/debacles with people shouting and screaming at each other, often punctuated by walkouts which are not only pointless but self-defeating. Walkouts are self-defeating because

if you are not inside the Assembly, how could you possibly positively influence the proceedings and fully represent your constituents?

(Interruptions)

Stop embarrassing yourself!

However, there are some silver linings to the cloud. I am hopeful that the new Leader of the Opposition will adopt a constructive and genial approach and we, on this side of the House, look forward to participating and listening to any worthwhile points, amendments and suggestions that the Opposition may wish to bring forward.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot make my maiden speech without mentioning the name of the hon. Member who first entered this House in 1976. Many from the 1976 parliamentary team are no longer among us. In fact, there are only 3 of them alive today. And this hon. Member, Mr Speaker, Sir, is one of the remaining 3 persons from the 1976 cohort, the other two being the mighty Sir Anerood Jugnauth and a certain Mr Prem Koonjoo. Hon. Bérenger, you have often inspired, entertained, and impressed us with your knowledge and experience and I can only pray that we see you at your absolute constructive best during the next five years coming.

The preceding successive Governments, led by the then Prime Minister, Dr. Ramgoolam, from 2005 to 2014, led this country to the brink of a catastrophic failure. We all know that. We all know how the situation was alarming already by the time the Government took over in 2014. The economic growth was on a declining trend; the prospects were gloomy, especially for the underprivileged; an increasing number of families was sliding into poverty; income inequality was widening everywhere.

That is why we have to take our hats off for what our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has achieved ever since he has taken over the leadership at the helm of this country. He has master minded a new era of development and put the country on a transformative journey. And the results, Mr Speaker, Sir, speak for themselves.

Today, the economy is on stronger foundations. The unemployment rate is trending down and so is poverty. The income gap between the richest and the poorest is narrowing. Workers are now better paid, especially those who used to be at the lower rung with the introduction of the minimum wage. Our elderly are receiving a much higher pension. Inflation is low and under control. We are building the infrastructure of the future across the entire country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot transform if we do not innovate. It goes beyond any doubt that many innovative measures in key strategic avenues of growth for our country are being spelt out in the Programme document.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my hon. Member Colleagues will, within the ambit of their mandate, elaborate on the innovations and transformations in the fields of Education, Digitalisation, Well-Being, Quality of Life, Economy, Public Infrastructure, Environment, Governance and Diplomacy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now address the National Assembly as the Minister of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. My cause as Minister is to increase female empowerment and to do everything I can to lighten the load on too many women's shoulders and to improve the quality of care and future opportunities of our children. There can be no doubt that the Government's vision as articulated in the Government Programme acknowledges the pertinence and relevance of gender equality, child and family well-being as well as community development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to inform the House that I am coming up with a Strategic Engagement Plan 2020-2024. We have identified 4 strategic focus areas and 39 strategic priorities. This Plan will give us a directional focus on the softer dimension of our inclusive development strategy which consists of -

- consolidating the protection, development and welfare of our children;
- bridging the gender gap and empowering our women;
- building more resilience in our families and reducing gender based violence,
and
- strengthening social cohesion and social capital to further enhance community development.

These strategies, Mr Speaker, Sir, will lay solid foundations for a more inclusive and equitable developmental agenda. Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot imagine any hon. Member in this august Assembly disputing the fact that Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment is a cross-cutting issue that needs our urgent attention. As the Republic of Mauritius has international and regional obligations through the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and other human right treaties, it is imperative that we engage as many stakeholders and partners in working together to develop strategies how to

best bridge the outstanding gender gaps. And we begin with the theme for this year's International Women's Day celebration which is aptly accelerating the realisation of gender equality.

With this in mind, my Ministry will come up with a Gender Equality Bill to eliminate gender-based discrimination and to achieve substantive gender equality in the Republic of Mauritius. A new gender policy 2020-2029 which will explicitly bring forth the role of the public, the private sectors, the academia, the media and civil society organisations, and Information Education and Communication (IEC) plan to raise awareness among all stakeholders which will also act as an eye-opener for the public at large and call for engagement of various stakeholders to reduce discrimination based on gender.

Mr Speaker, Sir, people often talk about economic development with a human face. Gone are the days when school cleaners were paid Rs1,500 a month, a terrible and scandalous situation that was allowed to fester for decades. It is hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, the Prime Minister and the then Minister of Finance who put an end to this. The implementation of minimum wage of Rs10,200 a month has made a big difference in the living conditions of that section of the population that has for far too long been at the bottom of the salary scale and I am referring to our women.

Moreover, the increase in old age pension has been a tremendous boom to all those who have worked really hard for this island and it is only befitting that we look after them properly in their old age. I would like to remind this National Assembly that statistics reveal that, as at the 01 of July 2018, out of an elderly population of 212,000 50% were women. For the same period, the woman's life expectancy was 77 years as compared to 71 years for men. The emerging needs of this segment of the population, which has hitherto remained unaddressed means that it is imperative to introduce new services which are adapted to these needs.

My Ministry will also address the issue of feminisation of ageing. It is a fact that women live longer than men. I will not make any cheap jibes over here despite us having all the handicaps that women face. We still seem to be the stronger and we last longer than men. From the weaker sex, we seem to have become the Duracell gender and you guys, the men have a lot of catching up to do according to me.

But, on a more serious note, Mr Speaker, Sir, the feminisation of ageing now implies that we have a significantly higher number of old women than old men which consequently

makes them more dependent on Government services. And to that end, my Ministry is proposing to come up with a pilot project to provide a conducive platform for lonely elderly women to come together, to socialise, interact and next meet with their peers in an environment conducive for their well-being by providing some psychosocial and emotional support.

New services in terms of health related counselling and easy access to sports amenities will be made available at the level of women empowerment senses. Conversely, as regards entrepreneurship and economic empowerment among the younger generation of women, my Ministry will formulate a vision document of Women's Economic Empowerment, particularly geared towards upscaling the micro, small and medium enterprises. I am confident, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the document will guide us with the ensued points regarding innovative issues as well as new pathways to accelerate our actions in that direction.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all have an obligation to protect our children from any form of violence and abuse and ensure that we provide the right support for the welfare of all our children. On that note, I am pleased to announce that I will shortly bring forth the much-awaited Children's Bill, an audacious new Children's Bill that will provide a more appropriate, comprehensive and modern legislative framework so as to better protect children and to bring us in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. A new Bill will address the irregularities and shortcomings that have lingered on for more than decades and among the proposed amendments, this new Bill will touch upon salient issues like the legal age of marriage, the implementation of a Child Sex Offenders Register, the reporting and investigating processes pertaining to criminal offences against children and the setting-up of a Children Court to fast-track the administration of justice towards our children. I am convinced that the setting-up of an early Child Screening and Referral Unit will also articulate its role, both in prevention and in response to violence against children. Violence against children is a human rights violation, Mr Speaker, Sir, and a global health problem. The early Child Screening and Referral Unit will help to identify potential health, social, emotional and developmental problems in infants and young children who are exposed to poverty, domestic and community violence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has been renamed as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family Welfare. Issues pertaining to families are cross-cutting in various fields such as

education, poverty and violence, amongst others. Hence, a holistic approach should be adopted for families, which takes into consideration the challenges that we are facing such as changes in the family structure, in the roles and functions of women, globalisation, child abuse, increasing rates of divorce, ageing, unemployment and family poverty, amongst others.

To that end, my Ministry will come up with the setting-up of a National Family Council to support the building up of resilient children and families in our Republic, to be better prepared to face the pressing issues of our society.

As the Minister responsible for the well-being of families, I remain a further proponent of building a society free from violence. On average, annually, some 1,760 cases of domestic violence are reported to my Ministry and the aggregated economic cost of domestic violence is a staggering estimated Rs2 billion per year. That is almost 0.6% of the GDP. I would like to make it clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the economic impact does not matter, but what matters the most is the unfortunate loss of lives. What does matter is the fact that an entire family is shattered. Children are physically and psychologically scared forever. That is what matters the most.

If you would allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to convey my heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family, especially to the two children of late Mrs Jaya Anatah who was mercilessly and brutally stabbed to death in broad daylight by none other than the person who had promised to cherish, love and protect her. That is, her own husband. I leave the House to ponder upon that and I would like to reassure the House as well that domestic violence and crime against women and children is undoubtedly among the highest priorities of this Government.

The setting-up of a high-level Committee chaired by the hon. Prime Minister, himself, reflects the commitment of the present Government to eliminate gender-based violence in our society and to declare its firm intention to deal with it more effectively.

I have to draw your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that we have proposed to expand the scope of violence from domestic violence to gender-based violence because gender-based violence includes the following acts: rape, marital rape, domestic violence, child abuse, female infanticide, denial of health care or nutrition to girls, sexual and emotional harassment, prostitution, pornography, political violence.

In the same vein, the Protection from Domestic Violence Act will be further amended to reinforce the protection of victims of domestic violence and to include a component on the rehabilitation of perpetrators of domestic violence.

My Ministry is also planning, Mr Speaker, Sir, to set up a model shelter for victims of gender-based violence. This shelter will not only provide protective services to victims but will also provide economic opportunities to them through training, apprenticeship and work placement, which will all lead to economic empowerment of such victims.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our country is on a transformation path. The needs and challenges being faced by our communities are also changing and we need to be able to better respond to those. My Ministry will empower and develop talented members of the communities to become more responsible, develop healthier lifestyles, contribute to reduce poverty and to seize opportunities that could range from economic, social, cultural and environmental with a view to enhancing community development.

Thus we intend, Mr Speaker, Sir, to review the existing Act of the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund (SILWF) which dates back to pre-independence period, to make it more modern and more responsive to the changing community needs of our society.

The challenges that lie ahead are not exclusively those of my Ministry, but they touch the lives of each and every citizen of this Country, as they are in fact, human problems and if we all put our efforts together, our future living environment will certainly be one where the well-being and happiness index will soar concurrently with our effectiveness in addressing them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, allow me to express my absolute faith in this Government, under the able leadership of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, that we will leave no stone unturned to have a society which is free from violence, exploitation and discrimination based on gender where the fundamental rights of everyone is respected and where human values within the family and the civil society are nurtured and cherished. This will be a cornerstone to transforming our Republic.

It is a fact that this Programme has given growing hopes for a brighter future for all our citizens and provides a feel good factor for better living in the Republic.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me express my gratitude to all hon. members who have listened to my speech with such patience and goodwill. As a newcomer to this august Assembly, it is but normal for me to feel a bit nervous before addressing you all for the first

time. You have all helped me by being very courteous and attentive and creating the right atmosphere for this debutante in what can often seem to be a boxing ring at times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot finish my maiden speech without thanking my constituents for the enormous faith they have placed in me. To the people of Piton / Rivière du Rempart, and to the citizens of our glorious Republic, I convey my eternal gratitude for granting me the honour to serve you and I will do everything in my capacity to justify your faith in me.

Thank you.

(3.19 p.m.)

Dr. A. Ramdhany (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'or): Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Members of the House, ladies and gentlemen, first, I would like to congratulate the leader of this House, the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth for the November 2019 General Election, where the population trustworthily gave the hon. Prime Minister a clear crystal mandate to improve the quality of life of our citizens and to take our Republic to new heights.

Let me also present my sincere thanks to the people of Constituency No. 6 of Grand' Baie/Poudre d'Or who have believed in me and have chosen me to represent them.

I also seize this opportunity to thank the President of Mauritius for disclosing the Government Programmes for the coming five years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am an average citizen of Mauritius who is new in politics, whose father is a retired policeman, whose grandfather worked as a labourer in the development of Mauritius and today I am standing here, in the National Assembly to serve the people, to work towards national interest and strengthen the vision of the Prime Minister. Furthermore, I feel proud and honoured to believe and stand firm with a political party that has been on the right side of the history for the emancipation and empowerment of the people, the society and the nation as a whole.

As a doctor, I find myself without words to express my appreciations for what is being planned for improving the well-being and quality of life for our citizens. The need for a comprehensive set of health services to provide good quality treatment and care is certainly the main priority of this caring Government. It is our concern to assure that every people in this country, regardless of his class to receive the best medical treatment and all the measures announced for this sector is a real boon.

With the completion of the state-of-the-art ENT Hospital equipped with the latest advanced medical technology, the new cancer hospital and the eye hospital, our health sector will certainly be called an international player in the region, which will surely position Mauritius as a reference in the healthcare domain. The University Hospital, the e-health programme, the promotion of traditional medicines such as Yoga, Ayurveda is *'la cerise sur le gâteau'*.

In my career as a doctor, I have witnessed many families who had endured and is still enduring stressful, desperate financial situation in order to get their members abroad for treatment. The decision to increase the financial assistance to Rs1 m. - Mr Speaker, Sir, I should repeat, Rs1 m. - is highly acclaimed. The air ticket cost for the relative is equivalent to God-gift. I would say before this Government, the previous Government did nothing for the family. They did not have enough money to go abroad with their relatives who are sick. Now, this Government is a caring Government. I would personally thank our Prime Minister for this noble determination. Thank you, Sir.

Thank you, sir, for personally setting and presiding over the high level committee over the propagation of coronavirus in China which is the actuality nowadays. The citizen of Mauritius acknowledges the effort of the Prime Minister. For the coronavirus, there was a PNQ asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He is a doctor. I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Education who put a standard in SC, five credits. This is a basic common sense, Mr Speaker, Sir. In biology, essential biology, you get all the answers. How can a Leader of Opposition come with such a question? I think this is a good initiative of this Government to put a standard way for the SC.

Once I was in anatomy classes, we have to study. We were studying bones, facets of bones, but here in the National Assembly there is the coming for the economic facet of Mauritius. I must say that no other Government has had the high level of strategic plan to drive our economy that reflects our maturity.

Any enterprise or country, in this cut-throat competition would, without emphasis laid on research and development, find its way very complicated towards progress and towards concretising innovative ideas. This can, eventually, jeopardise the economic success of a country. With Universities given the necessary focus on the R&D will bring about a major contribution to our economic growth. That's for sure. It is to be noted that improvements in technologies through industrial innovation have been the driving force behind the rising

standard of living in developed world over the long run. Taking, for instance, countries like Finland, Sweden and South Korea, have high level of R&D spending as a share of their GDP. They spend more than 3% in this field. Although the countries are highly developed, they still have a strong growth. Thanks to their R&D programme. Adopting this strategy of this kind is an intelligent step by this intelligent Government, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With cutting edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, and nanotechnology developing rapidly, it feels that we are on the brink of another industrial revolution which I would personally qualify as the industrial revolution 4.0.

There is a question. Who do we want: A Prime Minister of 4.0 or an Opposition 2.0? I let the public decide.

Vladimir Putin stated that artificial intelligence is the future not only for Russia but for all the humankind and it comes with colossal opportunities. He added that whoever will lead in artificial intelligence will also rule the planet. Here, I would like to point out that according to PWC the AI industry could contribute, ladies and gentlemen, hon. members, up to \$USD 15 trillion to the world economy in ten years, an amount greater than the GDP of China and India alone, Mr Speaker, Sir.

One of our main pillars, the manufacturing sector has witnessed its GDP contribution dropping from 18% to 13% in ten years' time. But in the other end, we have also witnessed a drift towards the application of AI by the industry to cope with mundane jobs, to bring down costs, increase production speed and reduce defects. Adopting the AI in this sector is bringing about new boosts.

Not to forget the massive investment of AI by the healthcare sector.

While the agriculture industry is also facing great difficulties in attracting young workforce, it can largely benefit by the application of AI.

In an interview to a local Press during the recent world AI Conference held in Mauritius, Professor Gopal Ramchurn of Southampton University stated that Mauritius can be the major centre in AI and serve the world. He also voiced out that together with a good communication system, Mauritius also has an educated population who learn new things really quickly, and subsequently we have the potential to do better than other countries. And, according to him, this is achievable in fifteen years' time from now onwards.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, the potential is immense. Scope is tremendous. No one can deny the paramount importance of AI for our survival. We should not be lagging behind, it is the right time to jump in and grab the golden opportunity.

My third and last point about the forthcoming Government Programme is projected on public infrastructure. Without adequate infrastructure, the progress towards a modern country cannot be fulfilled. So, the need is same, is crucial to attain the projected objectives for an innovative economy and society.

The ongoing modernisation of public transport, the ongoing modernisation of our road network across the whole country with the coming in operation of metro express, with the coming of electric buses, Mr Speaker, Sir, are concrete proofs of a far-sighted Government to modernise our country.

The negative impact on various aspects of society and economy because of traffic congestion are well known to everyone. With the implementation of more fly-overs and bypasses, as announced, in the view to eliminate roundabouts on motorways to improve traffic flow will certainly uptrend our productivity.

The new motorway from the airport to the north along the Eastern coastline will not only add to help increase our productivity but also benefit the people in many economic activities.

To cater for 8 million passengers' traffic annually, will no doubt, necessitate an expansion of the airport terminal. Construction of airport city and cargo village, this will be a gam changer as a major 'Regional Logistics and Aviation Hub'. Along with Port Louis harbour transformed into major transport logistics and maritime hub, connecting the rest of the world, will place Mauritius as a major player in the region.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the climate change – my hon. colleague said rightly – that the world is facing nowadays has shown disturbance and imbalance in the nature's pattern resulting in sudden downpour, long heavy rainfall, flash floods and accumulation of water. This has become a major concern for the Government, but the Land Drainage Authority is the solution, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is complying with the need to minimise the impact of floods by investing in appropriate infrastructure and modern technology.

We will go to the water infrastructure. Steps have been taken to assure a round the clock access to water and the Government as one of the main priorities. The focus to replace defective water distribution piles at a high pace is highly welcome. The construction of new

reservoirs and dams, and expansion of existing ones will add to solve our water supply problem. A higher storage capacity through a new infrastructure will assure longer water supply duration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to share with the House project of my Constituencies, Nos. 6 and 10 for the continued infrastructural and social development of Mauritius.

In Mauritius, there are around 22 sites that are earmarked high-risk zone of flood mitigation and one of them is Fond du Sac. I would like to salute the Prime Minister for reviewing the work progress of such. The Minister hon. Avinash Teeluck and I were on the site during the cyclone Calvinia for the safety of Fond du Sac inhabitants and I would congratulate the Government that the cut off drain is working 100 per cent even the project is still ongoing and would be completed by November this year.

Furthermore, I have already summoned three Citizen Support Unit meetings in my Constituencies, Nos. 6 and 10. And I would like to thank the stakeholders for their determination to alleviate the suffering of people.

There are some works that have already been completed - I want to share with the House -

- construction of absorption drain at Junction Madhoo Lane, Bois Rouge, Goodlands;
- construction of absorption drain near La Pierre, Camp Madras, Grand Gaube;
- construction of absorption drain at Pavin Road, Madame Azor, Goodlands;
- construction of absorption drain at Kali Mata Mandir, near Haulkhory, Mamzelle Jeanne, Goodlands, and
- construction of absorption drain near Volleyball Pitch, Village Council, Petit Raffray.

I am stressing on these facts that have already been done. Like my colleagues said that no drains are being constructed. But here are the lists that have already been constructed, Mr Speaker, Sir. Even in Sebastopol and in Camp de Masque, we have already inaugurated for the welfare and wellbeing of the people of Mauritius: the volleyball pitch in Camp de Masque, the recreational centre in Clemencia for the people.

The desilting of rivers and lopping of trees have been initiated because it is hazardous to our citizens. The task has been undertaken by SMF, RDA, District Council and CEB.

The Taskforce of Cavadee and Mahashivratre that was presided by the Prime Minister was exceptional, and with the help of the hon. Ministers of respective Constituencies, we have continued the work under local task force and it is on good track. A small analogy in Hindu mythology, Lord Shiva took halahull, the poison, it is time puzzle. Helped by his wife, he prevented the destruction of universe as it is, but right now in this modern era, we have a Prime Minister who is alleviating the suffering of people and we should be proud of it. Thank you, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while, on one hand, we have a Government coming up with a comprehensive set of initiatives, exposing large panoplies of decisions for the next five-year programme to alleviate the day-to-day difficult of our citizens to boost the economy to another level; to bring the country's future towards a secured destiny, on the other hand what do we have? We have a bunch of cynical cartoon Opposition who is trying its level best to make a comedy without any success, and the population should take note about the divide and rule policy of the Opposition, a dangerous deed that can be qualified as shameful for having boycotted the presentation of the Government Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Members of the House, ladies and gentlemen...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking!

Dr. Ramdhany: I am happy they are reacting to their comedy, because we are not laughing with their comedy, they are trying to provoke us.

To conclude and close my speech, I would like to request all Mauritians to come together regardless of their ethnicity, creed to carve our future, to build the future of our children in a sure manner so that the world continues to remind and recall there exists a country, with no natural resource in the middle of nowhere in Indian Ocean, named Mauritius. Let's come together to realise our dreams toward a modern and high-income society and to show to the world although being a tiny land, we are great as a nation.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

(3.39 p.m.)

Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, permettez-moi de féliciter les intervenants avant moi. Je me sens honorée et fière de faire partie de cet auguste assemblée, et c'est avec un esprit de service et d'humilité que j'assume mon rôle comme parlementaire et députée représentant la circonscription numéro 20, Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière.

Je saisi cette occasion pour exprimer ma gratitude envers les électrices et les électeurs de cette circonscription qui ont cru en moi, et je travaillerai pour être digne de cette confiance placée en moi. Je travaillerai dans l'intérêt de la nation mauricienne pour que tous nos citoyens trouvent une amélioration dans leur qualité de vie. Voilà notre mission à tous: servir et non se servir.

Je travaillerai pour que les femmes aient cette place digne et respectée qu'elles méritent dans la société pour qu'elles ne subissent ni discrimination, ni violence, et que leurs droits soient défendus.

Je travaillerai pour nos enfants, pour que les droits de ces êtres vulnérables soient protégés.

Je travaillerai pour répondre aux attentes et aspirations des jeunes pour qu'ils soient inclus dans le train de développement de la société ; pour qu'ils puissent bâtir leur projet de vie. Ils ont pendant trop longtemps été laissés en marge comme des simple spectateurs, alors qu'ils ont tant à contribuer.

Je travaillerai pour que les développements soient durables et pour que notre environnement soit protégé.

C'est pourquoi je souhaite qu'avec l'ensemble de mes collègues parlementaires, il y ait un dialogue et une compréhension mutuelle afin de pouvoir surmonter nos différents et mettre en place des projets et des lois qui feront avancer notre pays.

M. le président, j'ai pris connaissance du discours-programme gouvernemental. Il contient, certes, quelques bonnes intentions et projets positifs mais on peut y déplorer l'absence d'une grande vision cohérente. Mais aussi, les grandes idées, les beaux discours ne servent à rien s'il n'y a pas la mise en œuvre requise. Mon rôle sera aussi de veiller à cela, de m'assurer que les bonnes intentions ne restent pas lettre morte et d'appliquer une vigilance de tous les instants pour que les droits de nos citoyens soient respectés, pour que soient préservées et améliorées les mesures de protection sociale, pour que le gouvernement lutte

effectivement contre illégalité et la pauvreté et implémente concrètement le Plan Marshall comme annoncé.

L'opposition parlementaire est le chien de garde de la démocratie et ce rôle, je vais le remplir pleinement. Je vais le remplir car je garde en tête les personnes vulnérables et je compte défendre bec et ongles l'intérêt des faibles et des nécessiteux ; tous ceux qui sont aujourd'hui les sans-voix dans notre société et qui attendent notre aide.

M. le président, en sillonnant ma circonscription, j'ai pleuré et j'ai souffert avec les faibles qui sont victimes de l'injustice, du népotisme, de discrimination et de corruption. Et j'ai ressenti profondément leur souffrance et leur aspiration pour un petit mieux pour leur condition de vie difficile.

Et ce petit mieux, M. le président, il est de la possibilité de cette assemblée. Qu'aurait servi notre passage ici si nous ne cherchons pas sans relâche à soulager la souffrance et la misère de notre population ?

Pour ma part, je suis ici avec comme valeur : servir et non me servir.

M. le président, je vais consacrer le temps de parole qui m'est accordé pour parler des femmes, des enfants, des jeunes de l'environnement, du sport et je terminerai par un plaidoyer pour ma circonscription.

En tant que femme, cela me désole de voir la sous-représentation féminine au parlement. Il nous faut plus de femmes au parlement afin de bâtir une vraie démocratie, solide, inclusive et durable.

Le discours-programme parle de réforme électorale qui introduit des quotas. Les quotas sont, en partie, une solution et un premier pas, mais il faut surtout créer les conditions favorables pour que les femmes soient plus partie-prenantes dans les organes décisionnelles et les instances régulatrices. L'égalité des genres est un droit humain fondamental. L'égalité des genres amène une société meilleure et renforcée, une économie saine, croissante et productive et pour que le pays puisse atteindre ses objectifs de développement.

Les lois sont fondamentales pour les égalités afin de replacer les femmes à leur juste position dans la société et à corriger les disparités et réparer les injustices. Il faut cependant que ces lois soient correctement élaborées et c'est le devoir du gouvernement de mettre en place le cadre juridique et les actes législatifs adéquats et s'assurer que ces lois soient aussi appliquées.

M. le président, l'égalité des genres c'est aussi le combat des hommes, pas seulement le combat des femmes, car c'est le combat pour le respect de nos mamans, nos sœurs, de la gente féminine. Les stéréotypes sont les racines même des discriminations. Les idées reçues qui sont inscrites dans l'inconscience des personnes que la place et le rôle de la fille, du garçon, de la femme, de l'homme sont définis ; qu'à la maison la fille doit aider maman en cuisine et que le garçon aide papa à bricoler, que la fille prend des cours de ballet, que le garçon apprend à jouer au foot. Et trop souvent les femmes se retrouvent devant le besoin de faire le choix entre devenir mère ou entamer une vie professionnelle. Un tel dilemme n'a pas sa raison d'être. Une femme est censée pouvoir être maman avec une vie professionnelle. Mais le monde a beaucoup changé pour le mieux. Il nous appartient maintenant à l'île Maurice d'emboîter le pas. C'est la responsabilité de tous ici présents de rendre cela possible pour que nos enfants, en particulier nos filles, puissent réussir dans la vie. Eliminer les inégalités afin que chaque fille et chaque femme puissent s'épanouir pleinement.

M. le président, le nombre grandissant de ces cas rapportés de violence contre les femmes est préoccupant et cela sans compter les femmes qui souffrent encore en silence. Et malheureusement il y a eu trop de cas où ces violences ont entraîné la mort, et le dernier crime en date ne remonte pas plus loin qu'hier quand une femme qui détenait une *Protection Order* a succombé après que son mari lui ai infligé plusieurs coups de couteau. Il est nécessaire de communiquer davantage sur les services offerts aux victimes mais il est aussi important que ces services soient appropriés. Je trouve aberrant que dans les cas de violence domestique que c'est la femme qui est arrachée, qui est expulsée de chez elle pour aller dans un *shelter* et souvent accompagnée des enfants innocents. *It is adding insult to injury*. C'est plutôt l'homme qui doit être retiré du confort de la maison et envoyé dans un centre hors de la portée de la victime. La pratique courante est le monde à l'envers ; être victime de violence et être obligé de quitter chez soi. Il est plus juste et plus humain pour protéger la femme, de retirer l'homme de la maison et de l'envoyer dans un centre. Et je ne vois rien mentionné dans le discours programme sur la formation des officiers, même quand le rapport du *National Coalition Against Domestic Violence* a déjà fait part de ces lacunes. Il est nécessaire que les Juges et les officiers de Police reçoivent des formations appropriées et continues afin de réagir correctement et apporter le soutien nécessaire à ces victimes en détresse. Autre recommandation préconisée dans ce même rapport est que des *Domestic Violence Officers* soient présents en service à toute heure dans chaque poste. Il nous faut lutter contre cette culture d'impunité pour que ces victimes de violences ne continuent pas à subir

l'insupportable. Mais il faut aussi des campagnes de sensibilisation plus efficaces dans les familles, les écoles pour changer les mentalités, inculquer aux jeunes que la violence est l'arme des lâches, pour dire que ces actes irrespectueux sont inacceptables et illégitimes, et dire que le recours à la violence n'est jamais une option. Apprendre aux femmes à savoir dire non et à fièrement faire respecter leur droit, apprendre aux femmes à être autonome, à trouver de l'emploi pour une indépendance financière et se détacher de l'emprise de leur bourreau, faire prévaloir une éducation à l'*empowerment* pour nos enfants dans les écoles afin de construire des citoyens à part entière qui savent juger entre le bien et le mal et à dire oui ou à dire non. Ce n'est pas que la vie des victimes de violence qui sont détruites mais aussi celles de leurs proches et de leurs familles, et ces enfants traumatisés seront nos citoyens de demain. L'ensemble de la population doit prendre ce problème avec sérieux car c'est un fléau qui affecte tout un pays ; la société, l'économie et nos jeunes.

Une société a le devoir de protéger ses citoyens les plus vulnérables, s'assurer que les institutions concernées, telle que la *Police Family Protection Unit*, fonctionnent correctement. Il est impératif que les victimes puissent faire confiance aux institutions et trouver refuge, se sentir protégés, non pas être livrés à elles-mêmes avec leur peur, leur souffrance et, parfois même, en perdre la vie.

M. le président, nos enfants sont indiscutablement notre bien le plus précieux. Les enfants dépendent entièrement des adultes et n'ont aucun autre recours. C'est pour cela que c'est de notre devoir de les protéger et à veiller à leur bien-être. Le développement sain des enfants est crucial pour l'avenir de toute société. Il nous faut mettre en place l'encadrement nécessaire pour qu'ils bénéficient des meilleurs traitements pour qu'ils puissent se développer de façon optimale et leur donner les outils nécessaires pour leur offrir un avenir prometteur. Je souhaite donc que le nouveau *Children's Bill* réponde à tout cela, et j'y veillerai M. le président.

En tant que jeune, j'exprime mes craintes sur l'avenir de la jeunesse mauricienne. Elle est confrontée aujourd'hui à des mots inquiétants comme le chômage, la violence et la drogue. Un jeune sur quatre est au chômage ; c'est 20,000 jeunes sans travail. Beaucoup d'entre eux sont des jeunes gradués. Malgré leur volonté, leur connaissance et leur expertise, ils ne parviennent pas à contribuer à l'économie du pays. Comment un jeune dans une telle situation parviendra à trouver un logement, à fonder une famille, à construire un projet de vie ? Beaucoup de jeunes sont en marge de la société ; incompris, exclus du développement et sont laissés pour compte. Et après l'introduction du critère des cinq crédits, 70% des élèves

ayant pris part aux examens de la *School Certificate* ne peuvent passer en classe supérieure. Que réserve l'avenir pour eux ? Avec un futur incertain, oisif, sans loisir adéquat, au bord du désespoir, ces jeunes sont fragilisés face au fléau de la drogue et de l'addiction.

M. le président, la prolifération de la drogue synthétique est extrêmement alarmante. Nous sommes, je dirai, dans un état d'urgence. La drogue détruit l'avenir de nos jeunes, brise des familles et, plus loin, la destruction de la stabilité de notre société mauricienne. C'est pourquoi il est important d'agir au plus vite. Toutes les couches sociales sont atteintes et cette Assemblée a le devoir d'arrêter ce massacre. Avoir un *National Drug Control Master Plan* est bien pour les yeux et la conscience mais le plus important va être la volonté d'implémentation.

M. le président, les jeunes s'intéressent de moins en moins à la politique et font de moins en moins confiance aux institutions. C'est parce qu'ils sont témoins de ce manque de transparence, ce manque d'égalité de chance et de méritocratie. Le manque de méritocratie dans les recrutements est un facteur majeur du dégoût des jeunes. Non seulement cela engendre le mauvais fonctionnement de ces institutions en n'ayant pas des personnes avec les qualifications requises à la tête, mais ça donne le mauvais signal, que le mérite n'est pas récompensé.

M. le président, le succès des jeunes aux Jeux des Iles de l'Océan Indien a été une démonstration éclatante de ce que la méritocratie peut apporter à notre île Maurice. Nous avons eu raison d'avoir choisi les meilleurs athlètes et cela nous a conduits vers la victoire. Imaginons un instant que ce soit des protégés obscurs qui auraient à la place participé à ces jeux. Je vous laisse imaginer la catastrophe. M. le président, pour le progrès de notre pays, cette Assemblée doit veiller de près pour que la méritocratie prime dans notre société. Dans le cas contraire, nos jeunes vont préférer quitter le pays pour de meilleures opportunités plus justes ailleurs.

M. le président, l'Etat mauricien se doit d'assurer que le développement se fasse de manière durable, de lutter contre le changement climatique, protéger l'environnement et conserver la biodiversité au bénéfice de générations actuelles et futures. Nous voyons concrètement les effets de cette crise mondialement ; les feux de brousse en Australie, les feux de forêts en Amazonie, les inondations à Madagascar et ici même à Maurice, les pluies torrentielles. Le changement climatique a un impact économique inquiétant. Il creuse les

inégalités et fait chuter la productivité. Nous faisons face à l'urgence de la crise climatique et il est impératif que nous adressions cette menace promptement.

Nos décisions et les actions ou les inactions d'aujourd'hui auront une incidence considérable sur le monde qu'hériteront nos enfants et nos petits-enfants. Il faut que le *Climate Change Bill* soit bien élaboré, avec des normes strictes et des contraventions sévères aux contrevenants. Mettre en place des lois pour définir les règles à respecter, afin d'atténuer les détériorations déjà produites sur l'environnement et pour prévenir d'autres dommages à la nature. Limiter le gaspillage énergétique des foyers et des bâtiments. Introduire des mesures incitatives et subventions appropriées qui vont vraiment encourager tous les acteurs de la société, les individus et les compagnies d'investir dans l'énergie verte.

Encourager le *Made in Moris*, afin de réduire effectivement les émissions de carbone liées à l'importation. Encourager les utilisations des véhicules à faibles émissions. Introduire un programme effectif de tri et de recyclage des déchets. Cette crise climatique a tellement d'ampleur que nous avons besoin que tout citoyen apporte sa contribution pour redresser la situation. C'est pour cela qu'il nous faut des campagnes nationales de sensibilisation, et je ne vois rien de prévu à ce sujet dans le discours-programme. Il nous doit de responsabiliser les citoyens et diffuser les informations sur les risques et les conséquences sur leur vie, sur la génération future, et leur éduquer un savoir-faire sur les mesures à prendre pour sauver la planète, inculquer une vraie culture verte à tous nos citoyens. Et je prends note de cette initiation - d'initier aux enfants du pré-primaire la culture de conservation de l'environnement. C'est certes une bonne chose, mais il faut aller encore plus loin et même penser à introduire le « changement climatique » en tant que matière scolaire. Cette ambition d'une « *plastic free* » Ile Maurice ne doit pas être cantonnée qu'à l'interdiction des contenants en plastique à usage unique mais aussi à décourager et limiter l'utilisation du plastique dans l'emballage des aliments et l'embouteillage des boissons tout en encourageant les alternatifs recyclables et biodégradables. Encourager le développement, oui, mais pas à n'importe quel prix.

M. le président, comme dit le discours-programme, il faut plus d'infrastructures sportives mieux entretenues et mieux gérées. Mais il est surtout impératif de mettre l'intérêt des athlètes au centre de toute décision. C'est l'intérêt de l'athlète qui doit primer. Les athlètes doivent être plus parties prenantes des décisions dans les clubs et les fédérations sportives, et aucune provision n'est prévue à cela. Après tout, la majorité des décisions prises concerne directement l'athlète. Ne serait-ce pas logique qu'il y ait des représentants

d'athlètes dans chaque comité exécutif pour contribuer aux discussions et prendre part aux décisions ?

M. le président, lorsque l'athlète met un terme à sa carrière, la transition n'est pas toujours évidente à gérer. La retraite sportive d'un athlète de haut niveau est souvent synonyme de dépression. En tant qu'ancienne athlète de haut niveau, avec une carrière sportive de plus de 20 ans, je comprends les besoins et les attentes de nos athlètes, les difficultés auxquelles ils font face, et j'ai moi-même souffert des manquements de l'administration sportive à Maurice. Au terme de sa carrière, l'ancien athlète de haut niveau doit se réinventer après avoir dédié sa vie à son sport, quand la grande majorité de sa vie de jeune, il l'a consacré à l'entraînement intensif au quotidien, à faire beaucoup de sacrifices - personnel, familial, financier, académique, professionnel - en quête de réussite sportive. Du coup, quand tout cela s'arrête, il perd ses repères et se sent isolé, et peut sombrer assez vite dans la dépression. Les athlètes de haut niveau, de par leurs performances, participent à la valorisation de l'image de l'île Maurice et sont érigés en rôles-modèles, notamment pour les jeunes. L'État Mauricien qui encourage l'excellence et donc une poursuite intensive des carrières sportives se doit de penser à l'insertion professionnelle des ces jeunes sportifs qui n'ont pas toujours la possibilité de se projeter dans l'après-carrière, afin qu'ils ne soient pas victimes de leur sport.

M. le président, quelques mots sur ma circonscription Beau-Bassin/Petite Rivière. Une circonscription spéciale avec son côté urbain, faisant partiellement partie de la municipalité de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill, et avec son côté rural qui englobe trois *Village Councils*, notamment celui de Petite Rivière, Gros Cailloux et Albion. Et c'est pour moi une fierté de représenter une telle diversité. Je suis à l'écoute de mes mandants et je serai leur voix au Parlement pour que les habitants de ma circonscription ne soient pas délaissés, que leurs conditions de vie connaissent une amélioration, qu'ils bénéficient adéquatement des services essentiels, qu'ils se sentent en sécurité, qu'ils soient à l'abri des fléaux, tels la drogue, la violence et les crimes ; pour que dans ma circonscription il y ait des projets de développement, pour que dans ma circonscription il y fasse bon vivre. Toutefois, avec la construction du Metro Express, j'ai vu des maisons détruites, des familles dans la tourmente et des arbres abattus. Et désormais, la mise en opération du Metro Express génère de gros embouteillages dans le centre de Beau Bassin. Les déviations de la circulation et les distances plus longues à parcourir sont synonyme de casse-tête et stress au quotidien pour ces usagers

de ces routes. Les manques de mesures de sécurité sont évidents. Il y a même eu, il y a quelques jours, un accident à Beau Bassin entre un tram et une voiture.

M. le président, je voudrais attirer votre attention sur les conditions du village de La Valette à Bambou. Ces habitants sont dans le flou par rapport à leur contrat de maisons NHDC. Ce petit village de 200 maisons est délaissé, à l'écart du développement et laissé pour compte. Le transport public inadéquat, le manque de loisirs et infrastructures sportives et, par conséquent, les jeunes sont victimes des fléaux comme les grossesses précoces et la drogue. Je demande qu'on prête plus attention au développement de La Valette.

M. le président, les récentes pluies torrentielles ont mis en exergue les problèmes d'inondation dans certaines régions, telles Albion, Chebec et Coromandel. Je demande que dans l'intérêt des habitants de la circonscription, des solutions urgentes soient trouvées à ces problèmes.

M. le président, je conclus avec un appel à cette Assemblée pour que nous tous consacrons notre énergie pour construire une meilleure île Maurice dans une entente constructive.

Je vous remercie de votre attention.

(4.04 p.m.)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Luchmun Roy!

Mrs S. Luchmun Roy (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, this is maiden speech, my first experience as a Member of this august Assembly, and I feel deeply elated. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, to convey my greetings to all the Members of this Assembly, to you in particular. I would also wish to express my deepest thanks and appreciation to the President of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency, Mr Prithvirajsing Roopun, for presenting such an ambitious and promising Government Programme 2020-2024 to the Nation on 24 January 2020.

This Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, heralds new hopes and promises for our people.

My sincere gratitude goes to the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for the trust and confidence he placed in me when he proposed that I stand as a candidate for the National Assembly election held on 07 November 2019.

On this auspicious occasion, I have a special thought for the people and electorate of my constituency, Port Louis North & Montagne Longue, for having entrusted me with the responsibility of the Constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I rise today, I cannot allow myself to be oblivious to the support and help I have received from my family and my kids all throughout the electoral campaign. It was an exacting task but all the more exciting and challenging. I should also not forget my friends from the media, where I come from. My sincere gratitude goes *à mes deux colistiers*, hon. Joanne Tour and hon. Joe Lesjongard. I must also thank hon. Tania Diolle for the Motion of Thanks she has presented in this House, which allows us to kick-start the debate on this Government Programme 2020-2024. Debate, Mr Speaker, Sir, that is the very word.

M. le président, le 24 janvier, de par leur absence, les membres de l'opposition de l'autre côté de la Chambre ont voulu occulter l'importance du discours programme dans la vie parlementaire. Leur refus d'être présent à cette occasion démontre surtout le peu de considération et de respect qu'ils accordent à leurs propres serments en tant que parlementaires de cet auguste Assemblée. Leur absence démontre aussi le peu de respect qu'ils ont non seulement pour eux-mêmes mais aussi en même temps pour les institutions, mais aussi pour leurs propres mandants, ceux-là même qui leur ont confié la responsabilité de défendre leurs intérêts. Cette Chambre, M. le président, est le cœur même de l'expression de la démocratie parlementaire. En d'autres mots, comme dirait l'anglais, *'the repository of people's voices'*. L'opposition, M. le président, a choisi de justifier son absence en affirmant que ce gouvernement - démocratiquement élu comme nous le savons tous - n'a pas de légitimité électorale, donc, pas le droit de présenter un discours programme. Mais moi, je me pose la question de savoir si cette opposition que nous avons en face de nous de l'autre côté de cette Chambre, a-t-elle cette légitimité dont elle fait sienne, et pourtant, ils ont juré fidélité à cette même Chambre pas plus tard que le 12 novembre 2019. A mon sens, M. le président, tout n'est qu'une question de démagogie et de mauvais perdants. En tant que jeune et nouvelle élue dans cette Chambre et qui a encore tout à apprendre des pratiques et des règles, je suis persuadée que cette opposition a failli à son devoir, à son serment et à la confiance de son électorat et au peuple mauricien. A leur place, moi, j'aurais honte. *It's a shame!* Après ces quelques mots, M. le président, je vais me consacrer à l'essentiel du programme du gouvernement pour les cinq prochaines années.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government Programme sets out the vision of a modern, vibrant, sustainable and inclusive Mauritian society. It contains a series of policy measures that are

designed to create better opportunities for every cross section of our nation while laying emphasis on the protection of the weakest and vulnerable segments of our citizens. At the same time, this programme charts the way forward to continuously consolidate and promote the welfare and wellbeing of our people all through better education, enhanced better healthcare systems, social housing, greater access to transportation, public utilities such as water, electricity and telecommunications; improvement of the road infrastructure. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Programme is above all a roadmap for the development of our human capital, our only asset in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government Programme is not a *propos d'intérêt*, as it is claimed in some quarters, but it reflects and encapsulates the vision of a caring Government under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister –

- For an inclusive society based on equality of opportunities, social justice, protection of the rights of our needy population, the elderly, women and children.
- For building a society that is environmentally sound and healthy that guarantees the safety of our citizens as a matter of utmost priority.
- That values the democratic fabric of our plural society, upholds civil liberties as a fundamental and unfettered rights of our citizens.
- That empowers and values women as equal partners.
- That seeks to transform our youth as enlightened citizens of society, imbued with a capacity and capability to take leadership roles in various spheres of life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government Programme also lays the foundation for Mauritius as a country to rise to the challenges of an increasingly globalising world. Mr Speaker, Sir, we were elected in November last, the people of this country entrusted us with the responsibility to build and nurture a sustainable future, a promising future for our youth and younger generations. We will stand by the pledge because that is the promise that we made; a sacred promise indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, inclusiveness, development for all is our mantra, we are not just paying lip service to some socialist discourse, but we want to actually walk the talk. We have set the tone already since the beginning of our mandate –

- From the substantial increase in the old-age pension.

- The widow's pension and the invalid pension.
- The introduction of the minimum wage policy to the Marshall Plan against poverty.

We have demonstrated to this House and to the people of Mauritius that we don't only make promises, but we also mean business as a Government. Notwithstanding criticisms from the other side of the House - in any case, Mr Speaker, Sir, that's their role - we are stepping up our efforts in constructing the inclusive society and we have no lessons to learn from whomsoever because, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is a man of words, of conviction, of commitment and he is showing the path ahead.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the economy grows, the fruits of the development should trickle down as quickly as possible to the lowest strata of our society. Everybody should be on board. No one should be left on the side roads. We are reversing the deeply-entrenched social inequality traits in our society. Of course, Mr Speaker, Sir, the road ahead is long and full of uncertainties. The uncertainties are beyond our control. The battle will be difficult, no doubt, especially for a country like Mauritius with limited resources and which is competing in very tough and uncertain world markets, but we are getting there for sure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government Programme has laid a lot of emphasis on the need for Government to accelerate the deployment of socially-inclusive policies during its term. Combatting poverty is high on our agenda and remains at the forefront of our development strategy and effort. Government undertakes to step up the implementation of the Marshall Plan against Poverty.

Access to decent and affordable housing is also a prime objective of our social inclusion agenda. In this regard, Government will accelerate housing programmes for both low and middle-income families, referring to paragraph 22 of the Government Programme 2020-2024.

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, Sir, as stated in paragraph 23 of the Programme, existing social housing units, including the NHDC apartment blocks, the CHA housing estates will be upgraded so as to create acceptable living conditions for the needy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that gender parity and women empowerment are quickly becoming a catalyst of change. Unfortunately, of late we have witnessed a rise in the number of cases of domestic violence, more importantly violence against women, children and the elderly. Such behaviour is unacceptable in a society we are living in. We have to deal with

cases of domestic violence more meaningfully. And here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his excellent initiative to chair a High-Level Committee, in view of formulating new strategy to eliminate gender-based violence as stipulated at paragraphs 136, 137 and 138 of the Programme. I also note with satisfaction that the legal arsenal will be upgraded to ensure more safety to vulnerable women, children and the elderly, and to keep assaulters and potential assaulters in check.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the introduction of the Children's Bill will be another watershed in our ongoing effort to protect our children in the face of numerous social evils and physical threats and aggressions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, no civilised society can tolerate that our women, our children, our senior citizens are continually and systematically abused and victimised. The perpetrators of such violence should be taken to task and dealt with in the most appropriate manner, and for this to happen, we need new and effective laws to address crimes like luring children and teenagers into drugs, online child abuse and child trafficking.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are fully appreciative of the Prime Minister's commitment to combat crime and drug trafficking in all its forms and manifestations and in this context, we welcome the policy measures announced at paragraph 126 on the Programme to increase the manpower needs and requirements of the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit (ADSU) and other Units involved in the combat against the scourge of drug trafficking and drug-related crimes. We are fully alive, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the good work of the Police Force in the war against drug lords and drug-related activities. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a need for Police and all the institutions to be equipped with new skills and technology in the gigantic task of protecting our children, who, as we know, are easy prey for drug traffickers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would briefly wish to speak on an issue which has implications for all countries across the world, that is, climate change and the imperative need to build a sustainable and green society. The effects of global warming and climate change are already there and we cannot deny it. Our communities need to be prepared and ready to face the reality of the phenomenon of climate change. Our towns and villages should prepare themselves for extreme weather conditions. Flooding which is a direct consequence of climate change remains an area of concern and a big challenge for us all. And here, Mr Speaker, it is timely that I mention the case of my constituency, namely at Cité La Cure, Vallée des Prêtres, Le Hochet which was severely affected during the heavy

rainfalls recently and even in previous years. I am taking this opportunity to make a special appeal to the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development to carry out an urgent survey with a view to helping people in these localities to easing the situation. In the same breath, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not insensitive to the plight of the planters of Montagne Longue, Crève Coeur, Congomah and Les Mariannes, who sustained heavy losses as a result of overflowing of their fields. There is need to devise some measures to deal with their situation too.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is at a crossroads. It is stepping into a new era of its development. This Government Programme has paved a way for the next phase of our development agenda, an agenda which is people-centred and heralds new hopes and promises for a better and inclusive society. And it is our sacred duty as legislators to evolve the necessary policies, laws and programmes to respond to make it happen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: At this stage, I will break for some 30 minutes.

At 4.20 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.54 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dhunoo!

(4.54 p.m.)

Mr S. Dhunoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Speaker, Sir, at the very outset, allow me to congratulate you for your election as Speaker of this House. I would like to congratulate my colleague, hon. Zahid Nazurally for his election as Deputy Speaker. I am certain that you will uphold the values of democracy and honour your commitment to hold the rules of this Assembly for the greater good of the electorate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as this is my first intervention as a newly elected Member, I would like to thank the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for his trust by nominating me as Deputy Government Whip. I would also like to thank the constituents of my constituency for placing their faith in my capabilities to defend and promote their interests as well as for all the good of the citizens of this country. I would also like to thank my colleague, hon. Steven Obeegadoo for his guidance and support during the general election.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last November, when the polls gave their verdict, these very citizens made a choice towards continuity. They have first-hand witnessed and experienced the

success of the social, economic and environmental policies that the Government has put in place and executed brilliantly during the past five years. Their choice for continuity emanated from the social and economic progress that our nation has been through. I would just like to enumerate some of the major highlights and projects that have shined through, as they validate the efforts of the Government.

First, on the social aspect, there have been unparalleled measures that have and will in future significantly improve the quality of life of our people. The minimum wage has been introduced to reduce income inequality and make sure that every worker is able to meet the needs of his or her family. The negative income tax further enhances this endeavour, bringing additional income to those who are more vulnerable.

Second, the Government has also recognised that income insecurity alone is not a guarantee of employee welfare. We have, in our country, innumerable and admirable people who work hard night and day to bring prosperity to our island. The introduction of the Workers' Rights Act with adequate measures such as parental leave, for instance, ensures that the destiny does not lie in the hands of the unscrupulous, but rather provides the security and satisfaction that they deserve.

Third, the Government has introduced free tertiary education to give the chance to youngsters and their families for financial relief so that they equip themselves to meet the aspiration for a better quality of life for themselves and their families.

Fourth, the Basic Retirement Pension has increased drastically to reward our elderly, those who have contributed in making Mauritius as it is today. This will further be increased in the years to come to give them an even better retirement.

Fifth, on the infrastructural aspects, we have seen the mushrooming of projects all across the island to decongestion the road network. The Metro Express Project is the hallmark of the development agenda pursued by the Government and represents the spirit of this Government. Metro Express Project has been discussed for decades, yet it was only this Government that had the guts to make it happen.

Such examples of concrete, tangible and useful achievements abound, and the population knows better how these have improved their lives.

They have made possible by sound macroeconomic management that has seen the consolidation of growth and moderation of unemployment.

Fiscal and monetary policies have been managed soundly; economic sectors have been given adequate support to emerge. These have provided the Government the platform to do more for the people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme 2020-2024 aims at doing more by building on what has been done already. If I allow myself an analogy, the Government has already set the foundations towards building a house and these foundations are solid. The programme now indicates how we will construct the walls, the roof and apply the finishing touches to have a refuge.

I must commend the hon. Prime Minister for his programme which strikes the perfect balance between all socio-economic objectives. It is clear that this is an agenda that fully subscribes to its ethos of sustainable and inclusive nation-building.

The programme is inclusive as well as in its scope. The programme recognises that the youths have an important voice in the country and the Government will be placing a lot of emphasis on nurturing their talents and knowledge to allow them to fully participate in the economic development of Mauritius, be it for start-ups, the environment and for skills upgrading.

The elderly has also been given due consideration. The Basic Retirement Pension will be increased to Rs13,500 over the course of this Government's mandate. This is an unprecedented measure that will forever change the lives of those who have retired and for those who will be retiring soon. This Government cares for its people.

On the economic front, the signal is clear. Government will shy no effort to consolidate existing sectors of economic activities while making sure that the foundations are present to catalyse the emergence of new ones.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme 2020-2024 emphasises on the role that knowledge, technology and innovation will play. Innovating is imperative if we want to become a first world country and allow our economic sectors to meet their potential. This Government has, over the last five years, put several incentives and schemes to support research and development and we will be moving into an adoption phase.

Internet of things, blockchain, big data and artificial intelligence are changing the global economic landscape and there are significant opportunities that we can tap into by using existing and by developing bespoke technologies to improve our competitiveness and give a second life to our main economic sectors of activity.

For this to happen, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government will be building technological parks and innovation labs across the island to harness the potential and develop the ideas of our youth. This solution will not only support our economic sectors, but will also service delivery by the Government to further facilitate the lives of the inhabitants of Mauritius.

The e-licensing platform which revolutionises the way certain permits are delivered, has already improved attractiveness and accessibility for businesses and individuals. This is a success story that needs to be replicated. Cyber security, online and cashless transaction, open data culture and further democratisation of access to high speed internet will accelerate the digitalisation of public services to create an e-Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a Government that has an eye for the future and understands that citizen welfare and the better standards of living require quicker and more efficient services. In a world characterised by increasingly hectic work-life balance, it is important that we give back the gift of leisure time to the people. This is what the Government will do.

A good lifestyle requires a healthy environment as well.

In the past, we have been guilty of pursuing economic prosperity at the expense of the environment. This will be no longer the case.

Economic progress and sustainability can and should be complimentary. This is why this Government has made a cleaner and greener Mauritius a priority. Our children deserve a future where they do not have to worry about the impacts of climate change affecting their living; where they do not have to worry about pollution and unsustainable farming degrading their health.

As I mentioned earlier, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government cares for its citizens.

Clean and renewable energy is one of the areas where the focus will be. All over the world, disguarding fossil fuel has become a must. You have to make sure that our energy mix - I would like to salute the highly laudable initiative of increasing renewable energy mix to 40% by 2030.

The banning of plastic bags also is welcome. You have seen how plastic litter pollutes our rivers, endangers wildlife and results in despicable eyesores. Our beautiful beaches, towns and villages had become land fields causing an image deficit and harming our tourism sector. Over the past years, cleaner campaigns have been undertaken to reverse this trend, but it is clear that more is needed to be done. Together we will clean Mauritius and preserve Mauritius.

I will be ending my intervention by assuring each and every one of my commitment to make the programme you have created the dreams you have made a reality. I would like to invite all the Members of this Assembly, including those of the Opposition to avoid

demagogy and petty politics when we have serious matters to address and encourage the fulfilment of this plan.

Most of all, I would like to say to the people of Mauritius that together we can achieve a lot. I have built over my career a close connection with the African continent and I will be ending my intervention with an African proverb: 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together'. *Ensam nou kapav.*

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne and Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It is a great privilege to be called upon to make my maiden speech and I congratulate the hon. Members who have made their speeches earlier today.

I also seize this opportunity to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for your election to this very important office. I rise today in full recognition of the honour which the people of Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, have given to me by voting for me and electing me as their first elected Member and for enabling me to serve in this Parliament.

I rise in full recognition of the responsibility that comes along with this honour to be called hon. Member and to get this unique opportunity to serve my Constituency and my country.

I also rise in full recognition of the distinctive moment I shall be experiencing and lucky enough in life to be sitting on this side of the House sharing the Opposition bench with seasoned Parliamentarians, and representing the will and wish of about 60% of the people of Mauritius, who voted for us on this side of the House during the last General Election.

I take this opportunity to express my sense of pride to be sitting next to the leader of the PMSD, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, and also lucky enough to learn and work along with the Opposition, with seasoned Parliamentarians in the likes of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Arvin Boolell and the leader of the MMM, hon. Paul Bérenger.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to those who have had the privilege to be elected to this Parliament, let me say we have two obligations at the core of our role as Members of Parliament. First, we have to make our democracy work, and second, we have to make our democracy work for our people.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what do I mean by that? To make our democracy work we need to ensure that our citizens and the organisations are able to freely comment, support and, when needed, criticise policies and programmes being debated in this House. They need to know that our media will amplify their voices and ensure that their voices are directly heard by us. This way we will know how citizens feel about and experience Government policies and programmes. Our democracy will grow from this openness.

However, and yet while perusing the Government programme, I do not see a single mention about Government's commitment to come forward with a proper legislation with regard to freedom of information. This was high on the agenda of the previous Government, but was never canvassed in Parliament; no mention also to do away with this opaque policy of maintaining and introducing clause of confidentiality in every major projects and contracts involving billions of taxpayers' money.

Same fate for the Marshall Plan - since 2016, it was supposed to be implemented but, yet, so many recommendations have remained unattended. I do hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this Government will pursue the implementation of the Marshall Plan during this mandate and will walk the talk to eradicate extreme poverty.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government Programme talks about moving towards an inclusive high income and green Mauritius, but I must remind this House that what is being proposed is nothing new. Way back in 2010, the then Government came forward with a development strategy called *Maurice Ile Durable*. Most of the measures being announced in the Government Programme are found in the development programme called, at that time, *Maurice Ile Durable*. There were numerous studies that were carried out and there were numerous policies that were designed to create what we call green jobs. I do not see a single mention as to how green jobs will be created in this Government Programme. I do not see any policies that will eradicate youth unemployment in this country through the implementation of the green economy. I hope that the policies found in this Government Programme will be moving Mauritius towards that green economy that we want to be implemented, not remained mere words, and I shall fully support legislation that Government will bring to this House to make it happen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for a Government to implement those policies, we need to have vibrant, strong and independent institutions. For our country to forge ahead and become a model of democracy that the world will refer to in years to come in terms of good

governance, democracy and being a sustainable country I humbly move that we should embark in major constitutional reforms.

This is not new to this country, Mr Speaker, Sir. Way back in 1948, we have had major constitutional reforms, be it the advent of the 1958 Constitution, reviewed in 1961, reviewed in 1964 and thereof culminating in Mauritius becoming independent. There is nothing new to constitutional reforms. I know my Learned Senior, hon. Minister Alan Ganoo, has canvassed this issue of major constitutional reforms over the years.

I strongly believe that this House, with new hon. Members having their chance to be in this Parliament, be it on this side of the House or on the other side of the House, have got the will power to go down in history and make those major constitutional reforms happen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot have a constitutional regime where we do not have a constitutional division at the Supreme Court. I am not canvassing for a constitutional Court because it will create a lot of havoc with regard to reviewing the whole system, but at least, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to enhance democracy, and having electoral petitions before the Supreme Court, that will take the time that it will take, does not favour inclusiveness in this Mauritian society. That is why there is an urgent call for major constitutional reforms.

Even if there are no changes, the present constitutional regime already provides that there are some important powers of appointment, for example, dissolution of the Assembly which can be exercised by the President. I will not go on doing a *procès* of the President in his own personal name, but I will humbly say, we cannot have important powers in the hands of a President. These powers were conferred to the Governor General who does not have a mandate from the people whereas the Prime Minister does. The President is formally elected by the National Assembly, but only the Prime Minister can nominate a candidate and there is no debate on the Prime Minister's motion. In effect, the President is a nominee of the Prime Minister as was the Governor General. Either we decide, as a nation, that we want only a figurehead President or we have one who exercises certain powers in a non-partisan and non-political manner which guarantees independence of certain institutions vis-à-vis the political executive. If this is what we want, as this is already to a large extent what the existing Constitution theoretically provides, then we must review the mode of appointment of the President so that he has proper legitimacy. I am aware of the serious reservations that some may have on this issue, but I still believe that the spirit of the 1968 Constitution which provided for what Professor De Smith called unique powers given to the Governor General

may still be valid today. But we cannot accept today what might have been acceptable in the 1960s. Today, if a President is to exercise certain powers, he must have legitimacy, which he can only acquire through wider suffrage and which he does not have as a nominee of the Prime Minister.

Let us all join hands and make this happen and I urge this Government that to have an inclusive society, it is high time as it has been the case in pre-independence, Mauritius, let us all sit down together and bring about those major constitutional changes and come forward with a Constitution that will meet the expectations of the people and gear up towards a proper nation and becoming what I wish to call my country, my island, my Republic, the Ocean State of Mauritius. To be called the Ocean State of Mauritius, we need major constitutional reforms, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Here, I take inspiration and I will conclude what the famous Chinese philosopher, Lao Tzu once said –

“A Journey of a Thousand Miles Begins with a Single Step.”

So, let us all here, in this House, make that positive step altogether in this House, we can make major constitutional reforms, major debates in this House. We have got new Parliamentarians, we have got seasoned Parliamentarians, we have got experienced Parliamentarians. We can move forward to go and do away with a stereotype society.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would not take much of your time. God bless you all. God bless our country. Thank you.

(5.20 p.m.)

Dr. I. Rawoo (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Members of the House, it is a real honour and privilege for me to stand up for the first time in this House to address you on the Government Programme for the Government period of 2020-2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I take this opportunity to be among the very first in Parliament to congratulate you on your successful election and to wish you the very best for your time as Speaker of this Parliament. I am confident that you have the sense of judgment, the experience and the wisdom to do extremely well and looking forward to serving under you during the balance of this Parliament. I warmly congratulate you again on your appointment.

My first word must be a tribute to our Prime Minister, a great leader, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and to our Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, who both led us under the banner of *l'Alliance Morisien* to a clear victory during the recent election, never faltering and never losing heart. Beyond doubt, two men of great vision and proximity with strong determination and who have at heart the whole population of our beloved nation. Undoubtedly, they will both certainly lead Mauritius with full confidence to new heights. Within a span of three months, this Government, through the leadership of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has already embarked a comprehensive strategy for unleashing the full potential of the entire nation. You can sense the feel-good factor among the whole nation. Without any doubt, economic and investors' confidence have been boosted after the last election polls.

M. le président, il s'agit d'un exercice qui a été fait par le gouvernement précédent dans le passé, mais je peux vous assurer ainsi qu'à l'Assemblée que pour celui-ci le gouvernement a fermement l'intention de mettre les mots en action car il y a un sentiment de poursuite des affaires. Ce gouvernement ne vendra pas des rêves mais les réalisera au profit de chaque mauricien indépendamment de sa croyance et de sa communauté.

It is an honour to deliver my maiden speech in the debate of our nation economic growth, the drivers of growth of the smaller enterprises that inject our economy with creativity and energy. Behind each of those businesses are people with the skills to solve problems, to take decisions and to have the courage to lead entrepreneurs and the enterprises that they create both private sector and charitable play a uniquely large role in economy too.

After the victory of *l'Alliance Morisien*, we have been clearly chosen by the population to serve Mauritius to the best of our ability. The second mandate of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is but for the continuation of the progress and other projects for the betterment of Mauritius. We have already implemented the Metro Express which has been officially launched from Rose Hill to Port Louis which is a step ahead.

M. le président, nous allons travailler ensemble pour la continuité des projets de développement as we have said in the electoral campaign '*ansam tout possib*'. Measures have been initiated to steer action in range of fields in both rural and urban areas. A strong beginning has been made and a promising future awaits us.

M. le président, ce gouvernement est fermement déterminé et pleinement confiant dans notre tâche de créer des nouveaux emplois dans diverses industries et secteurs quand nous mettons en avant plusieurs moyens et programmes novateurs pour réduire sensiblement

et progressivement le taux actuel de chômage qui touche principalement les jeunes, en particulier les jeunes diplômés et les sortants d'école. Ce gouvernement s'engage à œuvrer pour le bien-être des pauvres, des marginalisés et des personnes vulnérables de la société et pour l'ensemble de la nation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to thank the hon. Prime Minister for placing his trust in me and giving me the responsibility and task to be Parliamentary Private Secretary for Constituencies No. 13 and No. 3, and Agaléga Islands. We are here to mean business and to change the lives of our beloved people, not in hundred days as we had once heard but a change in mindset, a change for a better future, a change for a better life and protection for our people. The people of Mauritius have wisely agreed to bring *l'Alliance Morisien* to power in November 2019. *L'Alliance Morisien* is a team of which I proudly belong to, a team of which I adhere to the values and principles, a team that means business, that is ready to take actions and measures to bring Mauritius to a high-end economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since our clear victory in the last polls, our opponents have not been accepting defeats. I beg to totally disagree with the cheap statements of those bad losers. Shame on them! The whole nation had made the choice and that choice was very clear in their minds. It is regretful that the Opposition parties are against the victory of *l'Alliance Morisien*. They are coming up with some cheap pretexts. They have even lodged a case in the Supreme Court to contest the result of the election, but they are happily sitting in the House. If this is not called *de la bassesse*, I do not know which word the *dictionnaire Larousse* should invent especially for them. *A bon entendeur! Cela se voit que ces personnes sont de mauvais perdants et n'acceptent pas la décision de la population.*

It is so clear to see what the Government of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has achieved in the first mandate in a few years, only whilst before 10 years lapsed without any big development. We have worked for the interest of the population irrespective of communities.

Le Premier ministre Pravind Kumar Jugnauth est un vrai rassembleur. Il a toujours une considération pour toutes les communautés confondues. Il n'a jamais manqué du respect envers peu importe quelle communauté ou culture. En plus, voyez vous-mêmes ces grands projets de développement que le gouvernement a réalisé en peu de temps seulement.

The Leader of *Parti travailliste*, Navinchandra Ramgoolam, should be himself ashamed of what is happening to his party after the expulsion of five loyal soldiers a few days ago. Executive members, including the ex-Attorney, Yatin Varma, who is asking

Navinchandra Ramgoolam to set down as Leader of *Parti travailliste*. *Il parle de la dictature au sein du Parti travailliste. Ce parti est fragilisé suite aux récentes polémiques survenues la semaine dernière.* It is like a cartoon story which is the movie; it should be an elected captain who is trying to raise the Titanic....

(Interruptions)

Hollywood, Bollywood *mem fail are kalité acteur la.*

Mr Speaker Sir, *c'est l'éclatement du Parti travailliste, l'hémorragie rouge au Parti travailliste, le coronavirus est implémenté dans une partie en mode de quarantaine.*

I would just add to hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, the Leader of the Opposition - my friend, hon. Dr. Kailesh Jagutpal answered a question - you, as doctor, should know that coronavirus is on the transmission through respiratory droplets - only respiratory droplets. You are a doctor, you should know - respiratory droplets through nose and mouth. So, wearing of mask is the only important thing, not wearing of gown.

(Interruptions)

I am a doctor as well, I am....

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, you are going far from the debate! Please!

Dr. Rawoo: *Comme dit le proverbe: au pays des aveugles le borgne est roi.* Here, on the contrary, *l'Alliance Morisien*, we have a new team of young dynamic and dedicated MPs, who are working with continued aim of making a better Mauritius.

Nous voulons faire de la politique autrement. Chers amis du Parti travailliste de l'autre côté de la Chambre, je vous cite un article paru durant le week-end par un Chef éditorialiste d'un grand journal en ligne.

I quote –

‘Votre leader, en exécutant ces petits protestataires, envoie, en fait, un signal fort à ceux, au sein de ce bureau politique, qui pensent pouvoir le pousser vers la sortie, en capitalisant sur le fait qu’il ne soit pas au Parlement et qu’il soit rejeté par l’électorat du numéro 5, puis du numéro 10. Varma, Pentiah, Hookoom et Bholah ont été sacrifiés, mais le message est clair. Si demain, disons, l’actuel Leader de l’Opposition ou l’ancien chef de file rouge du Parlement essaie de lui faire de l’ombre, Ramgoolam ne va pas se laisser faire et va brandir l’épée Highlander. Selon lui, on ne peut pas être

soit travailliste, soit *ramgoolamiste*. Il faut être *ramgoolamiste* pour être travailliste, et non l'inverse, sous-entend Ramgoolam.'

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is regretful to see, on the other side of the House, the young and newly elected Members from the Opposition to accept to be the yes man and to be brainwashed in such a way. To only criticising the great projects of development, make no mistake, the Government, under the leadership and primeministership of Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has achieved numerous projects in only two years. Allow me to mention only a few of them –

- the increase in old age pension;
- the introduction of minimum wage, and
- the fight against inequality and social justice, which remains still a priority in our Government.

Mes chers amis de l'Opposition réalisent que rien n'a été fait pendant 10 ans sous l'ancien régime. Certains ont même claqué la porte de l'Hôtel du gouvernement, alors qu'ils ont été choisis par la population pour servir notre pays. C'est triste et aberrant que ces personnes soient contre le progrès de Maurice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, based on Government Programme 2020-2024, we are towards an inclusive, high-income and green Mauritius forging ahead together. Our priority is to harness the collective efforts of the population in order to achieve an inclusive Mauritius.

Nous voulons une île Maurice meilleure, une société inclusive pour que tout le monde ait des chances égales. Le gouvernement met beaucoup d'emphasis sur le green Mauritius, un environnement propice vert et ainsi meilleur pour le bien-être de nos enfants.

We all wish to live in a peaceful, safe and secure Mauritius. Thus, this Government, which cares greatly for your safety, has built on the implementation of the Safe City Project. Government will provide high technology to ensure that our island remains safe and secure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, depuis qu'on a implémenté les caméras de Safe City, nombreux délits de vols à l'arraché, des crimes et même un cas de kidnapping, les officiers de police ont pu traquer récemment une fillette qui a été kidnappée par un présumé pédophile dans un faubourg de St. Pierre. Mais, malheureusement, certains, en l'occurrence les membres de 'l'Alliance savon national' voulurent enlever toutes les caméras de Safe City s'ils viendraient au pouvoir. I would say, shame on them!

These same people are now in concubinage à trois pour créer une alliance contre nature pour les éventuelles élections municipales et villageoises. Le coq de la basse-cour aurait-il sa place dans le cœur mauve qui cherche sa clé dans le bateau Titanic? Feuilleton à suivre!

Mr Speaker, Sir, referring to Government Programme measures, the Government, under the aegis of the Ministry of Energy and Public Utilities, under the strong hands of our Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, has at heart to make Mauritius independent from renewable sources. We want to make our island green. We are going to invest massively in renewable energy sector. The Government is making enormous efforts, 1,000 solar photovoltaic kits have already been installed in houses across the island. The main purpose of the project, along with other initiatives that are well underway, is to help the realisation of the national goal of 35% of renewable energy in the electricity mix by 2025. It is used as a major stepping stone for sustainable development of renewable energy. As my friend from the Opposition, hon. David said, from 2030, 100% will be in Reunion Island. I just want to pinpoint that CEB produces 46.4% of the country total power requirement and 53.6% is being purchased from independent power produce, out of which already 20.7% is renewable. So, by 2025, we will be already 55.70% of renewable energy.

Le gouvernement s'est engagé à adopter une politique de développement responsable et durable sur le plan environnemental. Il est clair que l'impact de réchauffement climatique et du changement climatique se fait de plus en plus sentir dans le monde entier. Maurice, en tant que nation insulaire, avec une petite masse terrestre, est la plus vulnérable au phénomène du changement climatique. Le gouvernement jouera un rôle de chef de fil, non seulement sur le plan intérieur, mais aussi à l'échelle régionale et internationale, afin de promouvoir un changement de paradigme dans notre politique de développement.

As mentioned in the Government Programme to ensure sustainability and responsible investment, Mauritius aims at championing this new development policy based on four pillars

–

- (1) investing in clean energy;
- (2) shifting to a cleaner and greener Mauritius;
- (3) migrating risk from climate change, and
- (4) protecting our marine resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as my Constituency No. 13 is concerned, we have already implemented numerous projects which are already completed, such as absorption drains at Rivière des Anguilles, La Flora, Rivière du Poste, Tyack, Souillac and Bois Chéri. Several children playgrounds have been constructed at Tyack, Rivière du Poste and La Flora. The inhabitants of Tyack also have a state-of-art facility which is considered as a jewel. *Petits et grands utilisent cette nouvelle infrastructure presque tous les jours pour s'adonner à des exercices quotidiens.*

Under the aegis of the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development, under the strong hands and supervision of my colleague, hon. Bobby Hurreeram, officers of the NDU have been working very hard these last days as we are completing the La Flora platform which will be officially launched this week. This new infrastructural development will be very beneficial for numerous pilgrims and devotees who will be able to use this facility for the coming celebration of Thaipusam Cavadee.

Moreover, we are also opening very soon the link road from La Flora football ground to Grand Bois Police Station for the celebration of Maha Shivaratri. This will definitely facilitate the pilgrimage of the numerous devotees on their way to Grand Bassin. Together with my two colleague Ministers, hon. Dr. Jagutpal and hon. Dr. Padayachy, we are all working in collaboration for the best of our constituency. Every effort is being made and no stone has been left unturned. A Task Force Committee has been especially set up by our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, to monitor and supervise all the works delivered before these two major celebrations for ease and benefits of all pilgrims and devotees. This is called unity in diversity, a Prime Minister of proximity who has at heart our rainbow island irrespective of race, religion and creed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, most importantly, we are coming up with the construction of the Rivière des Anguilles Dam. There will be a 2-kilometre long rock-fill dam across Rivière des Anguilles. This dam will have a capacity of 14 mm³ with an annual lead of 15 mm³. The maximum dam height will be around 55 metres. The construction of the dam will definitely ensure the meeting of the potable water of the southern region. The project will start in this mandate itself. Hence, Mare aux Vacoas will ensure the supply of water to the inhabitants of the Lower and Upper Plaines Wilhems. I am proud to be a Mauritian; I am proud to be an elected Member of this House. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am proud to be a Member of this Government, and to those who ask why I am here, I'll say it is because I want to rekindle the sense of adventure and pioneer spirit for our forebears and ancestors, the courageous men and

women who came to the new place carrying little more than their hopes and determination to build a better life. I have as a goal my ambition to build on their efforts and those of others who have preceded me. So, I may play my part in creating something even greater for those who have not yet arrived.

Furthermore, a state-of-the-art swimming pool will be constructed in Rivière des Anguilles for the benefit of the people residing in Constituency No. 13. It is to be noted that this state-of-the-art facility will provide access to people of determination and also innovative facility of hydrotherapy will be introduced in this sport complex. This development will be under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation, under the supervision of my colleague, hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is my hope while in this House to promote constructive solutions based on equity and social justice for the great challenges that we have promised to the nation. My greatest wish is that at the end of my time in the House, I shall have contributed towards making Mauritius a better place than it is today for its people to live the unity in diversity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let's work together to make Mauritius an innovation-driven high income economy to create a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius. We shall build a safer united Mauritius for all, based on higher standards of living enshrined in a culture of togetherness and harmony.

On ne fait pas des *shows* comme certains partis de l'opposition. On doit travailler et honorer nos promesses et objectifs. Sur ce, je lance un appel patriotique d'unité aux membres de l'opposition. On a besoin de votre collaboration patriotique pour qu'on puisse continuer les différents projets d'avenir pour le pays en entier. Laissons nos différences de côté, c'est ensemble que nous allons réussir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Hurdoyal!

(5.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms (Mr T. Hurdoyal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am deeply honoured as I stand in this august Assembly to deliver my maiden speech following the presentation of the Government Programme 2020-2024 by his Excellency, the President of the Republic of Mauritius on 21 January 2020.

I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for presenting the Government Programme 2020-2024, which will guide the actions of Government for the next five years and chart our way forward for a more prosperous and inclusive society.

Allow me, right from the outset, to seize this opportunity to congratulate all Members from both sides of the House for their election as Members of the National Assembly following a free and fair election held on 07 November 2019.

I appreciate that as a young and newly elected Member of this august Assembly, those who were here before, have gracefully left the political stage, making room for new voices, new ideas and new aspirations. And today is the moment for me, in my humble manner, to bring my contribution to the country towards new heights. “Do something today that your future self will thank you for.” Our actions and decisions today will shape the way we will be living in the future.

However, I must admit my disappointment that Members of the other side of the House chose not to be present at this solemn moment of the presentation of the Government Programme by the President of the Republic. As a newly elected Member of the National Assembly, I must say that such an attitude, without any reasonable justifications, does not send the right signal to those who look upon us as a role model.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to seize this solemn moment to extend my sincere appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a man of vision, a man of purpose and a great leader of our modern time. Mr Speaker, Sir, the task of a leader is to get his people from where they are to where they have never been. Mr Speaker, Sir, can you imagine that the son of a postman, driver coming from a modest family is today addressing the House as a Minister.

I am grateful that the hon. Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, entrusted me with the opportunity to serve his Government as Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, which has now a broader portfolio.

The population has given a clear mandate to our hon. Prime Minister to pursue his mission towards realising the vision of Government for an inclusive, high-income and green Mauritius driven by technology and innovation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there can be no comparison of the achievements and progress made within such a short period since the Prime Minister took office in January 2017. At national

level, the population was a privileged witness of the realisation of the most prestigious and complex projects ever implemented in Mauritius. I am referring here to the Metro Express Project. I am pleased to note that the metro network will be extended to the various parts of the country and will include the eastern region.

Furthermore, there are major infrastructural projects such as –

- a modern ENT Hospital;
- the construction of a multisport complex at Côte d'Or, and
- a gamut of road construction projects across the country is a testimony of the Government's unfailing commitment for enhancing the quality of life of our citizens.

I would wish to highlight that it is under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister that minimum wage has become a reality in Mauritius. History will always remember his contribution for improving the quality of life of those at the lowest rung of the social ladder.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *parole donnée parole sacrée*, the elderly, widows, persons with disabilities, orphans and other beneficiaries have seen a significant rise of their monthly pension to Rs9,000 in December last. In January last year, the hon. Prime Minister announced a historic measure to provide education for students studying at public universities. This will no doubt give opportunities to the youth in unleashing their potential for a brighter future. Furthermore, from Grade 1 to Grade 9, children in Mauritius now benefit from free textbooks.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, the country witnessed the capability of good leadership by organising one of the most fabulous editions of the Indian Ocean Games which saw a clear victory of our country in terms of medals won by our athletes. In September of the same year, Pope Francis set foot on the Mauritian soil for a memorable visit which coincided with the yearly pilgrimage of *Bienheureux Père Laval*, which is celebrated by Mauritians of various origins. Never has any Government created such a feel-good factor among the population and it is not over yet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my decision to join the MSM party led by hon. Pravind Jugnauth has been a logical step in my political career. My pride and happiness reside in my humble contribution to the betterment of the citizens coming from the four corners of the country, particularly those residing the eastern region where I have served as Chairperson of the Flacq District Council for five years. Under my tenure and with the support of the Central

Government, this region of our country has witnessed a marked transformation with more than 50 projects completed, including the new market building in Bel Air, which will be completed by mid-2020 at the cost of Rs115 m. Let me recall the House that under the Labour Government, many promises were made on the construction of the market, but not a single stone had been laid.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the 07 November 2019 marked a turning point in the history of our country. A young, dynamic and committed Prime Minister along with his team obtained a clear mandate to serve the country for the next five years. The signal sent by the population was clear and resounding progress should go on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we made history in Constituency No. 10 on 07 November despite vile and personal attacks from helpless, yet arrogant opponents who could not accept defeat. Never had the result of an election been proclaimed on such late hour. I have a particular thought to the hundreds of public officers for their courage, who worked for long hours on the counting day. I would like to seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people of Constituency No. 10 to have cast their votes for *l'Alliance Morisien* and I wish to give them my word that I will serve them to the best of my ability. History will retain that the former Prime Minister got defeated by a margin of 5,716 votes by a new comer in Constituency No. 10. Mr Speaker, Sir, as Mahatma Gandhi said: 'In a gentle way, you can shake the world'. The leader of the Labour Party refused to accept that *la voix du peuple est la voix de Dieu*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to elaborate on the Government Programme and the key role that my Ministry will be called upon to play in its implementation in the years to come. Never before had a Government Programme rallied a whole population around a common resolve in shaping a prosperous and equitable country where people live in unity and harmony. The Government Programme provides a clear vision of the game changing strategy to elevate our country to the league of high-income nation where each of us is given an equal chance to aspire for a better quality of life. We are, Mr Speaker, Sir, standing at a moment, where the capacity to shape the destiny of this country is unmatched. What an incredible privilege that is! All the ingredients are gathered for each and every one of us to work towards a common goal for transforming our country into a model of prosperity, stability and inclusiveness. As a matter of fact, there are clear indications that we are on the right path towards success, when we observe that our country is ranked 13th worldwide on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business and 1st in Africa.

Mr Speaker, Sir, an efficient public service is a *sine qua non* condition in ensuring that Mauritius takes advantage in embracing promptly the unfolding Fourth Industrial Revolution which will be driven by disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, Internet of Things, just to name a few. My Ministry will relentlessly pursue its efforts to enhance standards in public service delivery and to transform into a world class public service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraph 170 of the Government Programme makes a clear mention of the implementation of the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy which advocates a Whole-of-Government approach. I would like to state my firm commitment in ensuring that the transformative journey will be pursued relentlessly in our quest to put the citizens and the business community at the centre of public service delivery. We shall ensure that the public service is at the forefront of innovation and technology and driven by an organisation culture geared towards performance and excellence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has already embarked upon the promotion of a lean, flexible and citizen-centric public service which upholds the principle of good governance and ethics. A rapidly evolving local and global environment has called for a paradigm shift in the functioning of the public service. It is against this backdrop that as soon as I took office as Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms, several initiatives were undertaken in line with the Public Sector Business Transformation Strategy. The strategy calls for a collective response, for a systematic integrated and coordinated approach to prepare the public service to remain efficient, resilient and responsive. This will create the right ecosystem to realise the vision of Government for an inclusive high-income and green Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not later than last week, I have launched a Management Information System to enable all the 39 Transformation Implementation Committees to manage business transformation initiatives in their Ministries and Departments. In all, my Ministry has received some 211 business transformation initiatives across the public service. The system will also be a tool for the Public Sector Business Transformation Bureau of my Ministry in supporting Ministries and Departments in successfully implementing transformation initiatives and projects while ensuring that Key Performance Indicators set are within targets. Moreover, I wish to inform the House that next month, my Ministry will officially launch an SMS based platform to ensure closer and more effective communication between my Ministry and all public officers in the public service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the forthcoming initiatives of my Ministry will be to set up an innovation and incubation lab to showcase on the potential of a wave of innovations that will allow us to re-engineer the public service. For instance, the applicability of Artificial Intelligence to improve healthcare and other Government services would be showcased.

Queues and inefficient business processes that frustrate our citizens will be a thing of the past.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will soon come up with a Smart Process Framework that will be adopted across the public service with a view to revisiting and re-engineering existing processes and leverage on innovative technologies, to offer round the clock, customised and citizen-centric services to the population.

Our country has the technology and expertise to reach the level of service delivery provided by countries like Singapore.

Mr Speaker, Sir, equally important to sustain the socio-economic development of the country, it is imperative that the right conditions prevail for the wellbeing of public officers.

It is a fact that many tend to forget the role that public officers play in our day to day life. Many take for granted the hard work they put in everyday to ensure the good health, education, prosperity and security of our people and country at large.

It is becoming more and more difficult to strike the right balance between our professional and social life.

This situation, if allowed to persist, will likely lead to stressful conditions which very often have a negative impact on our work performance and even on our health.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for almost three decades now, the Public Officers' Welfare Council has been actively engaged in promoting the welfare of officers. The POWC conducts activities that have provided public officers with opportunities to take a break from their busy work environment. These activities include, amongst others, football, volleyball, badminton tournaments, keep fit activities, excursions, stays at hotels and tours in Rodrigues, Reunion, Malaysia, Singapore and India.

Mr Speaker, Sir, they also provide an appropriate forum for bringing public officers together, to promote a sense of belonging and networking team spirit, at the level of Ministries and Departments, subsequently, this reflects positively on the overall performance of the public service.

However, we need to do more by coming up with new ideas and new projects. To further strengthen the work of the POWC, my Ministry is actively engaged in reviewing the structure of the present Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to enhance the welfare of public officers in general, careful consideration is being given to the work environment.

In December last year, at the opening ceremony of the Civil Service Kermesse, the hon. Prime Minister acknowledged the immense contribution of Public Officers in the socio-economic development of the country.

I would like to emphasise here, that the right to decent, safe and healthy working conditions and environment have always been a priority for this Government.

My Ministry ensures compliance of Ministries and Departments with the provisions of safety and health legislations.

To minimise the risk of accidents at the workplace, the Occupational Safety and Health Unit performs -

1. monthly safety audits,
2. risk assessments,
3. investigations,
4. fire drill exercises,
5. attending complaints amongst others.

Mr Speaker, Sir, progress has been achieved in numerous fields and working conditions improved in several Ministries and Departments. In that context, 7,200 safety audits were achieved for the year 2018/2019.

My Ministry is committed towards promoting and supporting the development of a preventative safety culture for continual improvement of Occupational Safety and Health performance in Ministries and Departments.

As highlighted in the Government Programme, the new Occupational Safety and Health Management System, which is already operational in a few organisations in the Civil Service, will be extended to cover the whole of the Public Service on a planned basis.

This Management System will considerably improve the safety and health standards within the public service. Thus, all Ministries and Departments would be compliant with the Occupational Safety and Health legislation in terms of policy, risk assessment, the establishment of Safety and Health Committees, emergency procedures, and training amongst others.

Additionally, it is worthwhile to point out that this Ministry is responsible for Enhancement of Work Environment Programme (EWEP), which provides financial assistance to other Ministries and Departments, in order to enhance the working environment of public officers.

It is widely recognised over the years, that the programme has greatly upgraded the workplace environments.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to inform the House that, for the period January 2015-January 2020, 390 projects have been funded through Departmental Warrants to the sum of Rs45 m. by my Ministry.

My Ministry will continue to assist Ministries and Departments by funding relevant safety and health projects for enhancing the working environment through the programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the welfare of public officers also relies heavily on the sound health of the workforce. This will enhance productivity and ensure sustainable socio-economic development of the country.

In this context, my Ministry is in the process of launching tenders to secure the services of a Consultant, who is going to be responsible for the design and implementation of the Government Medical Insurance Scheme (GMIS) to cater for all public officers.

The benefits of the scheme are to enable public officers to have access to a wider array of high-tech medical facilities, and benefit from the latest technologies. It will also help reduce pressure on public hospitals, and create opportunities for the promotion of Mauritius as medical hub.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is responsible for the training of public officers in order to equip them with the necessary competencies. In line with the PRB Recommendations, forty to sixty hours of meaningful work-related training has to be provided annually to public officers at all levels in order to improve their job performance.

In this context, since November 2015 the Civil Service College, Mauritius has provided training to some 30,000 public officers.

The main objective of the college is to specifically cater to the growing training and development needs of public officers, including those from Local Authorities and Parastatal bodies.

Government is conscious of the need to provide a conducive and congenial environment for dispensing training to public officers and a plot of land to an extent of "9 Acres 13 Perch" at Le Réduit Triangle has already been identified for the construction of a new college which will have a pivotal role, to play in capacity building and human resource development in the civil service.

The college will act as a regional Centre of Excellence for Training and Development, think tank, research centre for governance and policy-related issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have much pleasure to announce, that a major milestone has been crossed, in the setting up of the new Civil Service College, Mauritius, as we have already hired the services of a Consultant for the design and implementation of the college.

Mr Speaker, Sir, since I took office, I have urged the Civil Service College, Mauritius, to devise an Action Plan to double the intake of Public Officers for training.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry will leave no stone unturned in order to ensure that there is a proper ethical culture; we will tackle behavioural issues that affect Public Service, namely, alcoholism and drug abuse.

The consumption of alcoholic drinks/drugs during official working hours is a serious offence and should not be tolerated. As part of its sensitisation programme, all training and induction courses, conducted by the Civil Service College, Mauritius, will include a component on alcoholism and drug abuse on-site of work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to match citizens' expectations, and deliver efficient public services, Ministries and Departments should have the required human resource, so as to enable them to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of the Government.

To that effect, funds have been provided in the Budget 2019-2020 for the filling of 9,071 funded vacancies. These funded vacancies comprises new or additional posts created in the budget, to cater for new services and also to replace some 1,500 Public Officers who

would retire from the Civil Service throughout the year and for those who would be appointed or promoted to other grades.

My Ministry has initiated all necessary action to support the Public Service Commission, in ensuring the filling of all funded vacancies before the end of this financial year.

Moreover, my Ministry has streamlined the procedures for the prescription of schemes of service so as to ensure the prompt filling of vacancies and hence enabling Ministries/Departments to hire the right number and quality workforce.

As for the PRB report, following representations made by the Trade Unions, Government announced that the Pay Research Bureau will publish its report by October 2020 and would be retroactive as from 01 January 2020.

Moreover, as an interim measure and pending the publication of the PRB Report, all employees of the Public Service are being paid a monthly allowance of Rs1,000 as from 01 January 2020.

As amply elaborated above, my Ministry is actively positioning itself to play its rightful role, in contributing its share to the overall socio-economic development of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at the dawn of my political career, allow me, to bow in admiration and seek the blessings of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, one of the founders of a modern Mauritius, who was bestowed recently with the most distinguished civilian recognition by the Government of India - the Padma Vibhushan award. He is a model to the younger generation, for exceptional and distinguished service in the socio-economic development of our country, from a crop-based economy to a vibrant one.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to reassure the House of my determination to transform the Public Service into a world-class citizen-centric institution.

We are all here not for any position but for a responsibility, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me make an appeal to all of you:

Let us walk together, move together, think together, resolve together and together we take the country forward. *Ensam tou possib.*

Thank you for your attention.

(6.11 p.m)

Dr. M. Gungapersad (Second Member for Grand’Baie & Poudre d’Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, at the very outset, to congratulate you for your election as the Speaker of this House. I also thank my constituents of Grand’Baie/Poudre d’Or for placing their trust in me.

Now, I am going to read a part which was not planned earlier. I promise to make constructive criticisms and I promise I will at no point in time hit below the belt. I heard most Members of the other side of the House inviting us, on this side of the House, to collaborate, to propose constructive ideas, but I am sad that not all of you did put it into what you preach. ‘Gentlemanship’ after all is an art which cannot be cultivated by any Tom, Dick and Harry. In the absence of a proper punching bag, some enjoy shadow fisting; carry on. This is funny and above all shows lack of proper etiquette.

As for hon. Rawoo, I shall refer him to the Press interview of his former colleague, or I don’t know if he is still his colleague, Mr Gayan, an active member of his party the ML who said it *carré carré* that *il a été déçu de n’avoir pas eu un ticket*. I hope that hon. Rawoo does not get the same treatment as did Mr Gayan for his leader. Wisdom advises us that we should not throw stones at others when you live in glass houses. And as far as beating an opponent by 5,000 votes, 10,000 votes, the culture I come from, I have been told that nothing is permanent in this world, this victory, this defeat. We shouldn’t be too proud, too vain; we need to cultivate humility, especially when we have won and it is not by belittling others, it is not by saying harsh words against others. This part was not planned. Forgive me for that.

My speech will be divided into three distinct parts. This part was not pre-planned otherwise; later on I will add it and I will tell you which part I am not going to add. My speech will be divided into three distinct parts, namely -

- (i) an overview of the situation in my constituency,
- (ii) a critical look at the Government Programme, and
- (iii) I will delve on my pet topic, that is, education.

On page 17 of the Government Programme 2020-2024, we read the following: Improving the Well Being and Quality of Life of Citizens.

In fact, I congratulate the Government for taking the commitment to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of its citizens - I hope it means all citizens.

If we really want to improve the wellbeing and quality of life of our citizens, then I will kindly request the authorities to do their best to put an end to the ordeal of my friends in Fond du Sac, Camp Carol and elsewhere who live in torturing anxiety and palpable stress each time there is heavy rain in the country. You have been there after being elected, I was there even before being elected and I have lived with them, I have lived their ordeal, I have stayed from 8 p.m. up till 2 a.m. with them, water up till my waist. I know we have enough of expertise on that side, human and financial resources and a large amount of goodwill so that the wellbeing and quality of life of the inhabitants of these localities are humanely dealt with, the sooner the better. The fishermen and planters of my constituency, from Poudre d'Or Village to Pointe aux Canonnières, passing by Grand Gaube to Grand' Baie and elsewhere are awaiting the right signals from this Government so that their daily routine becomes less arduous each time bad weather hits their daily livelihood. If we really mean business, then we should not dilly-dally to provide a decent market to villages like Goodlands and Fond du Sac. Improving the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens, I hope, entails improving road security, war against the proliferation of drugs, better sports and recreational facilities, proper street lightings, adequate and regular water supply, proper drains, regular resurfacing of roads and potholes; improving the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens, I hope, it means proper transport facilities for my friends in Bois d'Oiseaux, Sottise, Madame Azor and St. François. We are not asking for Metro - I don't know how you call it, Tram - but regular flow of buses which will alleviate the suffering of those people, especially those who do not own a private vehicle. Improving the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens, I hope, will entail the construction of a proper mediclinic in Vale and Grand' Baie. Improving the wellbeing and quality of life of citizens will be possible if we look for and work for genuine solutions to domestic violence, murder, theft, sexual abuse. I hope improving wellbeing and quality of life of citizens will mean not only material wellbeing at the expense of social harmony. I hope this Government will ensure sustainable economic development and will implement measures to protect our very vulnerable ecosystem and very vulnerable social group. This leads me to the second part of my speech, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, let me cast a cursory look at the main propositions made in the Government Programme 2020-2024. At first look, it looks as a bundle of good intentions. It is a package of measures which can really help Mauritius to move ahead. On page 5, we read that –

“a country that values its population as its main asset, through empowerment, enhanced social inclusiveness, and equality of opportunity;”

In theory, I should applaud this measure which is wrapped in lofty terms of good intentions. Indeed, we should value our population and should empower it. Let us not wear blinkers and use ego boosting phraseology like ‘enhanced social inclusiveness’ and ‘equality of opportunity’ if you do not believe in it, if you do not practice it, if you daily stifle it by partisan decisions. I hope job creation, development of the Blue and Green Economy, measures to combat and curtail public debt and inflation, measures to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor will be genuine targets of this Government and not mere promises. Equality of opportunity should not sound like an empty slogan, bereft of sense. I am happy that the competence of my friend, hon. Osman Mahomed was duly recognised and valued. I hope it does not remain the unique example to cite for the next five years. On both sides of the House, we have good intentioned people who aspire to bequeath a legacy of hope, good governance to future generations. Let us work together for a country that values its population as its main asset through empowerment, enhanced social inclusiveness and equality of opportunity. I hope that, every Mauritian, regardless of his skin or political colour, regardless of his religious or political convictions, regardless of his cast or origin should enjoy equal treatment in the Republic of Mauritius. Our island should not become an ‘Animal Farm’ where some animals are more equal than others. To paraphrase Martin Luther King in my own way, I also, I have a dream. I also, I dream of a country where “iron booted feet of political power no longer trample over noble aspirations of justice, equality, fair treatment, meritocracy”. I dream of a country where the Safe City cameras focus more on crimes and criminals than my friend, hon. Osman Mahomed’s window.

Let us show the population that we mean business. Let us revive meritocracy, let us live up to expectations by curtailing corruption in all its myriad forms, whether it is money politics or the ‘*roder bout*’ culture; whether it is favouritism or ‘*petits copains*’ culture; whether it is political vendetta or ‘*protez nou dimoun*’. Let us revisit our conscience and agree to work together for a better Mauritius. We need to further consolidate the values based on sharing, renew faith in our institutions and rewrite our common destiny with the colours of the rainbow, so that whether in or outside Parliament, in or out of power, whether we have the same political ideologies or affinities or not, we can still sing the National Anthem in unison, “As One People As One Nation”.

Scandinavian countries have developed an interesting concept: “Do more with less”. If we use this approach, we can reduce our use of virgin materials in order to protect the

environment. If we can ‘do more with less’, we can enhance productivity and quality performance in an array of sectors.

Now, I move to the third and last part of my speech which will deal with Education. The title of the chapter dealing with education is quite eloquent: “Education and Skills for the World of Tomorrow”.

I am fascinated by the heading. We are talking about the future; we are planning the future by taking measures today; that is why, I believe that policies regarding education should not be taken lightly. Policy decisions which are based on increasing access, quality and equity will always be acclaimed. Before 2005, the main guideline of UNESCO was: “Education for All.” And after 2005, it changed and became: “Quality Education for All”. In fact, education is an indispensable tool to build the Mauritius of tomorrow. The students who are entrusted to us to receive formal education in our schools should aspire to get quality education. The Labour Party has always believed in the importance of education, in nation building, in human empowerment and fostering democracy and boosting the self-esteem of each and every Mauritian. The human capital can only be developed and made competitive in a globalised world through an education which meets the requirements of the time. Many countries regularly revisit their educational system in order to adapt it to the needs of the time. For instance, in India, the Minister of Education entrusted the responsibility of spearheading reform in the educational sector to the Ministry of Human Resources. I find this a new and revolutionary approach. In my country, the reform in the educational sector took place with sparse, almost no consultation. Reform is normally based on consultation, piloting, taking stakeholders on board and reviewing it as we proceed. The reform which was brought about by this Government had, as main tenets:

- (i) To reduce competition and to ease competition of the primary level;
- (ii) To provide a broader holistic education instead of an exam-driven one;
- (iii) To equip our youngsters with the necessary tools to face and meet the challenges of a technology driven world.

What are we in reality? Have we reduced competition? Have we been able to heal the ailing education system? Have we really improved it?

Hon. Mrs Tania Diolle talked about Tagore. Now, let me tell you a story from Tagore. This reminds me of the Parrot’s Tale, written by Tagore. In the Parrot’s Tale, we have the king who has a parrot and the king considers the parrot to be stupid, and he calls his

advisers: “come and help me so that my parrot can be more learned, can be more educated because the way it sings songs, it sounds stupid.” And what happens? The Prime Minister calls the advisers and the advisers come and advise: “Your Excellency, there is only one way to make the parrot more intelligent, we need to feed it the right way.” And what was that way? They started scribbling on paper knowledgeable things and started stuffing the mouth and stomach of the parrot. And this continued for some time and you know the end of the story: After some time, the parrot is going to die. In our system also, we are trying to do the same thing. We think that all parrots should sing the same song in the same way, but when a collection of birds come in our garden, all of them cannot and will not be able to sing the song in the same way unfortunately. Later on, I’ll take the five credits thing.

It is important we inspire ourselves from whatever is being done elsewhere. In Denmark, empathy classes are part of the national curriculum. Caring for others, mutual respect, anger management, establishing cordial relationships, handling and managing crises can help in improving the quality of life in Mauritius; can help to combat domestic violence in the long run. Let us contemplate it.

In Malaysia, the Prime Minister Mahathir has insisted that equitability and egalitarianism must be visible in the reform policy. That is why the Minister of Education there has included love, happiness, mutual respect and responsibility to form the core values of their education philosophy.

In England, they are trying to adapt the curriculum to harness the Fourth Industrial Revolution characterised by the growing utilisation of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, cloud computing, robotics, 3D printing, the Internet of things and advanced wireless technologies, among others. My question is: “where are we?” Only a dismal number of our students opt for Computer Science or Science in Mauritius. We need to think and plan ahead.

On page 13, paragraph 25 states –

“Government will come up with concrete actions to further improve performance at all levels.”

My question is: “tell us the miraculous recipe, how to do it.” In 2015 also at paragraph 64, it was written, I quote –

“Government will aim to deliver a high standard of academic education and skills for our youngsters. Education reforms will focus on curriculum review and performance

improvement at all levels. Remedial Education at an early stage of the primary and secondary education cycles will remain a priority in order to deal with learning deficits, early drop-outs and failures.”

Now, again the same promise. Don't get me wrong! Let us face it! If there is any need to take prompt actions, please do it! For the past five years, just show me any qualitative or quantitative improvement in performance at any level. Rate of failure has remained moreover the same; the rate of pass is almost the same. This year more than ever the whole nation has been bewildered by the guillotine which is being applied to axe the chances of thousands of students from pursuing their Lower VI because they do not have five credits. I do not like blame game, I do not believe in blaming, I believe in constructive criticisms. I challenge anyone here to come forward and to tell me that our kids alone have to be blamed. Only our kids! There are several factors which account for failure. Go and carry out any research. There is no empirical evidence to show that only students are to be blamed for their failure. Don't get me wrong! I will never make an apology for mediocrity. 70% of our students who did not make it last year are being ridiculed and stigmatized. They are being made the subject of ridicule. Let me state a fact. All kids will not be able to secure five credits; all birds will not be able to sing in the same way. What is the general pass rate in Mauritius? In fact, it is more over 70%, whether it is CPE now PSAC, SC or HSC. Year in and year out, around 30% of our students fail in various examinations. MES statistics reveal that in the School Certificate only 44.7% students obtained a credit in Mathematics; 44.6% obtained a credit in English and 45.7% in French. This should be a serious concern to seasoned pedagogues. Our education system is in an *état d'urgence et aux grands maux les grands moyens*.

We need to deal with on the one hand side maintain and uphold quality and on the other hand ensure that no child is left behind. This is our job. We can do that. We can maintain quality and, at the same time, we should not prevent access to our kids. It is not ethical, it is not morally acceptable. I am talking to thousands of my previous students and to thousands of students who are watching and listening me through the social media. Rest assured, we, on this side of the House, we are going to fight for you.

In the past also, there were clear-cut criteria for promotion to Lower VI with three credits. As a Rector, I know that very well. We were looking at the age factor. Students with three credits had to satisfy certain criteria to be admitted in Lower VI. They needed to have at least a pass in the subject they were opting for in Lower VI. Understand it! We can

have students with only four credits whose results may be better; their aggregate may be better than someone with five credits. You have to accept that. We shouldn't be academically arrogant because we people we are lucky, we could manage and pass the examinations well. There are thousands of students outside who may not pass the SC.

And now hon. Rawoo, coming back to you, I will not use derogatory words like hon. Obeegadoo used against the Minister of Education, I will not tell her that she has fallen on her head, I will not pass unpleasant remarks at her because I know that it is not easy to be a Minister of Education. I respect her for whatever she has been able to do and, if need be, we are here willing to help out. Towards the end of my speech, I will make positive criticisms, at least 10. Many students with three credits manage to earn a decent HSC and a few students with 'Good' or even 'Excellent' SC results sometimes fail HSC. How many times, I, as a Rector, I had to ask students with aggregate 15 at SC to repeat Lower VI and sometimes I have had students with three credits who were allowed to go and do HSC. Today, I am saying "hello" to all of you; you have been successful and I am proud that you are successful because the Republic of Mauritius caters for you also. Not for a selected elite.

As a former Rector, I can testify that with or without five credits, the regional school which I managed from 2003 to 2014 produced quality results, which are known to the whole nation. Statistics are here to prove it. I don't want to talk too much about it.

I think at this point in time before we break perhaps, so that you don't get sleepy, let me come with the second story. I'll tell you the story which many of you know. It is about the two pots. Once a man living in a village had two pots and he used to walk a long distance to go to the well in order to fill the pots with water and bring water home. Unfortunately, one of the pots had a small hole in it. He would go, fill the pots and come back. Go and come back! One day, the pot which was perfect tells the man: "why do you still keep that imperfect pot; you go and fill water so painstakingly and on your way most of the water drizzles out, falls down. Why do you do that?" The man smilingly answered: "You know, look on the side the pot is imperfect; you will find an alley of flowers which is blooming, because we should care even for our pots which have a hole in it." Our kids who have three credits, they also they have to be looked after, they also require our attention.

Page 13, paragraph 27 reads as follows –

"Access to educational facilities to students with disabilities will be improved."

I am happy that something constructive is being done for kids with the special needs. However, like the stakeholders, I also am making an earnest appeal to the hon. Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, to consider the following –

- creation of a Special Needs Education Authority (SENA);
- to increase the present annual amount which is given per child, to increase it, and on this side of the House we are going to vote for it;
- Government should provide financial support to all organisations working with and for Children with Special needs so that they do not rely solely on CSR;
- to take into account how standardising SENS poses practical problems because we are trying to amalgamate slow learners, deaf, blind, visually impaired children and others under one homogeneous group,
- to provide the necessary training and professional development opportunities to everyone associated with SENS.

As promised, I will not conclude my speech without making a few suggestions. I put it in front of the House that the curriculum has to be reviewed as soon as possible –

- review the teaching and learning methods in our schools;
- review the teaching of languages in a technology driven world. English is being taught as if it were our first language and it is not. For some people, it is even the third or fourth language. We need to readapt our teaching skills;
- critical thinking, peer learning, activity-based learning, remedial education, extrinsic motivation, regular meetings with parents, involving stakeholders in decision-making, autonomy to rectors. Enhancing the leadership skills of rectors; educators is a must. We cannot talk about it without implementing it;
- review the National Curriculum Framework for the pre-primary sector as proposed in paragraph 31;
- review the number of Zones, increase it to six or eight in order to be geographically more sound;
- review the way slow learners are handled;

- review your stand on five credits; do not deny our youngsters the chance to benefit from education. Unfortunately, the way we conceptualise vocational training in Mauritius is mired with a lot of fallacies. In Germany, it is not because we have failed, we go to vocational school. It is an option, it is a choice. Here we are branding, stigmatising people who have failed. We are telling them exit the academic pathway and go over there. Let us put our heads together and see what can be done so that peacocks and parrots can both enjoy life;
- shift from teacher centred to student centred education, and
- my favourite is: introduce differentiated teaching in classrooms.

If ever you come with any of these, on this side you will find a friend who is more than willing to help.

I thank all of you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Balgobin!

(6.39 p.m.)

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr D. Balgobin):

Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to congratulate the President of the Republic of Mauritius, His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, for having such convincingly and clearly explained the vision of Government with regard to the future of our country.

I would like to congratulate you, Mr Speaker, to take the Chair of this august Assembly.

The Vision 2030 has been the driving force behind every decision made by the Government for the past five years.

Today, I am happy to note that the vision, which was about making Mauritius a high-income and inclusive country well before 2030, has a brand new component of immense importance: setting the trend for our children, our environment and our country as a whole.

Given the negative effects of climate change all over the world, it is imperative for us to take into account this green component in all decisions we make to achieve our ambitions and objectives. When we say ‘green Mauritius’, we mean it; we will work hard to achieve this target. I invite everyone to contribute to make Mauritius greener.

In the field of ICT, we will continue to encourage everyone, ranging from the user of ICT facilities to software developers to adopt sustainable practices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when Mauritius gained independence in 1968, a lot of people, especially outside Mauritius, believed that this country was doomed. Even Nobel Prize Laureates like James Meade declared Mauritius as a basket-case at that time.

Thanks to the vision of our political leaders such as Sir Anerood Jugnauth, and, today, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, our Prime Minister, Mauritius has become one of the most advanced countries in the African continent while preserving the essential component of being a full democracy.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to quote a few lines of hon. Pravind Jugnauth own maiden speech in this very august Assembly where he intervened on the then Presidential Address on the 28 of November 2000. 20 years later, Mr Speaker, Sir, his message should be reiterated as it is still very relevant. I quote –

“If one looks carefully, all the major developments in the economic sector were initiated under SAJ Government, right up to the liberalisation of the economy. Under his leadership, Mauritius took the lead in this part of the world. It is a very bold decision to liberalise the economy. At that time, people thought that there would be a flight of capital and that our foreign exchange reserve would deplete in no time. We all know that the contrary happened. Foreign exchange reserves went up. Indian Ocean Commission, SADC, COMESA - you name them, you will find them when the foundation was laid for regional co-operation.”

Quoting the above, Mr Speaker, Sir, was important as it provides the proof that each time MSM is in power, Mauritius makes significant progress.

We all know that Mauritius is not bestowed with significant natural resources. Consequently, we need our population to be at its best. We need to transform each pair of hands into thinking hands if we want Mauritius to be among the best.

Our population is our main asset and our hon. Prime Minister rightly considers that each and every one should benefit from the progress of the country. The progress that makes through empowerment enhanced social inclusiveness, and equality of opportunity.

We want the younger generation, the leaders of tomorrow, to benefit from the progress that this Government is building today. We want them to enjoy much higher

standards of living that their parents had at their age. We want them to have greater opportunities and live in a country *où il fait bon vivre*.

Hence, our Government will be relentless in improving both the standard of living and the quality of life of our youngsters.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I met a number of people from my Constituency, Flacq and Bon Accueil after the Government Programme was read in this House. I must say that all of them felt reassured. Their belief in our dedicated Prime Minister has increased several folds because he is doing what he promised to do. Today, many have realised that they had been fooled by the self-proclaimed king of the East, *le roi de l'Est*, who, even before election, had declared himself as the winner. He even mentioned publicly that this young lad is losing his time on what he called his territory. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, this self-proclaimed so-called king has no kingdom. Today, the so-called mahatma has no atma, he has no soul. Today, I am sitting in this House as a Minister of Government and he is sitting there in his house, watching us.

(Interruptions)

Watching me also! In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this election has proved once again that there is only one king and it is the population of this country. Ultimately, the population choose solemnly what is best for our country. They have chosen a new generation; they have chosen humbleness, sincerity, hard work over vanity, hypocrisy and idleness. This programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the programme of the common men and women. This programme reflects the promise of *l'Alliance Morisien* which democratically won the general elections. We, Members on this side of the House, will spare no effort to implement it and we will do it together with all Mauritian citizens. This Government is the Government of all Mauritians.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as pointed out by the President of the Republic, we want to propel Mauritius in the league of high-income countries and as the Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation, I am delighted to note that technology and innovation are formidable enablers towards this objective. Looking at countries, for example, Singapore and Estonia, it clearly indicates that progress is particularly dependent on the optimal use of technological solutions whenever a problem is identified. This Government will work hard to train our youngsters in the best possible way so that they are ready to embrace the jobs of the future. We will also ensure that we attract professionals, both members of the diaspora and foreigners to come to Mauritius and work thereby contributing to the development of the

country. We need the contribution of everyone to reach higher levels of growth, equality and shared prosperity for all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the human factor, we will continue investing massively in technological and digital infrastructure. Today, Mauritius is connected to the world via two undersea cables, one is called SAFE and the other one is called LION. Mr Speaker, Sir, to clarify, when I am saying LION, I am referring to a submarine cable and not to any lion which is shamefully hiding in a cage somewhere, as my hon. friend Gungapersad said, in an Animal Farm. But I am sure Members of the House will agree that two undersea cables are not enough to guarantee the resiliency of our international connection and adequate bandwidth for all citizens and organisations. It is clear that tomorrow our citizens, schools, organisations and companies will depend more and more on high quality video streams. This is why we are looking forward to the operationalization of the third cable called METISS which will greatly increase bandwidth. A fourth cable IOX has also been announced. Clearly, Mr Speaker, Sir, our aim is to be *avant-gardiste*. We want to continue making Mauritius an attractive country for investors to come and create jobs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to our international connection, the Government has invested massively to make Mauritius one of the few countries in the world to be 100 per cent covered with fibre to the home. As a result, we should not forget that Mauritius is the first country in Africa to offer 100 megabits internet bandwidth to home users. In addition, companies like Mauritius Telecom, with this business boost package is providing high speed internet to all SMEs at very affordable prices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, moreover, the Government has deployed more than 350 wifi hotspots throughout the island since 2017 so that our citizens, especially our youngsters can use internet at any time. In the near future, we will have an additional 250 wifi hotspots throughout the island, including Rodrigues. Therefore, this programme is not just like a list of good intentions, it is well-crafted programme that emanates from the work which has already been done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy to inform the House that more than 90% of the household today is subscribed to internet and the majority has broadband internet with high bandwidth. And to top it up, we are ranked first in Africa in terms of tariffs. As for mobile connectivity, our telecom companies have done an immense work in the past to deploy 4G throughout Mauritius and the outer islands. Today, it is no accident that the infiltration rate

of mobile devices such as smartphone has reached more than 150%. Today, in Mauritius there are more mobile phones than people, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the near future, we will move faster when our telecom operators will transition in Mauritius towards 5G technology as promised in our Government Programme. At this point in time, allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to share the key three benefits of 5G technology. 5G will provide much higher data rates, (1 to 20 Gigabits per second) enabling people to download content more quickly. 5G will also offer much lower latency (of the order of 1 millisecond) and this will enhance users' experience when using interactive apps such as games, surfing on the web or watching videos and 5G will be able to support a greater number of connected devices.

In other words, Mr Speaker, Sir, 5G makes it possible to have new edge services such as autonomous vehicles or even remote surgeries. Just imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the near future, the best doctors and the best surgeons around the world are intervening on our patients here, in Mauritius, in real time by conducting remote surgeries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in addition to the network, this Government, through my Ministry, will also develop countrywide physical infrastructure as technological parks and innovation lab. Having such structures in various places in the Republic can have positive impact on remote work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike other Governments, the various ones under the guidance of the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Pravind Jugnauth, have kept Rodrigues close to their hearts. Rodrigues is an island which is proactively taking bold measures such as the ban of plastic which this Government will also extend to Mauritius.

Let me reassure everybody that Rodrigues will also benefit from all technologies developed in Mauritius. Rodrigues is an integral part of the Republic of Mauritius and our brothers and sisters of Rodrigues need to have the same facilities which exist here in Mauritius. Of course, while deploying those new technologies there, we will take into consideration its specificities.

Let me point out that during our previous mandate, the problem of the Internet connectivity in Rodrigues was essentially solved with the coming into operation of the MARS submarine cable.

Members of the House will agree that the strategy of Government to invest massively in technology in Mauritius, in Rodrigues and the Outer Islands, is full of wisdom. Clearly, this Government Programme has been well-thought.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the new Minister responsible for the portfolio of Information and Communication Technology, as well as Innovation, I promise the House and the nation that I will do my best to further accelerate the process to propel Mauritius in the league of the most technologically advanced nations on the planet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, thanks to the pervasiveness of mobile data and Wi-Fi hotspots, our citizens can always be connected to the Internet.

Is it not true that Steve Jobs, the former CEO of Apple, once said: ‘Technology, and by extension, the Internet is the bicycle of the mind’?

Our people are now in a position to do more than the previous generation has been able to achieve.

The National Computer Board, which has a mandate to empower our citizens through technology, is doing an immense job into making our youth knowledgeable in computer programming through the Digital Youth Engagement Programme, and has trained more than 3,000 students last year.

On a similar note, the National Computer Board is empowering our elders to become conversant with technological tools which can help them in their daily lives. *M. le président, cela augure un excellent et brillant avenir pour notre République.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the trends show that, with the transition towards Industry 4.0, the nature of jobs is changing. We have moved from an era where people had to exert immense physical force during the whole day to one where wealth creation is happening every day, everywhere, be it in offices in Port Louis or Ebène, in our modernised factories or even in our agricultural fields which harvesting is more and more automated.

It is also true that some jobs will vanish, especially those that can be done more efficiently by machines. However, other jobs will be created and we will need people for those jobs. It is, therefore, of paramount importance that our education sector adapts to this new paradigm.

This Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, through the immense work that has been done by hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology, has introduced a number of profound reforms preparing our youth to face the challenges of 21st century. And now, when I am on the topic of education, I remember a few minutes ago, hon. Gungapersad was talking

about money politics and *copains, copines*. But let me remind him, money politics is not this Government, is the Labour Government. Let me remind him that *copains, copines*, is not us, is the Labour Party. He is talking about pots and history of pots. But let me also tell him to take the pots and to give the cutlery pot to his leader that will use it in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, he is talking about reading his speech two times. I invite him to give a copy of his speech to his leader because he is exactly doing the contrary of what he is preaching in this House. Be it in Government or be it in *karo canne*, where he is right now. And, of 5 credits, I would let my colleague, the Minister of Education talks more on that subject matter. But we all know, Mr Speaker, Sir, why at that material time, they were enjoying to decrease the level of education and standards in our school to 3 credits, is the only reason so that they can fill in all the *universités marrons* that was going up in every corner of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is no coincidence that starting from this year, textbooks and e-books will be provided free of charge to all Grades 7, 8 and 9 students in State and grant-aided private secondary education. This bold decision clearly indicates how important it is to provide the same chances and opportunities to children of our nation. This Government clearly has at heart the well-being of all children, and we also want them to contribute in the best way possible to develop the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius now houses more than 750 IT companies, some of them are local, but also a large number of international companies of high repute and employing a large number of IT professionals. These companies have the potential to bring our country to another level in terms of IT products and services. And here, hon. David - I applaud his intervention – mentioned about one avenue, the High Tech manufacturing. Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to remind Members of the House that since 2015, High Tech manufacturing is one of the major components of Vision 2030 of the Government.

Moreover, hon. David spoke about making our country a dynamic Tech Hub. I understand he lived in France for 15 years and might be disconnected to the reality of Mauritius. Today, Mauritius is already a vibrant place with more than - as I said earlier - 750 IT companies operating here. For the information of hon. David, most of the multinational companies operating in Mauritius are in the BPO non voice and the KPO space.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will, through a fruitful collaboration with private sector, identify precise skills development needs for the next five years and beyond,

especially in the field of technology, such as software engineering, system administration, IOT, Blockchain, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence and Data Science. We will then do whatever is needed to make sure that the IT sector, which is the third pillar of our economy, continue to flourish.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear to everybody that technology cuts across all sectors. And here, I would like to take an example of the health sector. Members in this House will agree that the Health Sector cannot continue to operate as if it is business as usual. And this is where this Government is taking bold decisions, one of which is to introduce and make e-Health a reality in this country. My Ministry is collaborating fully with the Ministry of Health and Wellness to ensure the smooth implementation of a comprehensive e-Health system throughout the country. This is a project, Mr Speaker, Sir, of a national importance for the wellbeing of the population. I will work closely with my colleague hon. Minister of Health and Wellness to ensure that the e-health project becomes a reality for us well before the end of our mandate. Very soon the citizens of Mauritius will be able to go to any public hospital to do an X-ray, move to another hospital be it in the North, South, East or West and their X-ray and medical records would be already available to the doctor there before they go to see him.

Our vision is to make our hospitals paperless and, hence, more efficient. Naturally, doctors and other medical staff will be fully involved in this implementation of the e-Health system. This is called vision, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is called moving forward. And here, I would like to mention the construction of the New Flacq Hospital that will start very soon, a modern state-of-the-art hospital laying emphasis on teaching. Government is investing massively Rs4 billion in the first phase and another Rs2 billion in the second phase to have a state-of-the-art hospital for the citizens of this country.

As I am talking about moving forward, I am talking about vision. Here, on this side of the House, we think how to bring positive changes to this country. We want to move ahead with a visionary leader as our hon. Prime Minister together with the leader of ML, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister. At the same time, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a shame for a Party like MMM, which is regressing. Yes, they have created history, I agree, but they have also created history by losing elections after elections after elections. Moreover, let me tell them, this is a unique history that they have created since 1967. Well before independence till now, it is the first time ever, Mr Speaker, Sir, that an MMM candidate in the Constituency of Flacq/Bon Accueil, No. 9, could only get 3,356 votes out of 56,788 electors, which is only 5.9%. This is

a true history that they have made and this will be written in golden letters in the history of the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also a remarkable history that would have first time ever, since independence of this country that an MMM candidate has not even taken out their *caution*. Never ever it happened...

(Interruptions)

No, no! Forget about MSM, I am talking about Constituency No. 9.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, another area where technology plays an important part is transportation. For the past weeks, our citizens have shown extreme enthusiasm for the Metro Express. At the beginning, people took Metro Express just for fun and for experiencing something unique. Today, thousands and thousands of Mauritians are using it on a daily basis to go to school or to work. In a few weeks, the Metro Express has become part of our landscape and people are asking for more lines towards other localities and I am happy to note that the Prime Minister is very supportive of this idea.

Personally, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am really looking forward to be able to one day take the Metro Express from Flacq to come to Ebene or come to Port Louis in the near future. Members of the House will understand that while construction of the Metro Express, which is a formidable human endeavour, it is also a fantastic example of how innovative technologies can deeply transform the very fabric of our country. With the mastery of technology, the limit is only imagination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to something which is equally very important, the economy. You will recall that in the Presidential Address for the Government Programme, reference was made to Mauritius moving to a High Income, Inclusive and Green Economy. In this context, Mauritius is fully engaged on its next stage of development, which will be, as all signs suggest, knowledge and technology driven. To fully tap the SMEs, Government will continue to encourage this category of people, they are entrepreneur, men and women, start-ups to move to industry 4.0 and become the workforce of the future. This Government will continue to invest and promote emerging technologies as well as existing ones. Of course, we will continue the journey towards cutting edge technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Robotics by creating the Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council through the induction of the Bill in Parliament shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will agree that given the independence of Government, our companies and even our household, they will be emerged of cyber treats and cyber-attacks and this is of serious concern. Direct access attacks, phishing, the use of back doors, denial of service attacks and privilege escalation and many more other cyber-attacks need to be prevented at any cost. This is why this Government will amend the Computer Misuse of Cybercrime Act to consolidate cybercrime and consolidate our cyber security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to talk a little bit about Blockchain and FinTech. The Blockchain is an important distributed technology which allows people to build distributed database which cannot be tampered with. This Government will invest in Blockchain to build the next generation of our State Land Register. On the other parts, Blockchain technology will provide the bedrock upon which FinTech and Cryptocurrencies are built. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are living in a world where data has become more important than resources.

Let me now, Mr Speaker, Sir, in order not to lose much time and give our colleagues time to talk about digital transformation of our civil service.

Since 2014, a lot of progress has been made. For example, my Ministry has created lots of apps.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in this mandate, Government will continue to create more and more e-services. Today, we have in excess of 120 e-services running at the Government Online Centre. Government will continue to promote innovation, R&D through the Mauritius Research Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I conclude, please allow me one more minute, to talk briefly about the MIR-SAT1, the first Mauritian Satellite which will be launched this year. MRC is working closely on a roadmap for a Space Program for Mauritius and Government is looking to collaborate with international experts to incentivise the public sector and private sector as well as academia to pursue opportunities in this exciting field. Can space, Mr Speaker, Sir, become, in the future, a socio-economic pillar for the Republic of Mauritius? Only time will say. MIR-SAT1 will be launched this year and we will have our own pairs of eyes to monitor our EEZ of 2.3m. km².

Mr Speaker, Sir, I conclude. Mauritius is a beautiful country. We are blessed to be classified as a full democracy; one of the only 22 countries in the world to be so by the Economist Intelligence Unit. We are even better ranked than France, South Korea, Japan and

US. It is a pity that some people, *les mauvais perdants*, are trying to make people believe that we are not a democracy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is so unfortunate that Members of the other side of the House opted to boycott the Presidential Address, which shows total disrespect for institutions of the Republic of Mauritius. I, therefore, kindly invite them to voluntarily and symbolically deduct Rs1 from their salary out of decency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as said by the President of the Republic -

“Together - *ensam* - we can make Mauritius an innovation-driven, high-income economy based on inclusiveness and shared prosperity.”

I thank you for your attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nuckcheddy!

(7.18 p.m.)

Mr S. Nuckcheddy (Second Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me, first of all, congratulate you again for your nomination as the Speaker of the National Assembly. I also seize this opportunity to congratulate the Government Whip for her nomination, a nomination which creates a historical milestone by having a first lady at that position.

It is also my duty to place on record my gratitude to the electorate of my Constituency for having elected me and my two fellow colleagues, hon. Maudhoo and hon. Balgobin, to represent them for the next five years in the National Assembly. The three of us had a task which lots of people thought was not easy and we proved them wrong; we defeated the auto proclaimed king.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my two colleagues and I, we were called the three ‘*chokras*’. The three ‘*chokras*’ made history, like my colleagues just pointed out, because we provided a solution to the MMM party, because they could not make their mind whether to be on or off. Thanks to our electorate, we showed them the way to being off forever.

I also seize this opportunity to thank the population for having voted in favour of *l’Alliance Morisien* led by hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Allow me to congratulate our former Prime Minister and Minister Mentor for being the first Mauritian to be awarded the title of Padma Vibhushan for his contribution in public affairs, an award which is the second highest civilian award in India after the Padma Ratna. I also thank Shri Modiji as he has

tweeted that the award is a token of affection from 130 crore Indians to the former Mauritian Prime Minister for his efforts to strengthen the deepening friendship between India and Mauritius. It is definitely a pride for the whole country.

Five years ago, with the presentation of the Government Programme 2015-2019, a new chapter was opened in the socio-economic life of the country, as it implemented the will of the people. It is the same will of the people that once again warranted the leadership of our Prime Minister.

This Government, under the leadership and vision of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, has braced itself to work for all Mauritians and to take our island to a new height and to continue improving the quality of life of our citizens. I, therefore, intend to address this House on a few aspects of the trust that the majority of Mauritians have placed in this Government. This trust bears its crux from the achievement of the Government in what it has accomplished since December 2014 and also the breath of fresh air that the young team of l'*Alliance Morisien* has brought.

The result is here, but, unfortunately, instead of getting ready to face the future with confidence, empowering our population for them to have a higher standard of living so that the country becomes a role model for the world, it is a pity to see people, instead of accepting the free expression of the will of the population, they are busy serving petitions over petitions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is only people with bad intentions who will deny that the last elections did not adhere to the democratic values and principles of our country. One can only applaud our population for not bringing into power people who for their own benefits did not hesitate a moment to tarnish the image of our country at international level. This also shows the lack of respect to our democracy and the aptitude and intelligence of Mauritians. Anyway, we could not expect more from people who have not yet understood the value of a *katori* which is, in fact, used in Hindu prayers to contain the *kumkum tilak*, which signifies energy, strength and divinity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now move to the significant vision that our Government is proposing; a vision that will take our country to new heights and face the challenges of the future. The population has witnessed the seriousness of our Prime Minister in the last mandate and it is with the same seriousness that our Government is going to tackle this mandate where emphasis will be laid on empowering our population, enhancing social

inclusiveness and equality of opportunity so as to make Mauritius a country that meets the aspirations of its population, including its youth for higher standards of living, enhanced opportunities and sustainable development.

Given my background as a Chartered Quantity Surveyor and being a professional from the construction industry, it is obvious that my comments will be on the public infrastructure chapter of the Government Programme.

Chapter 5 of the programme emphasises on the holistic approach which includes environment protection and improvement of living conditions of the population. I concur that we will only secure a prosperous, peaceful and liveable planet if we harness economic growth and development to social solidarity across and between generations.

Infrastructure is the foundation upon which our country is built. The Government remains determined to deliver better infrastructure in the island to grow the economy and improve opportunities for people across the country. Infrastructure shapes our lives; transport links get us where we need to be. Infrastructure supplies us with clean water, takes away our waste. And it is vital to improving our quality of life and integral to the creation of vibrant new places to live and work.

The Government envisions an infrastructural investment that will deliver economic and social benefits. Excellent progress has already been made to improve our infrastructure. Delivery of projects within time and budget are the main concern of the Government. Terms like cost and time overrun are no more heard while these were the buzzwords before 2014.

Our Prime Minister did mention some days ago that the Metro project was completed within the stipulated time and cost. The Metro project is definitely an iconic project which acts like a stepping stone to make our country a modern one. We no more have projects where roads settled before their use. The spirit of good governance pruned by this Government makes no room for unjustified variations where time becomes at large and also the contract price become two to three folds higher than it was initially supposed to be.

The Government fully understands that roads are fundamental to modern society. They keep people connected, making it possible to travel for work and leisure. The road network brings communities closer together providing users with freedom and flexibility that is unavailable by any other mode of transport. This is why roads are the backbone of the transport system, almost all journeys start or end on a road. The increasing fleet of vehicles have led to traffic congestion problems. Traffic congestion today is not limited to our towns

but also to the rural areas. The Government objective is to tackle the congestion problem with a modern road network. My own Constituency being on the east coast, I appreciate the foresight vision of the Government to have a new motorway henceforth to link the airport to the north along the eastern coastline. This will, I am sure, entail also improvement of the conditions of the existing roads as well. To any road user, congestion means loss of time; potentially missed business opportunities and increased stress and frustration.

In the current globalised economy, a responsible Government can at no means allow congestion to lower productivity, reduce trade opportunities, delay delivery and thus, increase the cost of production. Minimising driving time also directly impacts on the quality of life and this can be achieved by increasing our road network. Any country like ours, which wishes to boost its economy, relies on foreign investors. A good mobility on the road and less travelling time will place our country in a competitive edge to attract investors. Thanks to this Government, the road users will, in the future, have no need to use roundabouts, as they will be replaced by flyovers.

Today, faced with the imperative of tackling climate change and responding to radical Fast Paced Shifts in global technology, conception and population patterns, there is a growing consensus that sustainable development is the only way that we can avert environmental and social disasters.

Mauritius has always been an outward looking nation; an island economy that, for centuries, has owed its prosperity to its link with the rest of the world. With the increasing globalisation of its economy and society, the future of our country will undoubtedly continue to be shaped by the effectiveness of its international transport networks. Airport and port are the gateways providing the international connection that we need to grow and prosper. They facilitate the movement of goods, people and ideas around the world to support trade and investment and allow knowledge and innovation to be shared. They also provide social benefits in enabling our citizens to visit family and friends overseas, experience different cultures or simply enjoy a well-earned holiday. However, there is a capacity and connectivity challenge particularly in the desire to become that gateway between Asia and Africa. Therefore, the intention of the Government to transform our airport into a major regional logistic and aviation hub by expanding the terminal to cater for an annual passenger traffic from 4 m. to 8 m. and the development of an airport city and cargo village is for sure the best way to curb that problem.

Maritime transport is also essential to international trade as it facilitates the shipment of large volumes of goods and comparatively low transport costs. This has resulted in a rapid rise in world seaborne trade in recent decades. The provision of sufficient port capacity and the ability to handle the largest and deepest vessels in the world will remain an essential element in ensuring exports are increased and shops are filled with products by the shipment that these vessels are going to bring.

The transformation of Port Louis harbour into a major transport logistic and marine hub is long overdue. Unfortunately, several projects carried out before 2014 lacked visions and proper planning. Consequently, our island witnessed several floods where our fellow citizens have lost their lives. Now that this Government is doing its utmost to improve the life of the people, it is really sad to see our fellow colleagues on the other side of the House trying to take political benefit out of it and all that they do is just to go at these places and *bello farata*.

With hindsight, one can say that their solution to a problem was as bad as the problem. It is only when this Government took office that appropriate projects were implemented to address the flooding problem. I do agree that this took some time but as the saying goes: 'Rome was not built in a day'. This Government is not going to stop here. More investments will be made in this sector. The implementation of the Land Drainage Authority with the objective to develop and implement a Land Drainage Master Plan marks an important milestone in our history. This authority will be called to ensure that there is a routine and periodic upgrading and maintenance of that drainage infrastructure.

Notwithstanding that we have an exclusive economic zone of 2.3 m. km², our land area is just 2,000 km². In such a situation, it is for sure important that land is properly managed and not just allocated to Pundits to run restaurants like it was in the past.

The National Land Development strategy will definitely provide a better use and optimum utilisation of our land across the island. The various objectives like the creation of a comprehensive and accurate digital database pertaining to land occupation and use in Mauritius, including an updated State Land Register, a new legal framework for land use and planning, a Land Research and Monitoring Unit, the setting up of Land Division clearly show that the Government is more than ever eager to optimise on our land use to enhance our economy and achieve its goals.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to state that this Government wants to build a cleaner and greener Mauritius, and that Mauritius will be for all. No matter on which side of the House we are, no one will walk alone.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Callicurn!

(7.33. p.m.)

The Minister of Labour, Human Resource Development and Training (Mr S. Callicurn): Mr Speaker, Sir, It is a very auspicious day today. As legitimate representatives of the people, following the General Election of 07 November 2019, we are gathered here for the first session of the National Assembly. The House is thankful to His Excellency the President of the Republic, who, in his Address to Parliament, detailed the road map of Government's business for the period 2019-2024.

Please accept my congratulations on your election as Speaker of this august Assembly. I have no doubt that you will rise to the expectations of the Members of this House and uphold its decorum.

Allow me also to congratulate Government for its vision for our country for the next decade, in line with Government Vision 2030 which is geared towards Mauritius becoming a high-income economy using Robotics and Artificial Intelligence as drivers of growth. Our country is poised to be among the top 10 leaders in the world.

Before I proceed further, Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate the leader of *l'Alliance Morisien*, the hon. Prime Minister for the second consecutive victory in the last general election. The population has once again placed its trust in him and his team which is symbolical of a dynamic bright future for Mauritius. The population believes in the Prime Ministership of Pravind Jugnauth who is a man of words and vision. The victory achieved in the last general election is the fruit of hard work of the previous Government led by two Statesmen.

I wish to thank our former Prime Minister/Minister Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who has served this country with dedication, passion and discipline, since he first joined politics in 1963. His name is a household name and he will always be remembered as a hard worker and a no-nonsense political leader. His leadership has even been recognised by the Government of India which recently conferred upon him the Padma Vibhushan Award.

Bravo! As for so many others, I have had the privilege to see him at work, and to learn from him, during the last past five years. May God bless him with good health and personal happiness!

With your permission, and before I come to the content of the President's Address, and in particular, my Ministry's main assignments for the next five years, I think that it would be most appropriate to put in context a few issues of great public interest and make some general remarks for the benefit of the House and the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this country has just been through the most peaceful electoral campaign ever, under the able leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. All Mauritians, across the length and breadth of this island, do recognise this fact with great pride.

The Mauritian electorate has chosen to put their trust in *l'Alliance Morisien*, a political platform having as partners the ML, as well as our friends and comrade in arms – hon. Ganoo, Ramano, Obeegadoo *et la grande famille militante*.

The resounding victory of *l'Alliance Morisien* at the last general election can teach us a few lessons. People of this country always support those who uphold people's trust and those who dare care for the people's interests.

Since 2014, we, in Government, always believed in what we say and we do what we say we shall do. Our actions over the last five years speak louder than words. And we are happy to have been able to uphold the trust people had in us. And since 2017, as Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth has displayed the soft strength of his political leadership and vision. People trust his leadership. Even his erstwhile critics now recognise that he is to be trusted as a powerful political force in the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what did we not witness during the last electoral campaign? All sorts of machiavelic moves were underway to discredit our Prime Minister and his team. Fresh gates were coming out of oven every day. But, the killer of all gates was the "*catori gate*". Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote a friend, who, in a political gathering said: "*ek catori ki kimat toume kya jane navin baboo*". Which literally means: you don't even know the value of a *catori*.

The mastermind of all gates got caught up in his own game. To the point that he could not even enter the gate of this august Assembly but had to be escorted to the back gate of Ramnarain Roy Government School by my friend the hon. Vickram Hurdoyal.

Hon. Pravind Jugnauth whom once he called Prime Minister *linpost* has conquered the heart of the Mauritian people and managed to open the gate of Parliament for all of us on this side of the House.

Where is Navin Ramgoolam now? Where is he? His own leadership is being challenged by Members of his party. Rightly so, because he has not been able to get himself elected for two consecutive elections! When listening to Yatin Varma, who just got dismissed from the Labour Party, I feel pity for him; I must say that I find some credence in his words because let us not forget he was still a Political Bureau member of the Labour Party until recently. So, he was privy to all decisions taken at that level. He publicly admitted that the electoral petitions which have been filed by members of the labour party have been done to keep Navin Ramgoolam relevant to quote his words. *Sinon li pas pou ena role*. What does that mean? It means what it means. It is clear to the population that the electoral petitions which were filed for a specific reason that is to keep Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam politically alive.

Now, since he has not been able to get himself elected twice, the words on everyone's lips in the Labour Party is: "the guy should go". His leadership is more than ever being put into cause. The population is eagerly waiting for the move of the deputy leader of the Labour Party, the Leader of the Opposition, unfortunately is not here to listen. He, himself, on Facebook said a decision will have to be taken for the leadership of the Labour Party and I hope that this time he will have the guts to say what needs to be said and take the right decision, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This Government has a clear political mandate, a popular mandate from the people, to continue to work to promote the development of this country and the welfare of the Mauritian people.

As a responsible and responsive Government, we are prepared to do both with the support and blessings of the people and we are not going to shy away from our responsibilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having said this, I must hasten to add that at a material time where our country is facing a set of challenges at domestic and international level, the Opposition has chosen to play the game of cheap politics once again. Today itself, through the PNQ put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he tried to instil doubts in the minds of the public. But let me reassure the population, we are doing and we shall do whatever is required to avoid a contamination of coronavirus in Mauritius although we are highly vulnerable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on Friday, January 24, 2020, and after much difficulty and bargaining, they finally timidly agreed to take a local leave from parliamentary business. And they know pretty well that people have already condemned them for this political gimmick.

And as a matter of fact, we know that not all of them were happy with this line of reasoning, especially the PMSD. In French, they call this '*unité de façade*'. And it is! We just have to wait. Time will prove us right. They will break long before 2024! The unity that exists amongst them today will break well before 2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a matter of deep regret that the Opposition stands ready to trade the interest of the country and Mauritian people against their interest over short-term, personal interests for the sake of petty politics. Anyway, they won't succeed. As a Government, we are confident they won't succeed.

And you know why, Mr Speaker, Sir? It is because the people of this country have already read and understood their political tricks; their political calculus.

On this side of the House, we talk development and the people's welfare. On the other side, they talk politics.

It is a matter of shame, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they are trying, but still in vain to kick start a mudslinging campaign against the Political Leadership of this country and the Government to insinuate that the last general election was "*Election Mardayes*". Their allegations stand on false, concocted, imaginary and flimsy grounds. Furthermore, their allegations, Mr Speaker, Sir, are meant to mean that all Public Servants have been involved in one way or another in illegal and fraudulent acts to cause massive rigging during the last elections. And this is the first time ever that such grave and serious allegations are leveled at Public Servants. We know how much Public Servants feel aggrieved; they deserve nothing except a public apology from the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Opposition truly believes in what they say, they are duty-bound to go the full extent of their political reasoning. They can't just say that the elections have been rigged and still shamelessly dare sit on the bench of this august Assembly, also called '*La Maison du Peuple*'.

The Opposition alleges that the People's elected representatives on this side of the House have been wrongly elected except by "*Elections Mardayes*".

At this material time, not Government, but the Opposition will have to make some tough decisions based on their ongoing campaign about “*élections mardayes*”. They will have to show to this country, the more so to the very people who put their trust in them, that they are Honourable Members, ready to stand to their own words and beliefs.

The boycott of the President’s Speech by the Opposition was a mere political gimmick. With zero value addition, politically! Mr Speaker, Sir, it’s high time that the Opposition walk their talk, as any normal person would do.

The First Member for Stanley/Rose Hill, who is an experienced parliamentarian and an experienced politician, on Polling Day and Counting Day, had words of praise for everyone, including the Electoral Commission as an institution.

Following his meeting with his neighbour, which he, himself, made public, the First Member for Stanley/Rose Hill, in a cut and paste political exercise, started to throw his venom at everyone, clicking “*élections mardayes*” as his favourite page. *Buku kouyonad*, like he always says. We can’t talk about elected representatives of this House as having been wrongly elected except by way of “*élections mardayes*” and still sit in this august Assembly.

As an experienced parliamentarian, the First Member for Stanley/Rose Hill should set the good example. If I were in his place, I would have applied for leave until the matter is legally settled in Court, and I expect him to do the same thing and all Members who have filed Election Petition against some Members on this side of the House; because political zigzagging, Mr Speaker, Sir, always results in painful political experiences.

Mr Speaker Sir, the last general elections were a three-party contest and in such context the results cannot be more explicit than what they are. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can, and even must say that the composition of this House could have been different if the Opposition had voted for the electoral reforms which we had proposed during our previous mandate. Had they voted for these reforms, Navin Ramgoolam would well have been seated here even without getting elected. Baloomoody also would have been in the House, the best friend of hon. Bérenger. Now, to say that this Government is not legitimate is simply indecent.

Let us remind ourselves that it is the wish of the population that we should continue with the progress that we have engaged ourselves into since 2014. Allow me, Mr Speaker Sir, to congratulate the population for their wise choice. Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, and as a responsible Government, we will do everything that needs to be done to

uphold the trust of the people of this country – without fear. We will work to promote the development of our country and the welfare of the People of Mauritius. We take pride of the fact that we have been able to fulfil almost all of the pledges we made to the population during our first mandate. For the remaining ones, the foundations have already been laid and we will pursue during our present tenure of office.

During the period 2014-2019, the country witnessed several changes in its landscape. Major infrastructural developments, among which, no doubt, is the pride of our nation, the Metro Express. Mauritians are indeed so overwhelmed of this new means of transportation that since its launch of the paying services as from 10 to end of January 2020, some 280,000 people have been using this means of transport. Not only they are enjoying the undiscovered scenery along the Metro Line, but also reaping the benefits by reaching their destination on time without any stress. The first phase of this mega project has been completed with panache at a considerably lower cost than what was initially estimated by the Labour Government, that is, Rs18 billion to Rs19 billion compared to the Rs37 billion and out of which Rs9 billion, half has been given to us as grant by the Indian Government.

I would like here to thank the Indian Government led by Shri Modi ji and take this opportunity to congratulate him and his team for the astounding victory in the General Elections last year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that Metro is a big success. Government will, as announced, extend the network to the whole island and the population will be delighted by it. Well, my constituents are eager to have the network at their doorsteps. Other noticeable major infrastructural works are underway. The foundations of these major projects have been laid during our previous mandate and their completion during this mandate will transform the road network while at the same time alleviating the congestion problem. We do not believe in building castles in air, but in setting solid foundations for our beloved country.

On the social front, Mr Speaker, Sir, the financial burden of the needy has been considerably relieved. The House will recall that as a first social measure, pensions for the elderly and other vulnerable groups were increased as soon as we took office in 2014. The old age pension which was then Rs3,623 was revised to Rs5,000. Increase in old age pension by the Labour Government was done *à petit pas parce qu'il n'avait pas à coeur nos aînés*. Let's not forget the criticisms levelled against this measure in 2014 by the Labour Party and the MMM. What was not said at that time: *"Pays pou vinn banqueroute. Pa pou capav*

donner, pe couyonn bann grand dimounes” and all sorts of false propaganda were being uttered at that time. What happened? We did not just increase the old age pension to Rs5,000 flat, but continue to offer a decent assistance to our elderly by giving a fair increase each year. As soon as we took this mandate, that is, in November 2019, this Government honoured its promises made during the electoral campaign and increased the old age pension to Rs9,000. Furthermore, nous allons tenir nos engagements, comme nous l’avons fait dans le passé et augmenter la pension à R 13,500 d’ici 2024, M. le président.

I pay respect to all those elderly, be it inside or outside the House who contributed in the economic development of our country and we are forever grateful to all of them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during our previous mandate, the working class was not neglected. In fact, the legal framework has been reviewed to better protect their fundamental rights and improve the working conditions of some 600,000 workers. With the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, some 120,000 workers who were drawing salaries below the poverty line in 2013, are now being paid a decent wage.

Another major achievement during our previous mandate is the review of the Labour legislations. The Employment Rights Act 2008 did not address various pertinent issues, among others, precarious employment and the ease of laying off workers. This situation led to an outcry among workers and trade unions. Review of the old legislation became more than ever necessary. We took the bold decisions in the interest of the working class of this country. We went ahead with our labour reform. The Workers’ Rights Act was enacted to better protect the fundamental rights of the workers. The enactment of this legislation is aimed at addressing the issue of precarious employment and bringing all workers into the mainstream legislation.

To consolidate workers’ interests, a Portable Retirement Gratuity Fund (PRGF) has been set up to guarantee a lump sum that takes into account the whole length of service of a worker, irrespective of the number of employers he has worked with. Mr Speaker Sir, more than 350,000 workers will be benefitting from this historic and bold measure.

Additionally, with a view to ensuring that workers are not left to fend for themselves where those companies in which they worked go into compulsory winding up, receivership, administration and the like, a Wage Guarantee Fund has been provided in the Workers’ Rights Act to guarantee unpaid remuneration up to an aggregate of Rs50,000.

The Termination of Service Contract Board repealed by the Labour Government in 2008 was re-introduced by this Government as the Redundancy Board. This Board aims at protecting workers from abusive termination by employers on economic and structural grounds. The Board will further ensure a rapid resolution within 30 days of the date any matter is referred to it.

Furthermore, the actual employment relationship has been broadened to capture new forms of work which previously were outside the standard agreement and usually referred to as atypical work. With a view to ensuring that we really have an inclusive society where no one is left behind, the Workers' Rights (Atypical Work) Regulation 2019 has provided for the legal existence of atypical workers. The new Regulations provide for more flexibility and enhanced social protection for these types of workers.

Reconciling work with family obligations, Mr Speaker, Sir, is at the centre of this Government's concern. In compliance with ILO Convention on Maternity Protection, female workers are now entitled to 14 weeks' maternity leave with pay and which has been extended to all female workers even though they reckon less than 12 months' continuous employment. The same benefit applies in cases of stillbirth. Another major change is the introduction of adoption leave for female employees who adopt a child of less than 12 months.

Furthermore, with a view to reconciling work with family responsibilities, the Employment Rights (Work from Home) Regulations were enacted. In the same vein, the Employment Relations Act was amended to promote collective bargaining and enhance social dialogue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an undeniable fact that our human resource is the most important asset that we have and we should take all necessary measures to ensure that workers, in any field of economic activity, are provided with safe and healthy working environment as it has a direct impact on the quality of life of the workers and also contributes to increased productivity at enterprise and national levels.

Over the past five years, the Occupational Safety and Health Division of my Ministry carried out some 19,000 visits at places of work, including construction sites, issued 165 Prohibition Orders for hazardous activities on construction sites and lodged 652 cases before the Industrial Court for failure to comply with provisions of Occupational Safety and Health Regulations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the issue of employment and training, we will fulfill the programme through key strategies to enable the employment of scarce talents in key sectors and emerging industries aligned with the economic strategy of Mauritius. These strategies include –

- (i) creation of enabling conditions for sustainable expansion of the human capital pool through a pipeline of legislative and policy changes;
- (ii) implementation of bilateral working groups and Memoranda of Understanding for the protection and ethical recruitment of migrant workers, and
- (iii) accompanying stakeholders, particularly employers and the private sector to navigate policy and legislative requirements effectively.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there are actually more than 45,000 migrant workers working in Mauritius. These workers are contributing considerably to the economic development of our country. It is, therefore, imperative that we give due consideration to safeguard their rights at work.

In November 2018, the policies for the grant of work permit were reviewed with the objective of closing human resource gaps in key sectors such as construction, textile and bakery sectors. The essence of the review exercise was to simplify procedures and policies so that these fit within the business facilitation strategy of the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same breath, in order to address the acute shortage of labour in the sugarcane sector, Government, in October 2019, authorised the recruitment of foreign workers in that sector. Moreover, with a view to better addressing the issue of trafficking in persons, my Ministry has reinforced the Special Migrant Workers Unit to look into the terms and conditions of employment of migrant workers employed in Mauritius and to ensure that their fundamental rights are not being infringed.

A Memorandum of Understanding, the first of its kind, was signed between Mauritius and Nepal in June 2019 on the sidelines of the 108th Session of the ILO Labour Conference. The highlight of this agreement is that recruitment by agencies from the receiving country is not authorised so as to exclude all possibilities of exploitation by middlemen.

The MoU, as it stands now, is comprehensive and reflects the spirit of the reforms that my Ministry and this Government has undertaken along the principles and objectives of safe, orderly and regular migration, which is in line with SDG 10.7.

Talks have already been initiated with the Bangladeshi, Indian and Malagasy Authorities and draft MoUs have already been exchanged with these countries. We shall have bilateral agreements which will regulate the recruitment of workers from these countries. Hon. Members may wish to note that the majority of foreign workers come from these countries.

With a view to better protecting foreign workers, my Ministry has already initiated action for replacing the existing paper-based work permits with cards which will be embedded with appropriate security features and information for the better protection of migrant workers against illegal work and exploitation by unscrupulous employers as well as for control and monitoring purposes by the authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government's Programme aims at consolidating the foundation stones which we have laid during our previous mandate.

No development is possible without taking into account the human factor. Our country is limited by its landmass, but our capital is our human resource.

The philosophy underpinning the Workers' Rights Act and the amendments brought to the Employment Relations Act, which took effect on 24 October 2019 and 27 August 2019 respectively are in line with the policy direction of the Government Programme aimed at an inclusive society based on the improvement of the quality of life of our citizens and good governance. This is what decent work is all about and it is central to the social cohesion and conducive to a climate of confidence necessary to succeed our revolution 4.0

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government is conscious of the constraints faced by students in the mainstream education and their future employability. We have taken bold measures to implement the 9-year schooling programme and reinstated the five credits requirements for eligibility to promotion to Higher School Certificate. This will provide for quality education.

However, we are conscious that some may not be able to go through. The crude reality is that following the recent SC results, 70% of the students did not obtain the required five credits to be promoted to HSC. We are not excluding these students from the education system. Instead, the Government is taking them on board by providing alternatives/opportunities to them to follow vocational and technical courses at MITD, Polytechnic Mauritius and they can even attain diploma level, ultimately follow a degree course for a brighter future.

Previously, there was no proper coordination between the education system and the world of work. When I say previously it was under the Labour Party Government. Students were allowed to proceed to Higher School Certificate with only 3 credits obtained at School Certificate, thus lowering the education level. Afterwards the same students followed professional courses from “bogus” universities, such as EIILM, which, in the end, did not bring any advancement for these students who were lured for financial gains. What a shame, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Our Government has not shunned its responsibilities towards these students. We have since 2014 taken bold measures towards redressing the trend.

Another inheritance is the skills mismatch and lack of employability.

To address these issues which were becoming explosive on the social front, the Government, *inter alia*, extended the Youth Employment Programme meant for facilitating the transition of the youth from education to employment and introduced -

1. the Back-To-Work Programme to provide opportunities to women aged 35 or more to join and re-join the labour market;
2. the Dual Training Programme which aims at providing school leavers a mix of practical on the job training and classroom studies;
3. the Trainee Engineer Scheme to enable graduates in engineering to qualify for registration with the Council of Registered Professional Engineers;
4. the National Skills Development Programme which is a collaborative programme with the employers for the purpose of training and placement of the youth in scarcity areas of the economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will further consolidate the above schemes and, at the same time, create other opportunities taking into account the new demand of the labour market.

Furthermore, the Graduate Training for Employment Scheme (GTES) of the HRDC aims at providing reconversion courses to allow unemployed graduates to enhance their employability and providing them with skills matching requirements of the industry.

With the coming of the Human Resource Development Council and the MITD under the portfolio of my Ministry, we will be able to formulate more responsive policies and

strategies and foster skills development programmes to better address our main concern of skills mismatch.

The HRDC works in close collaboration with the industry to mount skills development programmes based on the need of the country and enterprises by establishing linkages between the education and the training systems.

The HRDC will further invest in digitalisation and financial technologies through the Artificial Intelligence Development Support Scheme.

The number of employees, who benefitted from training during 2015-2019 which stood at 243,000 employees, is called upon to increase with the implementation of the new measures and incentives which are provided in the action plan.

On the other hand, the MITD, which aims at making the Technical and Vocational Education and Training stream a more attractive and valuable alternative pathway for learners, will be called upon to consolidate its role to cater for those who cannot join the mainstream of the academic world.

The curricula of the MITD will be reviewed to incorporate skills related to green economy. Furthermore, the National Apprenticeship Programme will be extended. The existing unemployed Youth Programme will be upscale and greater opportunities will be offered for the training of women. The MITD will be called upon to mount courses for the continuous professional development of workers taking into consideration the fast changing technology.

Mr Speaker Sir, the world of work and training have to be closely linked. While we are consolidating our training capabilities, we also have to ensure that our workplaces are safe and healthy.

In this respect, I am reviewing the Occupational Safety and Health Act 2005 to ensure that it addresses the new challenges in the world of work. The existing Occupational Safety and Health (Employees' Lodging Accommodation) Regulations 2011 is also being amended to, *inter alia*, empower enforcing authorities to take appropriate enforcement actions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the labour rights, in addition to the improvement already provided in the Workers' Rights Act, parental leave will be introduced with a view to better reconcile work with family obligations. This new measure will be in addition to the existing maternity and paternity leave entitlement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the utmost duty of every caring Government to keep unemployment at the lowest possible rate with a view to ensuring social integration.

(Interruptions)

Enn ti moment!

In this perspective, this Government has taken several measures to bring down the rate of unemployment which was 7.8% in 2014 to 6.9% in 2018. We are aiming to further reduce in the coming years.

My Ministry has developed several active labour market policies to facilitate the integration of the unemployed into the labour market.

With the assistance of the *Agence Française de Développement*, a roadmap for the complete reshaping and reengineering of the employment service will be implemented to offer better services to jobseekers and employers.

The National Employment Act which will replace the Employment and Training Act 1972 will be promulgated to meet the challenges and exigencies of the present labour market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry does not limit itself to local job opportunities. Employment opportunities have even been provided to Mauritians in friendly countries like Botswana, Canada and Seychelles, and these will be pursued during this mandate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures we are proposing will no doubt benefit Mauritians but put our country in the league of high-income countries with a high literacy rate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the work which was started by the Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth in 1983 for the Economic Miracle to happen will be further pursued by this Government under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth and I do not have any doubt that we will leave a positive legacy for the future generations.

I thank you for your attention, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Teeluck: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mrs Koonjoo-Shah rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Friday 14 February 2020 at 3.00 p.m.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

(8.17 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

CONSTITUENCY NO. 2 – CHILDREN’S PLAYGROUND

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I would like to raise tonight is addressed to the hon. Minister of Local Government and it concerns the children’s playgrounds in my Constituency, *les jardins d’enfants*. Yesterday, I visited the one at Champ des Mars and the turf has reached almost my waist level.

(Interruptions)

Yes, it is very tall and it is really causing a lot of trouble for people wanting to bring their children here to enjoy the place, and this problem is happening in Tranquebar, in Vallée Pitot and in Plaine Verte as well. So, I would like to ask the hon. Minister to expeditiously look at this and to look at the state of the equipment as well because yesterday, when I was there, I had a close look at them and they need to be refurbished as soon as possible. Thank you.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the Lord Mayor of the Municipality of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(8.18 p.m.)

TRANQUEBAR, CROWN LAND TORY - FREE INTERNET ACCESS

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. In the Budget Speech of last year, the Government announced the provision of free internet access to families on the Social Register. These families were

invited to apply to Mauritius Telecom to get the installation of the free internet, and we are talking about last year, August. Six months later, there are still a number of families on the Social Register who are still not connected to the internet, in particular in the region of Tranquebar, Crown Land Tory and in the region of Sauzier Street in Vallée Pitot.

The Mauritius Telecom is very much aware of the situation because they have carried out site visits, including a few weeks ago, but still no work has been carried out. So, I would urge the hon. Minister if he could take up the matter with Mauritius Telecom and his officers to make sure that every member on the Social Register benefits from this free access to the internet. Thank you.

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr D. Balgobin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have taken good note and I will look into the matter and revert back.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

CHEBEL BRANCH ROAD – EXCAVATION WORKS

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, as Chairman of a taskforce for the Thaipusam Cavadee, for the deplorable state of the road at Chebel Branch Road. There have been excavation works by the Sewerage Department and on Saturday, we have this festival. So, if the hon. Prime Minister could direct the hon. Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development because it is a classified road, so that the road can be resurfaced. Also, for the first time for Cavadee, we have this light rail. So, if the hon. Prime Minister could see with the Police to give additional Police protection. We have one procession passing through the roundabout of Beau Bassin. It is the first time, and the second one at Pope Hennessy Street where we have the Mont Roches kovil going through Pope Hennessy Street and we have this railway track. So, I think additional Police security would be required.

The Prime Minister: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir. I chair the taskforce, but I do not manage everything that falls under different other Ministries. So, I shall pass on the remarks that have been made by the hon. Member. But with regard to the Police, I shall look into the matter and, of course, I shall report to the House.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

CUT STONES - THEFT

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister, although it relates also to the Ministry of National Infrastructure and Community Development and the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage.

Il y a une situation très inquiétante qui s'est développée depuis quelque temps. Cela concerne le vol des pierres taillées, et c'est non seulement à Port Louis mais à travers l'île. Ces pierres sont enlevées des trottoirs, des ponts, des parapets qui forment le pont, et cela va sans dire que ces pierres taillées ont une valeur historique et même patrimoine national. Je peux vous dire qu'autour de tout cela il y a un business qui s'est développé, il y un trafic très lucratif, parce qu'il y a une grosse demande de ces pierres taillées et, donc, la valeur est vraiment forte. Des gens sont disposés à payer une forte somme pour avoir ces pierres taillées qui sont enlevées dans des lieux publics. Donc, vous pouvez aussi deviner que ces pierres datent de l'ère française et ont été mises là par des esclaves, et ça a été fait par la sueur des esclaves. Donc, je demande au Premier ministre, aujourd'hui, s'il faut amender les lois pour sévir contre ces gens-là, il faut le faire au plus vite et aussi en même temps au Ministre des Arts et de la Culture, il faut sensibiliser la population par rapport à ce fléau. Merci, M. le président.

The Prime Minister: The law already exists for anyone who steals and who steals public wealth. So, I do not believe that there is any need to amend the law. The law has to be applied. But the hon. Member has spoken about theft of those *pierres*. I would have expected the hon. Member to give precise information about where those *pierres* ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, but you make a general statement! You are saying that *on est en train de voler des pierres, etc.* Fair enough! But for the authorities to act ...

(Interruptions)

Okay. If you had stated in your intervention that you would forward a list, I would not be standing and making such a comment. Now that you are going to give me a list with precise information, I shall, of course, pass it on to the relevant authorities for them to inquire into this issue.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

FUTSAL COUPE D'AFRIQUE DES NATIONS 2020

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, ma requête ce soir s'adresse à l'honorable ministre des Sports et concerne le retrait de l'équipe de Maurice de Futsal de la coupe d'Afrique des Nations de Futsal justement qui se tient du 28 janvier au 7 février à Laâyoune, un territoire de la République du Sahara, territoire occupé par le Maroc comme nous le savons tous.

M. le président, des zones d'ombres existent dans cette affaire et malgré le fait que la MFA a été priée de se retirer de cette compétition, ils ont quand même disputé leur première rencontre et ils ont par la suite, d'après les informations qui me sont parvenues, accédé à la demande du ministère des Sports de se retirer de cette compétition tout en ayant à régler une note très salée de 71,000 USD. Donc, il paraît aussi que suite à leur retrait de cette compétition, la MFA a été sanctionnée par la Confédération Africaine de Football avec une amende de 75,000 dollars et deux années de suspension.

M. le président, je pense que l'honorable ministre des Sports devrait pouvoir dire toute la vérité, nous donner plus d'information à la Chambre ainsi qu'à toute la population de l'île Maurice. Donc, il devrait pouvoir nous dire quand la délégation a quitté le pays. Est-ce que cela s'est fait avec l'approbation de son ministère ? Et le ministre devrait aussi pouvoir nous dire s'il y a eu des courriers qui ont été échangés entre la MFA et son ministère et de nous donner les dates respectives. Il devrait aussi pouvoir nous dire si l'équipe de Futsal de Maurice s'est qualifiée pour participer à cette compétition ou a-t-elle simplement bénéficié du retrait de l'Afrique du Sud.

Et finalement, M. le président, le ministre pourrait aussi nous dire combien ont coûté les frais de déplacement de l'équipe de Maurice. Merci.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I can intervene, Mr Speaker, Sir. We need your guidance on whether the way in which this matter has been raised is in order; whether it is in order for a PQ, or it is in order for such matters to be raised in this way. This is what I am asking you for your guidance.

Mr Speaker: I understand your concern, hon. Prime Minister. We are reaching the end; the Minister is intervening. So, go ahead!

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr. S. Toussaint):

M. le président, il est évident que je ne peux pas répondre à tout cela, là, comme ça. Si l'honorable membre vient avec une question parlementaire, je me ferai une joie de lui répondre.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(Interruptions)

Quiet!

(8.26 p.m.)

SUGAR PLANTERS, POINTE AUX SABLES – NEW ROAD

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My request...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: You have the floor.

Mr Armance: Yes, I wait!

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Armance: My request goes to the Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development. It is regarding one road at Sugar Planters, Pointe aux Sables; the name of the road is Marcel Piat. In fact, there is no road at all and when it rains, it is completely flooded. There are lots of children and people living there, and if he can look into the matter. There has been a petition sent to the Ministry and a case file at the CSU. So, I will ask if they can have a look at the construction of this new road at Marcel Piat. Thank you.

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint):

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the query to my colleague.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(8.27 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 3 – CHILDREN'S PLAYGROUND

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis East & Port Louis Maritime): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My request is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, being himself a member of Constituency No. 3. Right now, all the children's playgrounds in No. 3 are not in very good condition, especially the one found in Cité Roche Bois and in Camp Yoloff. So, I would urge the Minister to see with the Lord Mayor if the necessary can be done, because it concerns children, it is children's playground. So, please, if needful can be done.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to pass on the message to the Lord Mayor.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Richard Duval!

(8.28 p.m.)

CAVENDISH BRIDGE – REPAIRS & LIGHTING

Mr R. Duval (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Yes, Sir. There is a major defect concerning the Pont de la Ville Noire, commonly known as Cavendish Bridge. I would like to ask the hon. Minister if he could look to effect the necessary repairs as well as the lighting; the pathway is most unsafe and there is lack of visibility for the pedestrians. Please!

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the query to my colleague.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(8.29 p.m.)

VACOAS-PHOENIX – FOOTBALL GROUNDS

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix):

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. There is a big problem under the jurisdiction of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix. There are some 38 football grounds that are not being properly maintained for the last two months, due to lack of equipment and personnel. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister urgently look into the matter?

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government, Disaster and Risk Management (Dr. A. Husnoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will pass on the message to the Mayors as well.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(8.29 p.m.)

OIDC - AGALEGA - EMPLOYEE - CERTIFICATE

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In fact, the issue I wanted to raise concerns several Ministries. That is the reason why I said I would prefer directing it to the hon. Prime Minister. It concerns the Minister concerned with Outer Islands; it also concerns the Minister of Finance.

In fact, there is a resident of Agaléga who has, five years ago, been subject of a Police enquiry, but no prosecution has been started against that person of any sort whatsoever; there are no civil proceedings against that person and he is involved in no case whatsoever and has a clean record. And that person, this lady, who lives in Agaléga, has made an application to the Mauritius Civil Service Mutual Aid Association for, in fact, some sort of personal loan. And one of the conditions under which this particular organisation grants a loan is for that person to obtain a certificate from her department stating that 'you are not under report, not on leave without pay, not involved in a Police case'. I understand that condition to mean that this person has a clean record or that person is not being found guilty of any offence and, as such, should be granted the facility by this particular organisation, meaning Mutual Aid.

However, the interpretation given by the Outer Islands Development Corporation has been to give her a certificate addressed to the Mauritius Civil Service Mutual Aid Association, but to state therein that this person is involved in a Police case, that this person has a record of a previous Police case. And that person has been, I believe, maybe unwillingly - I am not trying to lay blame at the door of the organisation, but maybe unwillingly - and unknowingly been victim of some sort misunderstanding as to what exactly the law requires. Because their understanding discriminates against this person and the presumption of innocence, someone has not been prosecuted, someone for the past five years, no case, no provisional information whatsoever, cannot be refused such a loan from the Mutual Aid Association.

And, as such, my humble request to the hon. Prime Minister would be to look into that matter. I will have the documents here that I will not necessarily table, I believe the hon. Prime Minister will understand why, and this does not apply to only this one case, it applies to many other people suffering from those misinterpretation of what the law requires. And I will communicate this situation to the hon. Prime Minister, if he could kindly look into that

matter to resolve the problem for a simple loan that a citizen of Mauritius living in Agaléga requires. So, that will be my request. Thank you very much.

The Prime Minister: Well, if the hon. Member had provided to me the information in advance, I would have been able to reply with precision what has happened in this case or what can be done. But then, anyway, let me have the information and, obviously, I shall look into the matter.

At 8.33 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 14 February 2020 at 3.00 p.m.