



SEVENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 14 FEBRUARY 2020

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology
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Dr. the Hon. Renganaden Padayachy	Minister of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
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Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives
Hon. Kavydass Ramano	Minister of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
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Hon. Teeruthraj Hurdoyal	Minister of Public Service, Administrative and Institutional Reforms

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MAURITIUS

Seventh National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 03 of 2020

Sitting of Friday 14 February 2020

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT**ICAC PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE - MEMBERS - NOMINATION**

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have a few announcements to make. I have to inform the House that with regard to the Parliamentary Committee set up for the monitoring of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, pursuant to Section 59 of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Honourable Prime Minister has designated Honourable Naveena Ramyad, Dr. the Honourable Marie Christiane Dorine Chukowry, Dr. the Honourable Anjiv Ramdhany, Honourable Marie Alexandra Tania Diolle and Honourable Ashley Ittoo to serve on the said Committee.

I also have to inform that pursuant to the same Section of the Prevention of Corruption Act, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has designated Honourable Patrick Gervais Assirvaden, Dr. the Honourable Farhad Ismael Aumeer, Honourable Khushal Lobine and Honourable Dhananjay Ramful to serve on the said Committee.

Furthermore, I have to inform that the Honourable Prime Minister has designated Honourable Naveena Ramyad as Chairperson of the said Committee.

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Ministry for Rodrigues, Outer Islands and Territorial Integrity

- (a) The Annual Report 2018 of the Probation and Aftercare Service.
- (b) The Financial Statements of the Prime Minister's Relief Fund for the period 01 July to 14 December 2018. (In Original)
- (c) The Annual Report of the Mauritius Ports Authority for the Financial year ending 30 June 2019.
- (d) The Transfer of Prisoners (Republic of Mozambique) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 36 of 2020)

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

- (a) The Annual Report of the University of Mauritius for the period 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018.
- (b) The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Open University of Mauritius
- (c) The Financial Statements of the Students' Relief Fund for the year ended 31 December 2013.

C. Ministry of Land Transport and Light Rail

The Traffic Signs (Amendment) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 33 of 2020)

D. Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development

The Annual Report 2018/2019 of the Central Procurement Board.

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

The Report of the Director of Audit for the Special Fund for the Welfare of the Elderly for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)

F. Ministry of Environment, Solid Waste Management and Climate Change

The Financial Statements of the National Environment Fund for the year ended 31 December 2012 and for the 18 months period ended 30 June 2016.

G. Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance

- (a) The Annual Report 2013 of the National Productivity Competitiveness Council.
- (b) The Annual Report 2013 of the Competition Commission of Mauritius.

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

The Revision of Laws (Revised Subsidiary Legislation of Mauritius) (Volumes 1 to 9) (Supplement – Issue 4) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 35 of 2020)

I. Ministry of Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 31 of 2020)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 32 of 2020)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations 2020. (Government Notice No. 34 of 2020)

J. Ministry of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation

- (a) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the year ended 30 June 2009. (In Original)
- (b) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the 6-month period ended 31 December 2009. (In Original)
- (c) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the year ended 31 December 2010. (In Original)
- (d) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the year ended 31 December 2013. (In Original)
- (e) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the year ended 31 December 2014. (In Original)
- (f) The Report and Audited Accounts of the Mauritius Sports Council for the year ended 31 December 2015. (In Original)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**STC - UNLEADED MOTOR GASOLINE 95 RON - CONSIGNMENT - AUGUST TO DECEMBER 2019**

The Leader of the Opposition (Dr. A. Boolell) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Protection whether, in regard to the consignment of Unleaded Motor Gasoline 95 Ron, imported by the State Trading Corporation (STC) since August to December 2019, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the STC, information as to –

- (a) the agreed specifications of the contract signed with Vitol;
- (b) the results of the tests conducted at –
 - (i) loading port; and
 - (ii) discharge port and counter analysis of samples on board taken prior to the discharge thereof, and
- (c) whether an assessment has been carried out on the impact on vehicles which have been using Unleaded Motor Gasoline 95 Ron from the said consignment.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, the State Trading Corporation (STC) is assigned the responsibility of procuring the annual requirements of petroleum products for Mauritius since 1984. Initially, the STC had recourse to selective bidding and later, as from 1987, it resorted to open international tenders for such procurement and the contracts were awarded to the most competitive bidder.

Since then, it has been the practice for the supplier of the petroleum products to appoint an independent accredited surveyor to conduct tests on the products at the port of loading prior to the loading on the vessel. At the discharge port, only the volume of the products was verified by a surveyor appointed by the STC. With respect to quality, the STC relied on the certificate of quality issued after testing at the port of loading.

From 1987 to 2006, the suppliers of the STC were Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Caltex Petroleum Corporation, Engen, Shell International Ltd, Independent Petroleum Group (IPG), KPC, Veba Oil, Galana Energy Ltd, Chevron Texaco Global Trading, Addax B.V, Vitol Bahrain E.C, and Litasco.

In 2006, following bilateral negotiations between the Government of Mauritius and the Government of India, STC has been purchasing petroleum products from Mangalore Refinery and

Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL). The STC entered into a first contract with MRPL in July 2006 for a period of one year only to assess the performance of the supplier. Thereafter, the contract was renewed for successive 3-year periods from August 2007 to July 2010, August 2010 to July 2013, August 2013 to July 2016 and August 2016 to July 2019.

In 2016, the STC decided to carry out surveys on the world market to determine the prevailing premiums for petroleum products required by Mauritius. As more competitive rates were obtainable, the STC held negotiations with MRPL for a decrease in its premium. However, MRPL did not agree. STC then decided to review its procurement process and launch tenders on the international market. An international tender exercise was launched on 25 March 2019 for the supply of petroleum products for the period 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2020.

By the closing date of 29 April 2019, 11 bidders submitted their offer, out of which 9 quoted for Clean Petroleum Products (CPP) and 8 for Dirty Petroleum Products (DPP). Following an evaluation exercise, the Board of the STC approved that the contract with the CPP be awarded to the lowest substantially responsive bidder, namely Vitol Bahrain E.C. and to PetroChina International (Singapore) Pte Ltd for DPP for the period 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2020. The contracts were not awarded in light of the judgement of the Supreme Court of Mauritius in the case of STC v/s Betamax in May 2019. Alternative arrangements were made by the STC with the Central Procurement Board (CPB) for an emergency procurement for the period 01 August 2019 to 31 January 2020, following which the contracts were awarded to Vitol Bahrain E.C. for CPP and to PetroChina International (Singapore) Pte Ltd for Dirty Petroleum Products.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as requested, I am tabling a copy of the agreed specifications of the contract signed with the Vitol Bahrain E.C. These specifications were the same as for the last contract with MRPL. During the six months contractual period, Vitol Bahrain E.C. supplied nine consignments of Clean Petroleum Products. For the period August to December 2019, which is specifically mentioned in the question, seven consignments were received. I am tabling a copy of the tests results at the port of loading and port of discharge of these seven consignments. The tests revealed that the products were conform to the contractual specifications and were accordingly discharged and taken over by the oil companies.

As regards the reference to the counter analysis of samples at (b) (ii) of the question, I am informed by the STC that the counter analysis is performed only when the results of the key tests prior to the discharge of the products do not comply with the agreed specifications and, in such cases, the products are not discharged and returned to the supplier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I come to the last part of the question relating to assessment and impact on vehicles. I am informed by the STC that the consignments for the period August to December 2019 were in order and according to specifications. Consequently, the need for an assessment on the impact on vehicles on gasoline did not arise.

As regards the specific consignments on MT Hafnia Libra and MT STI Executive, the initial issue about RON was cleared and issues relating to other metallic additives are still under investigation.

At this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can reassure the House and the Leader of the Opposition that the gasoline currently being supplied is clean and fully compliant to international norms.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would ask the hon. Minister whether he had a look at the Clean Petroleum Product sheet, option one, and it is very glaring and shocking. There is no mention of manganese, which means that there is no threshold in respect of manganese and what it means. Can I ask the Minister whether Vitol will use MMT to blend the Mogas to achieve the RON 95? Because there is no mention at all of manganese.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, actually, as I mentioned before, the same contract, the same specification from 2016 has been repeated until now. So, when the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association came to me with a doubt, I clearly mentioned that they doubt that, following some problems relating to vehicles having knocked down, it may be related to manganese. We immediately spoke to the supplier in order to clear the doubts. We are not saying that this may have caused this problem. In order to clear the doubts, we have requested that no manganese should be present in the gasoline being supplied into Mauritius and any other irons that may affect the engines. These are the actions that we took. But, accordingly, Vitol has been supplying gasoline according to the specification that has been sent to them, for which they tendered for.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a very serious matter. I would like the Minister to table the request in respect of threshold of manganese. Not only there is no threshold of manganese, they have raised the level of benzene by more than 300%, which means that it gives a big leeway to Vitol to blend Mogas with MMT to reach the obtained level of 95. Can I ask the Minister whether he is aware that Vitol buys what we call parcels of oil, bring all those parcels together and then go for blending in its plant in Fujairah, basically again using MMT to raise the level of manganese? This is what actually happened.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the say of the Leader of the Opposition. I don't work in refineries nor am I engineer in petrol. This is what he is saying. So, whatever he is saying, he takes the full responsibility of it. But as I mentioned before, Vitol only started to supply Mauritius since August 2019 and this has been the case since 2016 or even before, but no tests of manganese were being effected at that time even at the port of loading nor at the port of discharge. So, I cannot say, whatever the Leader of the Opposition is saying, whether it is correct, it is wrong or it is not in order.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the Minister a simple question? Can I impress upon him to table that request? And he is not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask him...

(Interruptions)

Yes, alright, table the request!

Mr Sawmynaden: Which request?

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Request in respect of the threshold of manganese.

(Interruptions)

Yes, where is it?

(Interruptions)

Was that one of the preconditions established by STC? He is running away, he is not giving the reply!

(Interruptions)

He is not able to reply. He is running away from his ...

(Interruptions)

Can I ask the ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please! The hon. Leader of the Opposition is putting his question.

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Allow the Leader of the Opposition to put his question!

Dr. Boolell: Can I ask the hon. Minister whether a due diligence was conducted before the contract was awarded to a trader?

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, he is asking a question. It was done in August 2019. If I can still remember, the former Minister of Commerce did answer a PNQ on that.

(Interruptions)

He did answer a PNQ.

(Interruptions)

No, we are taking the...

(Interruptions)

Reste tranquille toi!

Mr Speaker: Silence, please! Let the Minister answer!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sawmynaden: Shame *lor to meme!* Actually, the former Minister of Commerce answered a PNQ on that and he cleared everything. When the contract was awarded, it was properly awarded and Vitol is supplying gasoline to Mauritius until now. And as I mentioned, the same specifications from Mangalore has been transferred to Vitol.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have asked a very simple question. Why don't you table the request in respect – because you said that the contract is substantially the same. Do you know what was spelt out with Mangalore? No manganese would be in the Mogas. No manganese at all! I would like to know where the tests have been conducted. At port load? At port of discharge? And I would like to know who conducted those tests?

Mr Sawmynaden: I can inform the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, that tests are being effected at the port of loading and at the port of discharge now. Before that, no tests of manganese were being effected. When the issue or when the doubt was raised by the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association, I personally requested that tests be carried out on those gasoline to make sure that there is no presence of manganese and, until now, all the tests have been conclusive - at the moment. And the tests are being carried out by SGS, which is an independent and internationally renowned surveyor.

Dr. Boolell: If the Minister is not able to lay on the Table a very important document in respect of the level of manganese, what else can we expect from this Government!

Now, can I ask the hon. Minister, not only we are dealing with a trader, but we are dealing with a company which has been involved in many shady deals. In Russia, in Mozambique, in Sri Lanka, it has been banned and because of adulterated Mogas, Sri Lanka has lost more than USD10 m.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, he is talking of ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let the Minister answer, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sawmynaden: If he wants to become the Leader of the Opposition, I think he should sit at his place.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: There is no need for questions then. Sit down, hon. Minister. There is no need for question if the Minister has no chance to give the reply. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

No crosstalking, please! Hon. Minister, give the reply!

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, Vitol was selected after a bidding exercise, and let me inform the House that Vitol has been supplying Mauritius in the past as well. So far that there is no issue, there is no issue. We cannot really get into the ins of that. I think the due diligence job has been done well before and Vitol has been supplying Mauritius and other countries as well. They are still supplying until now. So far that we have no issue, so far that they have been supplying according to specification, so far that SGS or the independent surveyor is happy that everything...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Don't interrupt the Minister!

Mr Sawmynaden: ...is working, I think the contract is on until at the end of the contract, then we are going for a new tender exercise.

Dr. Boolell: I will add that the truth comes from the mouth of adults also. What he has said is that we have relied upon Vitol, and yet Vitol is a company which has been involved in many shady deals. Can I ask the Minister whether he has been made aware that the offices of Vitol have been searched in Brazil, in Switzerland by the FBI? And when the question was put to him, what did he say? He put the blame upon Octane boosters! That's what he did.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Teigne to lampoul toi!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, it was conducted after a bidding exercise, as we mentioned. We are not here to defend anyone. As I said, we didn't put the blame on anyone. As the STC, when we conducted surveys, when we had analysis on the octane boosters being available on the market, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will be surprised to hear. Let me give you the figures! On all the tests results, the level of manganese on the octane boosters available on the market freely, sold everywhere, some ranges from 74.8 mg per litre to 7,263 mg per litre, and these are available on the market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will be surprised by the figures. Actually, in Mauritius, 420,534 kgs of octane boosters have been imported. So, that means that some people are using it in their cars, but it was our duty to inform the public. We did not pinpoint anyone. We just informed the public to be careful about using octane boosters in their cars so that it may result to car breakdowns. So, I think it was our duty to do it.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, the Minister is a game for a laugh. We all know that octane booster has been in use since almost days immemorial. Why is it that when Mangalore was the main supplier, there was no problem with octane booster? Why is it so?

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the Leader of the Opposition is defending the importers of the octane boosters. I think, as a duty, we just informed the public.

(Interruptions)

He is not defending the consumers. Otherwise, he would have been sitting here!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the opposition! You had the floor Leader of the Opposition! Let the Minister answer!

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, Mr Speaker, Sir, as we mentioned, we are not defending anyone. We are just informing. When the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association came to me and emitted some doubts, we cleared the doubts immediately, and we are still working with them. We are still collaborating together. It is only 1.8%, according to the figures given by the MVDA, that some vehicles have had some issues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the 3,300 vehicles that have been mentioned, we don't have a clear picture of these vehicles; whether they have been surveyed; whether they have been serviced properly; whether they have been serviced by their agents; whether they have been serviced by the proper mechanic. I have also been talking to all the importers of vehicles in Mauritius. Some of the authorised dealers did not even have one case. Even the Second-hand Car Dealers Association did not have one case.

Let us talk about the speedboats. No one came to us. What about the boats? No one came to us. Motorcycles, nothing! They run with the same gasoline.

That is why we need to see where is the full responsibility, where is the exact problem. We cannot just say: it is like this, it is like that, or we become experts all of a sudden on gasoline.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have ruled out octane boosters. We have ruled out the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association...

(Interruptions)

I have said so!

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

Dr. Boolell: Because as to now - can I ask the Minister and I would advise him to make available to this House results conducted with respect to manganese and benzene from port load to discharge at port, and I would like to know who hired the services of the inspectorate, who paid for it and why is it that, up to now, there have been no results published by STC?

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have just, in my previous reply, mentioned clearly that the tests are being conducted by SGS Mauritius, and SGS is a well international renowned company which does surveys all over the world. Are we today, in this House - the

Leader of the Opposition putting fingers at a big organisation like the SGS or any other? Actually, we had Milton as well who came. I think we should rely on their report. So, whatever they put in their report, they take their full responsibility, and we rely on these reports because we are not experts.

The Leader of the Opposition just said that he has knocked out octane booster. I did not know that he was expert in octane booster or in gasoline. I am not. But we rely on reports from independent qualified surveyors.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, the STC, in fact, has adopted what I call a delayed onset of action. Others have conducted and sent samples overseas and the results are a high incidence of manganese level. Are these people not telling the truth when they say that there are 50 times the level of the threshold on manganese?

Motor Vehicle Dealers Association! Are you telling me that they are not saying the truth? There are, what we call, the oil major companies and we know that tests have been carried out also by them. Are you saying that they are not telling the truth? It is only STC which is hiding behind the truth because it is guilty of impropriety and it has to pay those who suffered undue harm and those who have incurred financial losses. I am talking of those 3,300 vehicle owners.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, the samples sent by the Motor Vehicle Dealers Association come from where? From the tanks of the vehicles. What happened to it? Who added anything to it? We don't know. We don't have a clear picture. And if it was gasoline taken from the tanks of the STC, then I would have agreed with the report. Tests are being carried out; investigation is being carried out. We had experts which came from the United Kingdom. They have done their work. They took samples. They took samples from all the petrol stations. They took samples from our tank. They took samples that were kept at the unloading and they took the spare parts which were damaged so that we can have a thorough analysis. We cannot jump to conclusions just like that. And as I mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, only 1.8%, according to the figures given by the MVDA. Whether these figures are correct or not, we don't know. As I mentioned, why only 1.8% of cars? Why only from specific brands? Why no boats, no motorcycles? Why? So, we should ask ourselves the question. So, we should conduct thorough analysis, deep analysis to make sure that whatever is going to come out should be correct for everyone.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, from the reply given by the Minister, it stands to reason that this is a cover-up of State Trading Corporation and of the blunders made by your predecessor and the blunder made by the former Director of State Trading Corporation.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't think this is a question. This is just allegation.

Mr Speaker: No allegation, please, Leader of the Opposition! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister clearly stated out a few minutes ago that the specifications of 2019 were substantially the same as the one of 2016. I am using his words. I am here looking at the specifications for Mangalore Refinery for 2016 and, in the 2016 specifications, I read that it meets customer specification and no additive containing manganese, in other words, customer specification. But why is it, therefore - and this is what I would like the hon. Minister to answer - in 2016, there is a customer specification for no manganese as opposed to 2019, where manganese is totally forgotten? And therein lies the problem! So, where is the substantial sameness that the hon. Minister is referring to? Could he enlighten us?

Mr Sawmynaden: We don't even know whether the document that he is reading is 2016, 2018 or 2014. So, I cannot answer to that.

Mr Mohamed: I'll table it. Since he wants to hide his, I'll table it. The answer is still not forthcoming, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. From what we have heard from the hon. Minister, he is the only one who is convinced and he is hiding behind the SGS or other bodies. This whole issue stinks corruption. We have been observing, we have been reading the different statements of the STC, the Minister himself. It would be good to clear the air if the Minister agrees, in his own interest and in the public interest, to set up a Commission of Inquiry or an independent inquiry to see the involvement of the previous Minister, especially the previous General Manager on this whole issue of import of this type of fuel, where consumers are being taken for a ride and those who have suffered losses, their cars have been broken down. The Minister is happy and he has nothing to hide. Is he agreeable to ask Government, the Prime Minister to conduct an independent inquiry if he has nothing to hide,

especially with regard to the involvement of the previous General Manager who is sitting here?

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I told you, investigation is being carried out. We are analysing the product, we are analysing everything. Let us get the final report, then we can see. But as I mentioned before, gasoil ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Quiet please!

Mr Sawmynaden: *Mo pas cause ek twa en dehors moi!*

(Interruptions)

Aller do ta eh!

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, quiet please!

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is pure frustration - leave it. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, once we get the final report, then we will see. As I mentioned before, the gasoline has been supplied according to specification that has been sent to them.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

Mr Lobine: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, with regard to the surveys and independent tests that the STC is carrying out or awaiting results, when will we be getting those independent results and why is it taking so much time?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, the work is being done by an independent surveyor. I think it will not be independent if we are going to put pressure on them. We should let them do their work independently. When they will finish with the report, they will send it to us.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. A lot has been said about the contract between STC, Vitol Bahrain and PetroChina, MRPL. As the House is aware, there has been a reduction of Rs40 m. as premium, which Vitol has agreed with STC. Therefore, can I ask the hon. Minister if he is agreeable to table the contract between STC and Vitol?

Mr Sawmynaden: Actually, I am not aware of the figures that the hon. Member is saying. This is not part of the question. If he comes with a specific question, then we will reply.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Xavier Duval!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to ask the hon. Minister, the samples must have been taken months ago by the STC and sent to the UK, probably, for testing. The MVDA has done the same and weeks ago got the results. Why is the STC not able to tell us, at least, the results for manganese tested by the overseas surveyors? Why can't they, at least, tell us that? Otherwise, it will look to everyone like a cover-up.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have already mentioned that before. There is an in-depth analysis being carried out with the samples collected at the tanks of the STC, from the MVDA, from the petrol stations and from tanks of vehicles and also carried out on the spare parts that probably have been damaged. So, it is a big investigation on all these items. The MVDA just took one sample from their tanks and sent it to one surveyor. This is what is being carried out and once we will get the final report, we will put it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, last question!

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the scandal of the decade. In the light of so many questions which have remained unanswered, in the light of so many grey areas and in relation to product specification I have in mind, especially manganese, can I impress upon Government, if there is honesty and seriousness of purpose, to set up a Select Committee to look into all these issues so that those who have suffered undue harm – I have in mind those who have lost their cars, those whose cars have undergone irreparable damage and those who have suffered huge financial loss. In the name of the consumers, I hope that Government will set up this Select Committee.

Mr Sawmynaden: Mr Speaker, Sir, few months back, they were in this Parliament and they were saying, 'this Government, only few days left.' And the people of this country trust us because whatever we are doing, we are doing it for the people of this country. We are working for this country. If there is an issue, if there is a problem, we will clear the problem; we will work *en étroite collaboration*. *On est en train de travailler en étroite collaboration avec la MVDA*. No complaints, we are working together. As we mentioned, it has been supplied according to specifications and whatever doubts come from the MVDA or any other potential users of gasoline, we will take into account. As a serving Government, we are here to serve this nation and we will continue to do it in the best interest of this country. This is why we are sitting here today one more time.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION**SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)**

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(3.35 p.m.)

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**2020 FUTSAL AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS - MAURITIUS PARTICIPATION**

The Minister of Youth Empowerment, Sports and Recreation (Mr S. Toussaint): Mr Speaker, Sir, following the withdrawal of the Mauritius national Futsal team from the 2020 Africa Cup of Nations, I wish to make a statement on the issue with a view to shedding light on the circumstances that led to that decision and subsequent consequences.

On 17 January 2020, the Mauritius Football Association informed my Ministry that our national Futsal team had been qualified for the final phase of the 2020 Futsal Africa Cup of Nations scheduled from 28 January to 07 February 2020 in Morocco. No mention was made of the circumstances which led to the qualification of the national team nor of the exact place where the competition would take place. It must be pointed out that National Sports Federations do not normally require my Ministry's approval for participation in international competitions except when financial assistance is required for such participation. In the case of the 2020 Futsal Africa Cup of Nations, all costs of participation were met by the Mauritius Football Association and the national team left Mauritius for Morocco on 24 January 2020.

On 26 January 2020, the SADC Liaison Office to the African Union informed that the Futsal Africa Cup of Nations would, in fact, be hosted on the occupied territory of Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Our attention was drawn to the position of the SADC, including Mauritius, on the issue of SADR being illegally occupied by Morocco and the need for us to reconsider our decision to participate, the more so as South Africa had withdrawn from the competition for the same reason.

Upon advice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the effect that, given our SADC position and the fact that South Africa had withdrawn on the principle of recognition of

SADR, it was decided that Mauritius should also withdraw its participation in the competition.

The Mauritius Football Association was informed accordingly at around 15 25 hrs on the same day by way of a letter sent by email to its Secretary General and requested to do the needful for the immediate withdrawal of Mauritius from the competition as the national team was supposed to play its first match at 20 30 hrs (Mauritian time) on that same day. The Mauritius Football Association informed the Secretary General of the *Confédération Africaine de Football* of the decision to withdraw the Mauritian team on the same day.

However, according to the Mauritius Football Association, in spite of all their efforts to contact the team in Morocco on 28 January 2020, they were not able to do so given that the team had already left their hotel for the stadium. The team thus played its first match, on 28 January 2020, against Equatorial Guinea. However, on the following day, the Mauritius Football Association confirmed that it would abide by Government's decision. Arrangements were made for the national team to leave Laâyoune on Friday 31 January 2020.

On Thursday 13 February 2020, I had a meeting with the President and other officials of the Mauritius Football Association to clarify matters regarding the issue. The President explained that it was in November 2019 that the federation had been informed by the *Confédération Africaine de Football* of the holding of the 2020 Futsal Africa Cup of Nations in Morocco. Upon withdrawal of South Africa, the Mauritius Football Association deemed it an opportunity for our Mauritian Futsal team to participate in the final phase of the competition as our team had been disqualified during the preliminaries. At no point did they realise that there was, in fact, a regional political issue around this matter.

The president of the Mauritius Football Association confirmed that the withdrawal of the Mauritian team from the competition, the federation has been sanctioned by the *Confédération Africaine de Football* with a fine of USD 75,000 and a two-year suspension from Futsal competitions. Necessary arrangements are being made by the federation to settle the fine.

As regards other costs incurred for the return of our team, due to the urgency of the situation and for security reasons, my Ministry has contributed an amount of Rs500,513 representing costs of airfare from Laayoune to Casablanca and a hotel accommodation in Casablanca in favour of the team.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must highlight that the Mauritius Football Association has tendered its apologies for embarrassment caused to the country and took the responsibility for this regretful incident.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also permitted for me to ask for clarification, just a simple clarification it is.

Mr Speaker: Clarification?

Mr Mohamed: Yes, it is permitted.

Mr Speaker: Go ahead!

Mr Mohamed: Is the hon. Minister saying, therefore, that the federation is not to blame, his Ministry is not to blame, no one is to blame, and it is only the Moroccan organisers that are to blame?

Mr Speaker: No debate is allowed!

(Interruptions)

No debate is allowed!

Mr Mohamed: Is that clarification...

Mr Speaker: No debate is allowed please!

(Interruptions)

No question!

(Interruptions)

No question, only clarification!

(Interruptions)

Only clarification!

Mr Mohamed: So, the clarification I seek from the hon. Minister is as follows: is the hon. Minister saying that there is no else to blame and that it will be taxpayer who will have to be paid?

Mr Speaker: This is a question! Hon. Member, this is question!

Mr Mohamed: How else can I ask for clarification if it is not question?

Mr Speaker: But you can come with a question.

Mr Mohamed: But, of course, Mr Speaker, a clarification...

Mr Speaker: Not now! During Question Time you can come with a question.

Mr Mohamed: He is not used to that, but he has to get used to it. Clarifications are asked in that way. Simple!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! Hon. Mohamed, I am on my feet. Listen, there is what we know as clarification and there is a question itself during Question time. So, we don't play with that!

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Is it because he has not voted for him, he does not want to say?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Balgobin!

(3.43 p.m.)

BROADBAND INTERNET - ACCESS

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

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I wish to make the following statement –

At the last sitting, the hon. Second Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central, hon. Uteem raised the issue of free access to Broadband Internet for families in the Social Register.

This is a measure which was announced at paragraph 52 of the Budget Speech 2018-2019.

I am informed by Mauritius Telecom that provision has been made to offer 10 Mbps for broadband connectivity with a monthly volume allowance of 15 GB. Those who are listed on the social register have to make an application to Mauritius Telecom to avail themselves of this facility. Out of the 8,228 people who are on the social register, 5,220 have called in person at Telecom shops to apply for the free service. Out of the 5,220, 4,771 have already been connected, representing more than 90% of applicants. For 289 cases, the connection is still in progress. Based on availability of infrastructural facilities in other

regions, Mauritius Telecom will continue to connect more people. However, some of those listed on the social register are not eligible for the following reasons –

- (a) they are occupying State land without authorisation;
- (b) electricity is not available on premises, and
- (c) no demarcation point for the pole planting (the houses are too close to the road).

As regards Tranquebar, Vallee Pitot and Crown land Tory, 108 eligible persons called at Telecom shops to avail themselves of the facility. Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the 108 beneficiaries, 90 have already been connected and most of them within one month only from the date of application. The remaining 18 houses could not be connected, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the reasons I just mentioned earlier.

I am also informed that the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development will examine the hardship cases and will also try to investigate why some eligible persons did not apply for this free service.

I wish to assure hon. Uteem that I am personally following this matter to ensure that all eligible persons listed on the social register will benefit from this facility.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Teeluck!

(3.46 p.m.)

PRESIDENT’S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

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

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

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

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage (Mr A. Teeluck): Mr Speaker, Sir, I feel truly honoured and privileged to be addressing this august Assembly today. And, this honour and privilege, I owe it to my close family and friends for their constant support; the activists of *l'Alliance Morisien* for their hard work and collaboration and the people of my Constituency, No. 6 for having believed in me.

As I stand here today, I also commit that I shall work to the best of my abilities to repay the faith and trust that the voters of No.6 have placed in me and also to uphold the values of the MSM Party.

I also salute the hard work of my predecessor and congratulate him for his appointment as the President of the Republic of Mauritius and for the Government Programme 2020-2024.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would also like to congratulate you on your election as Speaker of the National Assembly.

And my most sincere thanks go to the hon. Prime Minister, Leader of the House, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, for having placed his trust not only in me, but in the youth of this country; for having given young people like me the opportunity to serve the nation. This reminds me actually of one of the favourite quotes of Lady Thatcher, and which goes like this –

“That which thy fathers have bequeathed to thee, earn it anew, if thou wouldst possess it.”

It means that the achievements of another time are never an inert legacy, waiting only to be swallowed. Instead, we have to live up to the challenge, be resourceful and creative, and use the best of our abilities to construct anew in our own time and place that which others have achieved in their own particular circumstances.

This is our task! This is what we are here for! To strive for the betterment of the society, to boost our economy, to bring our country to new heights. So that the Mauritian population and future generations can say that it is this Government, under the leadership of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who brought jobs, prosperity and success to every person in, and every corner of, our great nation. It is our pledge that when tomorrow the young generation looks back at us, they say that we have prefigured the dawn of a new golden age and constructed a developed and emancipated Mauritian nation in its true sense. Someone

rightly said that “Democracy can be sustained and developed only by people who understand its essence”.

And today, it is unfortunate to see that the legitimacy of this Government is being challenged, and for reasons other than in the interest of democracy. It is being argued that the last 2019 elections were not free and fair. That the elections *étaient truquées*.

I will not question the right of any person, whether it be the Opposition or any citizen of this Republic to nurture unfounded presumptions or entertain groundless beliefs that the elections were not free and fair, because you have the right, *vous avez le droit de le faire*.

But today, I put the question to the Members of this august Assembly. I put the question to the thousands of Mauritians watching us at this very moment through live broadcast, *et un petit parenthèse* – talking about live broadcast, I will not fail to stress on the fact that *la diffusion en directe des travaux de l’Assemblée Nationale fut une décision prise par le précédent gouvernement sous le leadership de Sir Anerood Jugnauth dans un élan d’étendre la notion de la démocratie*.

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I put the question to the nation, and let us see what is on the other side of the coin.

Si les élections étaient truquées, then how come that hon. Fabrice David was elected *en tête de liste* in Constituency No.1 with the third elected Member being another Member of the Opposition.

Si les élections étaient truquées, then how come *l’Alliance Nationale* and the MMM would have won all three seats in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central.

Same applies to Constituency No. 3, Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, where again *trois membres de l’opposition sont élus*.

What about Constituency No. 5? *Si les élections étaient truquées*, would hon. Woochit have been sitting here in this House as a hon. Member in this Assembly? And coming to my Constituency, Grand’Baie and Poudre d’Or, *si les élections étaient truquées, alors comment expliquer que l’honorable Dr. Mahend Gungapersad fut élu en deuxième position, tandis que moi-même, en troisième*, and it goes on. Constituency No. 15, La Caverne and Phoenix, where hon. Lobine and hon. Assirvaden were elected, and the list goes on and on, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Si les élections étaient truquées, with all due respect, then none of the Members on the other side of the House would be sitting here and participating in these debates.

Ce gouvernement a toute la légitimité voulue pour gouverner. Ce gouvernement a été élu et mandaté démocratiquement par le peuple mauricien pour diriger le pays dans la continuité. And this rests on the merits of the Government for the work accomplished over the past five years.

People have made a choice, a choice to trust an alliance which had a *bilan*, a choice to trust a leader who had earned and who has earned the respect of a whole nation. A choice for an alliance who had the audacity to respond to the aspirations of the youth and to line up the youth as candidates for the general election. *Tandis que d'autres* only chose to repeatedly talk about *rupture* without living up to the word, *nous avons choisi de le faire, nous l'avons appliqué sans réserve et sans condition.*

People have chosen hard work over ill-intended empty speeches, people have chosen a leader, a Government, an alliance who has strived hard to make *le salaire minimum* a reality, and today these thousands of workers in this country who now earn a decent living and live life in dignity have translated their blessings into vote in favour of this Government.

Oui, M. le president, ces milliers de travailleurs qui peuvent désormais, suivant l'introduction du salaire minimum mener une vie décente, ont traduit leurs remerciements en plébiscitant ce gouvernement pour un nouveau mandat. Ces milliers de retraités qui ont sacrifié toute une vie au service du pays, qui ont contribué à faire de l'île Maurice l'économie qu'elle représente aujourd'hui, ont remercié ce gouvernement pour l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse en votant en sa faveur.

Free tertiary education, free school materials, negative income tax, and yet again the list goes on and on. And at this point, I would like to go back to the speech of hon. Dr. Gungapersad where he rightly mentioned that he was in the waters in Fond du Sac till his waist and lived the ordeals of the inhabitants. But I am sad, hon. Member, to note that you failed to mention that this Government is investing millions of rupees to solve the issue of flooding in Fond-du-Sac by putting in place a cut-off drain, which will reach completion in a year or so. The mere fact of being in the waters does not in itself solve the problem, the problem is solved when action is taken, and action is being taken, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What he also failed to mention is that a previous Government failed to implement the project by issuing and then cancelling Work Order for the implementation of the cut-off drain.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the choice was clear. The choice was to vote for a team who has only one interest, to work in the best interest of the people of this country.

It is time for the Opposition to accept that democracy has prevailed on all fronts and to move forward gracefully and to believe in the capacity of this Government.

If not, la logique voudrait que si vous contestez les élections, il serait démocratiquement incohérent de prêter serment comme Membre de l'Assemblée Nationale et d'assumer les rôles de député. Votre légitimité en tant que député est d'office mise en question si vous prétendez que les élections sont truquées. Mais aujourd'hui, *it's Valentine's Day*, alors je reste candide et je ne vais pas réitérer ma demande faite à l'Opposition dans le passé de démissionner en tant que député de l'Assemblée si vous êtes sincère dans votre démarche juridique.

And few Members, during the last sitting, actually raised some interrogations on fairness and fair play on our part or even talking about hitting below the belt. Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not hit below any belt and we only play by the rules, and when it comes to fair play and fairness, I will share with the House what fair play and fairness is in politics.

Fair play and fairness, Mr Speaker, Sir, is when a leader is being mopped out of the school in Constituency No. 10 at early hours in the morning after losing the 2019 election, and though being his opponent, my colleague, hon. Vikram Hurdoyal, ensures his security and takes all measures to escort him safely out of the premises of the school. This is fairness and fair play in politics, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Fair play and fairness is when the results are announced in Constituency No. 6 and though the second elected Member is from the opposing party, I not only congratulate him but I hold his hand high and get all the *l'Alliance Morisien* activists in the yard of the Doorgachurn Hurry Government School to congratulate and applaud his election. This is called fairness and fair play in politics.

We play by the rules and the rules of fairness, the rules of democracy. And we certainly do not hit below any belt. If not, I would have ironically included in my speech, reference made by Yatin Varma and Raj Pentiah concerning the rig elections in their own Party.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our country, as rightly pointed out in the Government Programme 2020-2024, has been blessed by an extraordinary cultural and ethnic diversity which is unique.

The fact that my Ministry has henceforth been renamed the Ministry of Arts and Cultural Heritage is a testimony of the Government's intention to lay emphasis on the richness of this diversity which has contributed to build our identity - the Mauritian identity.

Cultural heritage is, in fact, not only a matter of buildings, stones or other intangible traditions. It is the treasure that carries part of our souls and our ancestors' spirit, that we want our children to learn about and to keep for the following generations.

And as the new Minister of Arts and Cultural Heritage, I will ensure that the protection and understanding of our cultural heritage and its contribution to social cohesion, improved economic opportunities and the resilience of communities, be high on my Ministry's agenda.

I will ensure that initiatives for the conservation, promotion and marketing of our intangible and tangible heritage as well as our cultural diversity are pursued and strengthened.

In this endeavour, I am proud that during my first mission abroad, we were successful in inscribing the Segha Tambour Chagos in the UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

I would like, Mr Speaker, Sir, to thank the hon. Prime Minister for his unflinching support while working on this challenging dossier. I also have a special word of thanks and recognition for my predecessor, now His Excellency the President, for taking up the challenge, his dedication and close follow-up in ensuring that the dossier is nominated.

I cannot forget here my friends of Chagos, among whom the late Lisette Talate, Mimose Furcy, Olivier Bancoult and all those, who have braved the waves but ensured that the Segha Tambour Chagos remains alive.

My Ministry has already started bringing a new touch to the sector with the participation of the community to promote our cultural heritage.

Over and above, Mr Speaker Sir, the traditional *dépôt de gerbes* at Pointe Canon on 31 January 2020 in the context of the commemoration of the Abolition of Slavery, we proceeded this year with the holding of a culinary creole festival – '*La Cuisine d'Antan*'.

This new initiative has permitted bearers of our culinary traditions to showcase what they have learnt from their parents and also allowed us to taste the culinary delicacies of our grandparents that have passed on to us. Such initiatives, which have been made possible with the very close collaboration of hon. Sandra Mayotte and hon. Tania Diolle, will be encouraged and permeated in the future.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the opinion that people must feel that they are the owners and transmitters of heritage. To enable this to happen, we have to start at grass root level. Children of the locality should first be knowledgeable of the heritage in their neighbourhood, and feel the need to be its guardian. It will be crucial to devise measures to put this into reality and to ensure the protection of our rich heritage. In fact, we have already started in this avenue.

On 01 February this year, we had the privilege of having his Excellency, Mr Adoulaye Diop, the Senegalese Minister of Culture and Communications as guest of honour. In his presence, the Prime Minister inaugurated the 'Replica Village' at Trou Chenille, Le Morne. This project depicts the life of the descendants of slaves and is in line with showing our rich cultural heritage and promoting cultural tourism.

In this same spirit, and to keep the memory of our founding fathers alive, the much awaited Intercontinental Slavery Museum will soon become a reality. One of the key recommendations of the Truth and Justice Commission Report, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum will be housed in the Ex-Military Hospital, itself a highly symbolical structure linked with slavery, which will give visibility to slavery and the slave trade in the Indian Ocean, promote slave history, and emphasise the contribution of the African Diaspora in the world development.

Furthermore, the museum is expected to link countries which formed part of the slave trade network in the 18th and 19th centuries. A Special Purpose Vehicle has been set up by the Government on 20 December 2019 to fast track the implementation of the project and very soon this museum will see the light of the day.

Mr Speaker Sir, UNESCO is convinced that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component. To ensure that culture takes its rightful place in development strategies, various initiatives will be taken by my Ministry.

And one of them is an *Assise du patrimoine*. Protecting our historical monuments, our paintings, our nature is not an easy task. Our cultural and national heritage is threatened

unfortunately by various factors, climate change, air pollution, international political conflicts, etc. Moreover with the rapid development in the country, there is a need for balancing heritage conservation and development and to ensure awareness on heritage to provide a platform to reflect in these issues and with a view to adopt a concerted and participatory approach towards elaborating orientations for sustainable heritage preservation which will be used to formulate a policy, strategy and action plan on Cultural Heritage. The main theme of the *Assise* will be integrating –

1. the integrating heritage in development plan;
2. heritage sustainability and economics, and
3. heritage and community.

On a legal perspective, a new Bill on National Heritage is being finalised to update our legislation and to revamp the sector. Along with this Bill, I have urged the National Heritage Fund to come up with a Strategic Plan on heritage so as to have a roadmap to ensure we are reaching our common objectives.

Preserving cultural heritage and opening it up to all parts of the society is vital. We are to create a common sense of belonging. Innovative technologies such as virtual or augmented reality can enhance how people experience cultural heritage. There is great potential here. For museum, for example, we know very well that new and exciting digital technologies can offer unique creative and interactive experience and attract a wider audience. It is, therefore, important to support the development of specialised skills and to help heritage and museum related professions adapt to the digital world. We also want to march on digital technologies, to respond to the threats to cultural heritage such as natural disasters, climate change, terrorism or vandalism. For instance, our archives, to help ensure that we have better harness this potential, we will launch digital platforms such as mobile application to make people discover and experience our rich heritage.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is ensuring in making culture the driver to success, be it promotion of cultural industry or putting in place cultural infrastructure.

The National Arts Fund has proved to be very helpful to our artists. In three calls since 2018, funds for a total project value of Rs19,209,738 have been approved out of which Rs12,329,310 have already been disbursed. Disbursement of funds under the fourth call is in the pipeline and we are launching shortly the fifth call for projects. I will be looking into the

forthcoming calls to ensure that dynamics of the sector are incorporated in the scheme to ensure that we live up to the rapid developments and changes in the sector.

The welfare of our artists is high on my Ministry's agenda. One of the areas that will require a close attention is the timely payment of copyright fees. We must ensure that artists receive their dues within a very reasonable time. I have requested the MASA to ensure that an action plan, including the time frames for the proper administration and distribution of copyright fees, is elaborated. While the new structure of copyright fees is being finalised, my Ministry is also exploring ways and means of automating the collection mechanism and easing the means of paying fees by users of works.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we also wish that artists have a state of art venue for giving top level performances for the benefits of lovers of music. In that respect, in close collaboration with hon. Minister Stephan Toussaint, I am presently looking into potential locations for the housing of a *stade musical*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Articles 3 and 12 of our Constitution protect this very freedom of expression. This is crucial for any art form to flourish. We have to acknowledge the importance of the arts for the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions in Mauritians' multicultural society and that the vitality of arts depends on the social and economic wellbeing of artists, both individually and collectively.

This Government has always felt the need to improve the social security, labour and tax status of the artists, whether employed or self-employed, in light of their contribution to cultural and social development. We cannot overlook the special conditions of work and employment under which artistic activity takes place, and this Government will endeavour to develop sector specific labour standards that address the right of association and collective bargaining, social protection, fairer remuneration, gender equality and all those in line with the existing ILO and UN standards, providing for basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The consultation process for gathering inputs from relevant stakeholders and creating new legislation was led by the then Ministry of Arts and Culture with the UNESCO support. The experts from the UNESCO have expressed their appreciation that various recommendations made in their report had already been implemented by the Government. This demonstrates the willingness of the Government to be proactive.

Very shortly, and following some clearances, my Ministry will seek Government's approval for the drafting instructions to be issued to the Attorney General's Office.

If we want an "inclusive, high income and green Mauritius", we must have no alternative than "forging ahead together", "as one people, as one nation". Someone rightly said that you can't run a Government solely on a business basis. Government should be humane. It should have a heart and this Government does have a heart, a heart for you and the most vulnerable and needy people of our society, a heart for the whole Mauritian nation and, above all, a heart for this country.

On this note, Mr Speaker, Sir, *je vous souhaite ainsi qu'aux membres du gouvernement, une joyeuse fête de Saint Valentin et plus particulièrement une bonne fête de l'amour aux membres de l'Opposition.*

Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

(4.12 p.m)

Mr E. Juman (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is, indeed, a great honour for me to address this august Assembly as a Member of Parliament. As a believer, Mr Speaker, Sir, I deem it my duty to thank, first and foremost, the Almighty for the blessings bestowed upon me, as a result of which I am standing and addressing the House today.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the previous orators and wish to applaud some of them for their remarkable speeches, including two staunch Labourites, hon. David and hon. Gungapersad, as well as hon. Ms Foo Kune from the MMM, and also on the other side of the House, the hon. Minister, Mrs Koonjoo-shah.

I wish, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the House could have met earlier than this Friday to resume the debates instead of having had two weeks of unwarranted leave. As a new Parliamentarian, I hope that the hon. Prime Minister will set a good example and that he does not make it a habit to hold the House in abeyance each time he goes on a mission abroad.

Before talking about Smart Cities, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us, first and foremost, all of us be smart Parliamentarians. Let the House be a place where democracy is strengthened, let the House be a place where the so-called good governance is put into practice and it does not remain just a mere concept devoid of any sense.

I wish to make it clear, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially to Members of the other side of the House, the electoral campaign is over, and therefore, I won't focus on attacking our opponents. Whatever points I am going to raise, here, are based on facts and figures. Whatever I am going to say is based solely on my concern on what is being done to address, and most importantly, to redress certain issues of national interest.

The more so, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the voters of Constituency No. 3 for their trust and support. I know they have lots of expectations. I know it won't be an easy task, especially the more so when for the last five years, nothing, absolutely nothing has been done for the welfare and development of the people of Roche Bois and Plaine Verte.

(Interruptions)

Go and see the Mamade Ellahee Stadium, closed for nearly 3 years. The Idrice Goomany Multipurpose Complex, *M. le président, plus de mille jours rien que pour décider si on va rénover ou on va reconstruire. 1,000 jours, alors qu'on aurait dû décider de cela en mille secondes.* The infrastructure, Mr Speaker, Sir, be it footpath, drains, *parcours de santé*, children's playground and what not, nothing! Nothing has been properly maintained. At the Idrice Goomany Government School, the football pitch looks more like a bush than any other thing.

Worst, Mr Speaker, Sir, in Constituency No. 3, be it at Roche Bois, be it at Plaine Verte, there is not a single children's playground in order - that's why he ran away.

Le Gymnase Premier Février à Roche Bois, c'est plus un panier percé qu'un gymnase. En termes de recrutement, *M. le président*, à la veille de la dissolution du Parlement, on a recruté 64 personnes à la *Cargo Handling Corporation*. De ces 64, seulement deux de Roche Bois, seulement deux de Plaine Verte. En parcourant la liste, *M. le président*, on voit qu'il y a des gens qui habitent à Tamarin, Rivière Noire qui sont recrutés pour travailler à Roche Bois. Tamarin !

(Interruptions)

Alors qu'il y a des centaines de chômeurs à Roche Bois qui peuvent marcher pour aller travailler, on préfère payer plus en termes de l'allocation de transport que leur salaire, mais on ignore les personnes de Roche Bois et Plaine Verte qui sont à quelques mètres de la *Cargo Handling Corporation*.

M. le président, ce qui est plus triste, lorsqu'on a écouté l'honorable Rawoo, PPS de la Circonscription No. 3, pas un seul projet pour la Circonscription No. 3, pas un mot dans son discours sur la Circonscription No. 3.

(Interruptions)

Pas un mot dans son discours ! Merci honorable Membre!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Too much talking, please!

Mr Juman: Mr Speaker, Sir, as a Member of the Opposition, we are not here only to talk, we are not here only to deliver speeches, we are not here only to criticize. *On n'est pas là pour s'asseoir sans rien faire.* We are not here, as hon. Tania Diolle has said, to be "*une Opposition stérile*". This is certainly not our aim. In fact, we are fully committed, Mr Speaker, Sir, in bringing meaningful change, as promised by the Government during his last mandate. But meaningful change should not be only for a happy few, as it has been the case so far.

I am convinced, Mr Speaker, Sir, that those who are on this side of the House are even more determined to bring about this change provided it is done in a constructive manner where good governance and transparency prevail. This is what we call *opposition constructive*. And I am sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, given the chance, we can do it together.

(Interruptions)

You all tend your hands to us, now listen! I presume all the Parliamentarians have only a sole objective, the betterment of the country and the prosperity of our nation.

M. le président, on aurait beau aimé faire une opposition constructive, mais si les critiques, si les suggestions de cette même opposition aussi constructive, aussi valable qu'elle soit ne sont pas écoutés, elles ne serviront à rien. *After all, Mr Speaker, Sir, it takes two to tango.*

(Interruptions)

M. le président, j'ai entendu les intervenants, surtout on vient d'entendre l'honorable ministre Teeluck et la plupart des Membres de ce côté de la Chambre ont qualifié la démarche de l'opposition de boycotter le discours programme de bassesse, d'attitude défaitiste et de mauvais perdant. On vient d'avoir un exemple ici, l'honorable Teeluck vient

de nous dire que c'est lui qui a autorisé les partisans de l'Alliance Morisien d'entrer dans la cour de l'école le jour de la proclamation des résultats. C'est lui qui a décidé de faire ça. Je ne suis pas là pour donner la réplique, loin de là ou encore moins abaisser ou faire la leçon comme certains ont voulu la faire de ce côté de la Chambre. Vainement tenté de la faire ! Je leur dirais simplement que la Constitution de notre République nous garantit le droit de contester les élections si nous estimons qu'elles n'ont pas été libres et transparentes. Les 63% des votants sont représentés ici, de ce côté de la Chambre. Et tous les Membres de l'Opposition qui sont la conviendront avec moi qu'il n'y a jamais eu auparavant autant d'irrégularités entourant les élections générales. Jamais eu ! Ce n'est pas une démarche en solo entreprise pour sauver quelqu'un ou un parti seulement. Loin de là. C'est une action concertée de tous les trois partis de l'opposition pour contester les élections qui sont teintées d'allégations, d'anomalies. La population, je pense, est en droit d'avoir des réponses, M. le président. Des réponses pour savoir pourquoi des milliers de personnes n'ont pas pu voter, des réponses pour savoir comment autant de personnes décédées ont pu voter, des réponses pour savoir comment des bulletins de vote erraient dans la nature. Le peuple veut aussi savoir, M. le président, à quoi servait les fameux *computer rooms* ...

(Interruptions)

Quel rôle a été joué par un nommé politique de la *State Informatics Limited* ? Jamais auparavant, M. le président, l'indépendance, l'impartialité et l'intégrité de la commission électorale n'ont été aussi mises à rude épreuve. Jamais ! L'image de cette institution censée représenter la démocratie électorale du pays a été ternie. Je le redis, M. le président, la population veut des réponses et la Cour, je suis convaincu, nous apportera ces réponses, comme ça a été le cas la semaine dernière au Malawi. C'est la Cour qui va décider si les élections étaient *free and fair* ou pas.

M. le président, j'ai entendu l'honorable Mme Diolle, à la radio, récemment, dire que c'est un programme de continuité. La première chose qui m'est venue à l'esprit, 'continuité' avec quoi ? Avec quoi, M. le président ? Les mêmes vieilles pratiques qui ont ponctué le précédent mandat, les mêmes pratiques qui violent les principes de la démocratie, la méritocratie, la bonne gouvernance, c'est ça qu'il faut continuer ? Doit-on avoir d'autres *BAI*, doit-on s'attendre qu'il y ait d'autres Sobrinho Alvaro, ou encore des nominations scandaleuses, ou les fausses promesses comme le paiement de Super Cash Back Gold ? Ou est-ce à dire que le trafic de drogue va s'amplifier comme cela a été le cas sous le précédent mandat ? Parce que ce n'est pas '*kass les reins les reins trafiquants*', non, M. le président,

c'est 'kresse les reins trafiquants' ! On a vu ce qui s'est passé avec la tractopelle. Comment peut-on dire qu'on va continuer avec une gouvernance pareille ? On préfère louer une photocopieuse à R 1,235,000, quand à l'achat cela coute R 850,000. Honorable Madame Diolle, on ne peut pas ...

(Interruptions)

Je vous le redis, on a préféré louer une photocopieuse à R 1,235,000. L'honorable Madame Diolle nous a dit qu'il faut continuer au lieu d'acheter une neuve qui coute à R 850,000...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, a point of order.

Mrs Diolle: Mr Speaker, I would like to raise a point of order. Hon. Juman is saying that I said things that I never said. I never said that we have to continue with the buying of a *photocopieuse* of I don't know how many million. This hon. Member is lying. I would like him to produce the statement to this House. I would not tolerate anyone quoting me in a wrong way. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Don't make allegation, hon. Member.

Mr Juman: It is said *dans le processus de continuité, M. le président.*

(Interruptions)

C'est dans le processus de continuité qu'elle a dit...

(Interruptions)

If I have been rude, I am sorry. I never said liar...

(Interruptions)

Est-ce bien la même continuité qui a conduit le pays au bord du précipice économique ?

Mr Speaker, Sir, most of the promises in the previous Government Programme 2015 have never been implemented. Once again, we have another programme full of ambitious projects which make us wonder if they will ever materialise. Let me give you an example.

J'ai pris bonne note de la déclaration du ministre, l'honorable Toussaint, sur la Cane 2020. M. le président, la *MFA* et le ministère de la Jeunesse peuvent se renvoyer la balle entre eux comme ils veulent, mais c'est la population qui est le grand perdant, parce qu'on a payé des millions de roupies - on est disqualifié - pour jouer notre sélection nationale. Et

comment se fait-il que notre sélection nationale participe – la *MFA* informe le ministèr. Une bourde, une bavure diplomatique irréversible ! Le ministre du *Youth Empowerment and Sports Recreation* a fait preuve d'une légèreté inacceptable, je dirais même criminelle dans cette affaire, M. le président. La responsabilité de l'honorable ministre Toussaint ne doit nullement être minimisée. Je me demande s'il n'arrive pas à faire de simple formalité de vérification. Pourra-t-il gérer un *Sports Hub* même si celui-ci se concrétise ? Permettez-moi d'en douter, M. le président. C'est ce même doute qui me vient à l'esprit quand on apprend...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Juman: C'est le même doute qui me vient à l'esprit quand le même dirigeant de notre *Sports Hub* en devenir a refusé d'accueillir le *African Judo Championship*. La fédération a fait une demande pour organiser une compétition internationale et la seule demande qu'ils ont fait au ministère c'est d'utiliser le gymnase à Côte d'Or, mais le ministère a tout simplement refusé parce qu'il y a des concerts qui s'organisent là-bas. Des milliards de roupies pour organiser des concerts, mais pas pour le judo, une compétition internationale d'envergure ! En fait, on ne fait pas briller le sport mauricien, M. le président, on le brule.

Laissez-moi vous donner un exemple, M. le président. Je vous cite encore une. J'ai entendu l'honorable Premier ministre dire l'autre jour, et je cite –

« *Assurer qui ena enn certain niveau dans l'éducation.* »

En parlant de niveau, on le sait, M. le président, le rehaussement de l'éducation doit être fait à tous les niveaux et cela dès le cycle primaire. Mais je comprends mal comment le ministère de l'Education compte s'y prendre pour atteindre l'excellence, pour atteindre le niveau, avec ce que le Premier ministre est en train de nous dire, quand il envoie lui-même des signes contradictoires. Je vous explique, M. le président. Au début du mois de février, les élèves du Grade 3 et plusieurs d'autres classes encore n'ont toujours pas de manuels scolaires. Et vous savez ce qui est plus grave, ces manuels scolaires sont déjà imprimés, stockés depuis le 26 décembre à l'imprimerie du gouvernement. Comme M. le ministre de l'*ICT* avait dit l'autre fois, je crois qu'il nous faut une intelligence artificielle pour faire cela, pour aller distribuer ces manuels scolaires. Dois-je comprendre, M. le président, que les écoliers n'ont rien fait pendant le premier mois ? Ajoutée à cela, dans plusieurs écoles à travers l'île, il n'y a pas de professeur. Pas plus tard que la semaine dernière, au Collège John Kennedy, ils ont

manifesté parce qu'ils n'ont pas de professeur de *Design*. How do we expect to achieve excellence when the Ministry is itself showing slackness in its approach?

Restons sur les incohérences du ministère de l'Éducation, M. le président. J'ai pris note dans le discours programme que le gouvernement compte mettre sur pied une nouvelle Faculté de médecine et des sciences de la santé à l'Université de Maurice. Soit ! Mais je trouve tout à fait incompréhensible pourquoi le gouvernement refuse toujours d'accepter les bourses en médecine offertes par le Pakistan. S'ils veulent vraiment promouvoir les études en médecine, pourquoi refuser l'aide d'un pays ami qui nous tend la main ? M. le président, le gouvernement s'enlise des fois dans les contradictions qui frisent l'incompréhension, pour ne pas dire l'incompétence. Il ne suffit pas, M. le président, d'évoquer des ambitions grandiloquentes pour épater la galerie alors que la vision et la volonté pour y parvenir n'y sont pas.

If we look back at the previous programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can come up with a whole lot of examples. However, I don't want to go into all details, otherwise no Valentine. But the nation wants to know, Mr Speaker, Sir, how does the Government intend to address some key economic issues. *Le discours programme n'aborde que des généralités mais ne fait aucune mention sur la façon dont le gouvernement compte s'y prendre pour surmonter certains défis qui nous guettent.*

The SME sector, Mr Speaker, Sir, is dying a slow death. From 2007 to 2014, up to 7,000 SMEs were being created yearly. Do you know how many SMEs are being created now? 1,700! And we all know that statistics say 50% of our SMEs do not survive more than five years. Imagine the situation we are now. We have no clear policy for the SME sector when the SME sector could have become a motto for our economic development. Nothing is being done to promote the export sector. Nothing! Instead of focusing on boosting our own food production, we are more adamant on increasing our imports. Can you believe it, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in a tropical island like Mauritius, we are importing 55,000 lemons for the coming Maha Shivaratri? Importing lemons, importing coconuts!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, since the House is in a good mood, I will suspend the sitting for some 30 minutes.

At 4.45 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.21 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Juman!

Mr Juman: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, in a tropical island like Mauritius, we are importing lemons, coconuts. Why do we need to import when we can cultivate? We can cultivate them on a larger scale to cater for our needs or even exports. You will be surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir, to know how many potato chips, canned vegetables, juices and what not, we import even though we live in a tropical island.

I wonder, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the EDB doing to promote investment. What is the role of the Economic Advisory Council because we cannot see anything, which is being done on the economic front? What is being done to promote the manufacturing sector? Mr Speaker, Sir, during the three first quarters of 2019, 90% of our FDI emanated from property development? *Cela veut dire tout, M. le président.* Can you imagine, during the same period, the financial services sector decreased from Rs4 billion to Rs354 m?

We all know that the public sector debt has skyrocketed in the last few years. We are disguising with all sorts of special purpose vehicle. There is a constant decline in our exports, mainly of textile and agricultural products, which is adversely affecting our balance of payment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a debt is a debt. Will we continue to hijack the reserves of the Central Bank? Are we going to further devalue our Rupee? Compared to 2014 and now, our Rupee has been devaluated by 13%.

All these are some fundamental issues and we were hoping, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government will, at least, give an indication on how it will be tackled *mais on reste sur notre faim, M. le président.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know the situation of law and order. So I won't go into details but this chaotic situation calls for an overhaul of the Police Force. I will go as far as suggesting a complete rebranding of our Police Force, but first, the current Police Commissioner should go as he has done more harm to the Police Force and the country by failing in his responsibilities. I can give you several examples but, unfortunately, we are running out of time.

We have, Mr Speaker, Sir, to tackle the serious issue pertaining the ageing population. Increasing maternity leave and paternity leave won't solve the problem. This will only add to the burden of small enterprises and nothing else. We have to give more incentives. I am thinking more in terms of baby bonds to encourage procreations.

In the same vein, Mr Speaker, Sir, we need a fit and healthy population. We need to review our public health system in order to improve the quality of life and overall efficiency.

Before I conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would request hon. Mrs Diolle to withdraw the word 'liar' that she used along the line - it is not parliamentarian, as I said, that we claim to be.

Having said that, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would say united we stand, divided we fall.

Thank you.

Mrs Diolle: Mr Speaker, Sir, I withdraw the word 'liar' and I apologise to hon. Juman.

ANNOUNCEMENT

BROADCASTING COMMITTEE - CHAIRPERSON

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members, I have to inform that with regard to the Broadcasting Committee, the Committee of Selection has met and nominated hon. Georges Pierre Lesjongard, Minister of Tourism, as Chairperson of the said Committee. Thank you.

Hon. Leopold!

(5.26 p.m.)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, and congratulation for your election.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I stand here tonight, incredibly humbled, by the people of Rodrigues who have chosen me and the OPR pPrty, as one of the representatives in the National Assembly. I will have to thank all the people of my electorate for the faith shown to represent them in the National Assembly and I will do my utmost as representative for the trust that they have shown to me and my Party to represent them, that is, the electorate of Constituency 21, which is Rodrigues Island. Rodrigues island is one of the most beautiful places of the Republic of Mauritius; very beautiful island with magnificent beaches, of volcanic nature and approximately 550km to the north east of Main Island, Mauritius, with an area of only 110km², very small, but surrounded by a huge lagoon with other islets all around. A place where I call home and a place where I spend most of my time and it has a population of about 40,000 inhabitants. Tonight I pay respect to all the people of Rodrigues, past and present.

There were several attempts, Mr Speaker, Sir, since so long ago to develop Rodrigues island, especially in its agricultural and livestock potential by our ancestors, who are and were mostly slave descendants. But, because of its geographical isolation, developments were very slow, though we were self-sufficient in local products at all and at that time. This is when the necessity of the creation of OPR Party took place under the leadership of Serge Clair, who was and has been dedicating his life to helping Rodrigues and whereby he has continually worked towards bettering the lives of the Rodriguan people so that the Rodriguan people be empowered to take their destiny into their own hands. It has never been an easy ride for Serge Clair, the Leader of OPR and our actual Chief Commissioner. He has had his life threatened on different occasions. They had even once shot him at point-blank with a handgun, by targeting him to his vital area but failed to hit him, and his faith in God has a lot to do with that. And don't ask me who brought this gun to Rodrigues, I won't tell you that tonight. Let's keep it a secret. But despite all that, he remained focussed on what he has to do and he demanded autonomy so as to allow the Rodriguans to live better within the framework of the Mauritian State.

The history for the autonomy of Rodrigues began in 1976 with the creation of OPR Party and, during a congress on the 03 April 1977, the Assembly of Delegates passed nine resolutions under the title '*Pour une île Rodrigues nouvelle*'. It is through those resolutions that the Constitution of Mauritius must affirm the principle of decentralisation for Rodrigues, and OPR Party proposes its projects to make Rodrigues an autonomous region, and this will only be possible by the amendments in the Mauritian Constitution. It was on a Tuesday, 21 November 2001, 25 years after OPR Party first affirmed the principle of decentralisation, that the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act was voted in the National Assembly, under the Prime Ministership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in a coalition MSM/MMM Government of 2000-2005, where hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger was Minister of Finance at that time, and the Rodriguan people are ever so grateful for that.

I also have to pay tribute here to late Antoinette Prudence and late Sir Victor Glover, with their pivotal roles in the implementation of such structure. After 17 years since Rodrigues Island is autonomous, lots of progress have occurred since for the socio-economic and the political development of Rodrigues. Through this structure, Rodrigues is ensuring efficiency in all fields where powers are decentralised, and the steady progress of Rodrigues Island and its population are palpable.

Sadly, Mr Speaker, Sir, not everybody in this august House is seeing that this decentralised process is so important in a modern State. Not all the people in this House know that decentralisation of power gives rise to a climate of innovation. Not all the people of this House know that the mechanism of decentralisation is the best answer to the problems of a modern State. After all these years in politics, PMSD still cannot make the difference between decentralisation of power and delegation of power. Delegation of power only means power can be taken back at any time, but with decentralisation, powers are given and distributed by Constitution.

In a modern State, decentralisation is the rule. And you might have heard, Mr Speaker, Sir, that during the last General Election, PMSD was the only national party to align candidates in all constituencies of the Republic of Mauritius. But funny enough, PMSD is the only party with the least returned candidates although it has put candidates in all constituencies and, to make things worse, PMSD doesn't know about autonomy and cannot make the difference between decentralisation of power and delegation of power.

During their campaign, they have repeatedly stated that they will remove the status of autonomy to Rodrigues and go backward to a centralised system; to centralise the whole system so as to be able to do whatever they want, and starting back again, bullying the Rodriguan people.

Times have changed, Mr Speaker, Sir. That was very long ago, in late 1960, abusing on our isolation, where we were cut off with all means of communication. They came fooling the Rodriguan people with so many lies, urging them to vote against the independence of Mauritius, just to secure seats in Parliament. And the same person then came back to Mauritius, after fooling the Rodriguan people, and contracted a post-election coalition with the Labour Party, which was campaigning for the independence of Mauritius. But we are in a new millennium now. We are as informed as anyone else. Technologies have allowed us to be connected to the rest of the world in real time now and a repeat of what I have just said is not going to happen.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am of the humble view that it is so wrong for a national party to interfere in a regional and a decentralised system. It defeats the purpose and concept of decentralisation, as decentralisation simply means transfer of powers from Central to Local Government and the reason why the people of Rodrigues, under the guidance of OPR Party, under the leadership of Serge Clair, asked for autonomy. We asked for autonomy to address a

number of key issues we were facing due to the physical distance of Rodrigues to main island Mauritius. Our specificity as a population, amongst others, which makes centralised planning and management limited is due to the insufficient representation of local policy makers and the weak contact between Port Louis and local people, the weak contact between Central Government and Rodrigues.

And, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is also because of inadequate exchange of information and insufficient modalities of service delivery which were parts of our problems which needed to be addressed. Therefore, Rodrigues being autonomous, the local, that is, the people of Rodrigues will be more empowered and motivated to identify their priorities to be able to respond to the local preferences so that when resources are allocated to them, that will have a positive impact on their lives.

Yes, Mr Speaker, with this structure, the structure being put in place, we know what we want. We know our priorities, we know what we need. Infrastructure such as good airport, which is infrastructure to accommodate bigger airplanes; development of our seaport to allow bigger ships to dock; good telecommunication infrastructure, and addressing all the urgencies which negatively impact on the life of the Rodriguan people so as to enhance our economic balance between expenditure and revenue. It is of no doubt with this centralised structure we have been able to influence the relationship of local people to the environment in accordance of developing sustainable initiative, and this is in line with the Government Programme 2019-2024, which makes us the autonomist island of Rodrigues to be compatible in policies with the central Government and, therefore, I will support the 2019-2024 Government Programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, OPR and the majority of people who support us campaigned for decentralisation of power to Rodrigues, and Rodriguan people give a full support to that. We asked for that as a prospect of peace, democracy and development. Decentralisation is regarded as the most suitable mode of governance and the only aim is to improve the quality of life of the people through planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all interventions. It is an improvement of people empowerment, sustainable democratisation, an instrument of social integration and wellbeing and, in no way, it should be regarded as a struggle between the central and the local Government, not at all. It must be regarded as a framework for empowering of local Government, where allowing the central Government to take care of higher missions over State. This is why OPR Party and its people condemn any 'alien' from outside to come and interrupt the socio political economic environment of Rodrigues. And I repeat, once again, that our autonomy is a process, it is devolution, it is not

stopping where it is now, it will devolve further. There will be further transferring of decision of making and implementation of powers, functions and responsibilities to the legally constituted structure and with an executive structure and established by a popularly elected Party and that Party is OPR Party, and we are going to be here for 40 more years. It is not fair that people from outside to come and mislead a few people of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I have said, the law which governs autonomies is deeply-rooted in the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, and therefore, it is wrong for PMSD to come in Rodrigues and to state that when they come into power, they will come and make such and such changes. It is pure nonsense. PMSD cannot and should not be trusted with power. Most of the changes for the development of Rodrigues go through the structure of autonomy. My main role as people representative of Rodrigues is to make sure the dignity of the Rodriguan people be respected, that the central Government gives due consideration in the consolidation of autonomy in allocating sufficient funds for the development and the emancipation of the people of Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not here to hold central Government accountable to the day to day running of Rodrigues, there is a Regional Assembly for that with a Regional Government and an Opposition to hold the Rodrigues Regional Government accountable on Expenditures of Budget allocated to the Regional Government by the central Government.

The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act allows Rodrigues to have its area of responsibility which falls under respective Commissioner, that is what makes the single page manifesto of PMSD for the last General Election for Rodrigues during the bias, as there is a budget allocated to the Regional Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, the fact is the Leader of PMSD is a big preacher, but he still does not know the essence of autonomy. He was in Cabinet as Senior Minister for several years. What I see on it in regard to budget allocation to Rodrigues so as to address the concern of Rodrigues. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues is no longer isolated and, as I repeatedly said, Rodrigues is not a burden to the Republic of Mauritius. Rodrigues is not a dependence of the Republic of Mauritius, Rodrigues is not a district, Rodrigues is an integral part of the Republic of Mauritius. As I have said, because of our remoteness this hinders development, but not anymore; this remoteness has turned into advantages. Our geographical position to mainland Mauritius gives the Republic of Mauritius about 182,000 square kilometres over extended Continental Shelf in our region alone, which the Republic of Mauritius even bigger with such sea territorial baselines, which when add together gives the Republic of Mauritius a 2.3 million square kilometre of exploitable

marine resources. While the Republic of Mauritius exercises its right over the Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf implies the country will have access to a huge amount of resources, giving rise to an economic potential.

Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us together as a nation where there is no such thing as second-class citizen *ou développement à deux vitesses*. Let us get everybody on board and let everyone be included in all processes so as to improve the ability, opportunity and dignity of one all. Let us take the opportunity that we have been given so as to develop our ocean economy by taking everybody on board and together become a prosperous nation. Let us make ocean economy be our main contributor of GDP.

What I am trying to illustrate here, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that Rodrigues needs to be respected and we need help as well. Let me thank the hon. Prime Minister of his consideration for Rodrigues. He made his first visit just after being elected as Prime Minister to Rodrigues and I have to say that this gesture was highly appreciated by the Rodriguan people. Once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to say that I will support the Government Programme 2019-2024 because in this Programme the Government recognises that climate is affecting our weather patterns which is impacting on everything, on our food supply, on our health and the whole ecosystem. Therefore, let us continue to govern in stability, with good governance, focusing on achieving on prosperity in a sustainable way with equal rights to one and all.

Let me end here, Mr Speaker, by saying, no one, be it out of revenge, will be able to stop us with our vision for the people of Rodrigues. Our vision is that Rodrigues has to be committed and is committed to radically transform itself. Rodrigues, through the structure of decentralisation, has no choice than to develop a creative and productive attitude. It is by hard work and the development of all of our resources which we possess that will make Rodrigues a better future. This new stage in the history of Rodrigues must be undertaken with and by those who make up of the population of Rodrigues.

Rodrigues needs to assert its identity and personality, assuming its responsibility with the collaboration of those who want to help us moving forward.

It is our wish that the relation between Rodrigues and Mauritius be continually based on respect of our differences, dialogue, mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation.

I think I have done, Mr Speaker, and I thank you for your kind attention.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Reza Uteem!

(5.50 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le président, permettez-moi tout d'abord de remercier les braves gens de la circonscription numéro deux, Port Louis Sud/Port Louis Central pour m'avoir renouvelé leur confiance en me choisissant comme leur représentant pour un troisième mandat consécutif. Je m'efforcerai d'être à la hauteur de cette confiance et de répondre à leurs attentes sans peur ni faveur.

Comme le veut la tradition, j'aimerais féliciter tous les intervenants qui ont fait leur baptême de feu, leur discours inaugural, leur *maiden speech* lors de ces débats sur le discours du trône. On a eu droit à certaines interventions de haute facture, M. le président. C'est de bon augure.

M. le président, plusieurs membres du banc du gouvernement ont critiqué les membres de l'opposition pour leur absence lors de la lecture du discours du trône. A ces nouveaux parlementaires, à la critique facile, je leur conseillerai de se renseigner auprès de leurs aînés avant de lancer leur pique. S'ils avaient pris la peine de les consulter, ils auraient sans doute appris qu'en avril 2012, le MSM avait non seulement boycotté le discours du trône mais aussi les débats autour du programme. C'était suite à la cassure du gouvernement Ramgoolam/Jugnauth.

Oui, M. le président. Nous avons choisi de ne pas être présents au moment de la lecture du discours programme et nous l'assumons pleinement. On l'a fait en guise de protestation, une protestation symbolique pour dénoncer la façon de faire de ce gouvernement, le déroulement de la campagne électorale et du dépouillement des scrutins.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we simply could not pretend that it is business as usual when thousands of Mauritians have been deprived of their constitutional right to choose their representatives in the National Assembly. Thousands of Mauritians who have been voting for years at the same polling station, who have stayed in the same house, overnight they were told without any reason whatsoever that they can no longer choose their representatives. How can you simply, by a stroke of the pen, deprive thousands of people of this constitutional right; thousands of potential voters who could and probably would have made a difference in marginal seats?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the way the registers of electors are compiled is totally out-dated and archaic. As the law currently stands under the Representation of People Act, a person has only between the 16 of May and the 30 of May of every year to verify whether his name is on

electoral register and to make a claim. But everybody knows that it is only when an election is announced that people take the care of verifying whether their names are on the list and by that time it is too late.

What we need, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a system like, for example, the UK where persons can be registered up to 12 working days before an election and he can do that through online registry.

We also need a system, Mr Speaker, Sir, where a person who is absent for valid reason, maybe he is studying abroad, maybe he is sick; he can appoint a proxy to vote in his place as is the case in most democracies including in England. We should also probably allow Mauritians the right to vote in our embassies and consulates outside Mauritius if they so choose.

Now is the time, Mr Speaker, Sir, to come up with a modern Representation of People Act which will ensure that every Mauritian of age can exercise his constitutional right to choose his representatives and the Government of his choice.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last general election was fraught with irregularities and this has resulted in a number of electoral petitions being filed before our courts. During the campaign, social medias were flooded with distasteful and highly defamatory clips in utter disregard of the provisions of the ICT Act. Private lives of politicians and their close ones were laid bare. Fake news were very much the order of the day. Isn't it time, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have a code of conduct for politicians which is binding and enforceable? Isn't it time to give proper power to the Electoral Supervisory Commission to sanction abusers and malpractices?

On the 29 of October 2019, only a few days before the election date, the Electoral Supervisory Commission issued a communiqué and held that the MBC had acted in breach of section 4 subsection (g) (iii) of the MBC Act which requires the MBC to observe neutrality and impartiality on matters relating to politics.

How can we say that elections are free and fair when MBC is flouting the law, is not observing neutrality and impartiality on matters relating to politics during the electoral campaign? And it is not the Opposition saying so, it is the Electoral Supervisory Commission blaming the MBC. Was there any sanction taken against anyone at the MBC-TV? Yet, it is a criminal offence to breach a provision of the MBC Act, punishable by up to 2 years of imprisonment. Isn't it time, Mr Speaker, Sir, to have a really independent broadcasting

authority manned by truly independent professionals who will sanction television and radios for any breach of ethics during an electoral campaign?

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can we talk about elections being free and fair when money politics has its way? For months preceding the elections, the MMM and its leader, in particular, Paul Bérenger, has been saying week after week in press conferences: 'we should guard against money politics, we should be careful'. And even the Commission of Inquiry on Drugs Trafficking had warned about the link between drug traffickers and financing of political parties. But not only dirty money from drug traffickers, also dirty money from certain bookmakers and lobbyists. I, personally, have never seen so much money in circulation as I had in this last election - of course, a bounty for many, *la coupe pour certains*, but what a perversion of democracy.

At paragraph 180 of the Government Programme, it is mentioned that a new Bill on the Financing of Political Parties will be introduced into the National Assembly. Last year, when the Bill on the Financing of Political Parties and the related constitutional amendment were presented, it felt short of the necessary three-quarter majority. But I am confident, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is possible to achieve the required majority if we have proper consultation between parties from both sides of the House because there is a consensus that there is a need to regulate the financing of political parties. We need a law to register political parties and make them accountable and transparent. So, I will reiterate the plea which I made to Government last year to have a Select Committee consisting of members from both sides of the House to come up with a Bill on the Financing of Political Parties which will have the support of both sides of the House. The mandate of that Select Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir, should also extend to electoral reform. The results of last year's election demonstrate how unfair and perverse our current electoral system can be. With hardly 37% of votes, l'Alliance Morisien won over 60% of seats, what does that mean? Almost two-third of the population did not vote for this Government. The overwhelming majority of voters are now in the Opposition and this probably explains the absence of euphoria after the results were proclaimed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need an electoral system that reflects the will of the people; that is fair while, at the same time, ensure broad-based and inclusive representation of all components of our rainbow nation.

We also need to comply with the ruling of the United Nations Human Rights Committee which, may I remind the House, has held that our current electoral system violates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Unfortunately, once again, Mr Speaker, Sir, many Mauritians who wanted to be candidate at last year's general elections, were not able to do so. They were not able to exercise their constitutional right to stand as candidate because they refused to declare their community. We cannot allow the situation to continue. We need a Select Committee of patriots and champions of democracy and we should not be afraid to review the whole system. By this, I mean we should not be afraid to come up with a proposal as to the number of constituencies. Should it be limited to 20? Should it be more? Should it be less? Should we split some of the bigger constituencies like No 5, No 9, No 14 and No 15? Should we have three members' constituencies? Should there be more Members or less members? Should block voting be allowed in which case you vote for a party for three candidates of the same party instead of voting for individual candidates, at least, that would have solved our problem of plumper votes, *coupé-tranché*?

Government has announced, at paragraph 181 of the programme, that it will pursue its initiative to bring an electoral reform that will ensure political and social stability in the country and higher women participation. Let us hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it keeps its promises and takes on board proposals from the Opposition.

M. le président, comme tout programme gouvernemental, ce programme aussi contient une panoplie de bonnes intentions. Nous sommes tous d'accord qu'il faut mettre les citoyens au centre de tout développement. Nous sommes tous d'accord qu'il faut améliorer le sort de nos concitoyens, qu'il faut augmenter leur pouvoir d'achat, qu'il faut réduire, voire éliminer les poches de pauvreté. Nous sommes tous confiant qu'avec le changement climatique, il nous faudra une politique favorisant l'énergie propre et la protection de l'environnement. Nous voulons tous accentuer la croissance économique, créer de nouveaux emplois, développer de nouveaux secteurs économiques, promouvoir le développement durable et garantir la bonne gouvernance tout en s'attaquant aux fléaux qui rongent notre société, la drogue, la corruption, la violence sous toutes ses formes.

During the electoral campaign, I am sure many hon. Members were probably shocked to see the level of poverty in which today some of the Mauritians live in, some of the pockets of poverty that are held in Mauritius. It is simply unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in 2020 today people live in houses without electricity, without water supply, with basic hygienic facilities lacking, in houses made of corrugated iron sheets and the first heavy rainfall that

you have, these people have to leave their houses behind and take refuge in community centres and when they come back, they see all their properties destroyed and what type of treatment do they get from the Police, from the Ministry of Social Security. They are treated as beggars. Why? To get only Rs180 per day, per person. *A qui la faute si ces personnes vivent dans cette condition? Qui n'a pas fait des drains ?* Why are these people pushed to live in flood-prone areas? What has the Government done for these people? They promised 10,000 houses. Last year, the Minister of Housing, answering to a PQ, stated that for the period January 2015 till April 2019 only 1449 houses had been delivered. Not even 20% of what they had promised. And not a single house in my constituency or in Port Louis. I know, Mr Speaker, Sir, people who had been on the list of NHDC for more than 20 years, who have paid money above Rs100,000 and after 20 years they are still waiting for a house. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister of Housing and Land Use Planning is not here, I would have told him to come to Tranquebar, there is land available in Tranquebar, there is land available in the surroundings of Port Louis, and to come and build NHDC houses so that we can solve the problem of homelessness once and for all in my constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we look at the Government Programme, the first words we see: 'Towards an Exclusive Mauritius'.

(Interruptions)

Sorry, 'Towards an Inclusive Mauritius.' I am saying exclusive because this is exactly what we are doing. We are saying inclusive society, but how can we talk about an inclusive society when 70% of our children are not allowed to take part at the HSC in Grade 12? How can we talk about an inclusive society when we spend Rs17 billion every year on the education system only to find people aged between 16 and 18 being chucked out of the education system? These are facts, Mr Speaker, Sir. 18,559 students took part in the SC Exams and only 5,518 will go to Lower Six. What will happen to the remaining 13,000? The hon. Minister talks about Polytechnics and MITD. How many children will Polytechnics Mauritius absorb? 1,000! How many will MITD absorb? 1300! That is less than 3000. What will happen to the 10,000 remaining children? What do they do? They are deprived of their right to do HSC; they do not have any facilities offered by Government. What are they supposed to do? Become drug traffickers? Join the number of jobless people? Already one out of four young people is unemployed in this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, *gouverner, c'est prévoir*. When the Government took the decision to increase the admission criteria to 5 credits for HSC, they ought to have built up alternative schooling facilities to cater for those who would not be able to make it to academia. They ought to have built more Polytechnics, more centres of learning and training, more vocational centres. Now that we are left with all these people, what do we do with all these children? I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that *le gouvernement a une obligation morale envers tous ces enfants jusqu'à qu'il trouve une solution pour tous ces enfants. Il ne peut pas les laisser pour compte. Il doit les intégrer dans une des structures existantes dans des écoles publiques.*

*We are talking about vocational education. On doit valoriser l'éducation technique et vocationnelle. Et cela, M. le président, passe nécessairement par une révision de la nécessité d'avoir cinq crédits pour postuler pour un emploi dans le service civil. Pourquoi un plombier ou un électricien ne peut pas être recruté par la PSC pour travailler dans l'entretien des bâtiments ? Parce qu'il n'a pas cinq crédits. Techniquement, il peut être un plombier, il peut être un électricien, il n'a pas cinq crédits. Pourquoi un maitre-nageur, qui peut sauver des vies, qui peut faire une plongée, ne peut pas travailler pour la National Coast Guard ? Parce qu'il n'a pas cinq crédits. Quelle est la logique ? Si nous voulons une société vraiment inclusive, M. le président, nous devons nous assurer que chaque citoyen ait les mêmes chances. Mais, aujourd'hui, la perception est tout autre. Aujourd'hui, il y a toujours cette perception de la nécessité d'un appui politique, un *backing* pour décrocher un emploi ou une promotion. Il nous faut plus de transparence dans l'exercice de recrutement et de promotion. Il est grand temps aussi, M. le président que la loi soit amendée pour que le *Equal Opportunities Commission* puisse enquêter sur des cas allégués de discrimination dans la fonction publique.*

Madame la ministre de l'Egalité des genres devrait aussi se pencher sur ce que j'appelle, enfin, pas que moi, ce que les experts appellent le phénomène de *sticky floors* et *glass ceilings* qui empêche aux femmes d'accéder au plus haut poste de responsabilité. Sinon comment expliquer qu'aujourd'hui aucune femme ne soit à la tête d'un corps paraétatique ou d'une entreprise où le gouvernement est actionnaire majoritaire. Que ce soit la CEB, CWA, Wastewater Authority, State Trading Corporation, State Investment Company, MauBank Banque de Développement, Banque de Maurice, State Bank Air Mauritius, ATOL, SME Mauritius, NHDC, Mauritius Ports Authority, FIU, FSC, et j'en passe. Et pourtant, ce sont des positions de responsabilité où le gouvernement a une mainmise, le gouvernement décide

qui nommer comme *CEO*. Madame la ministre a fait un très beau discours, maintenant on attend que vous le mettiez en pratique.

M. le président, comment peut-on aussi parler d'une société inclusive sans une réelle volonté politique favorisant l'insertion des personnes handicapées.

I am very disappointed, Mr Speaker, Sir, because there is only one reference in the whole programme to persons with disabilities and it is at paragraph 27 which says, and I quote –

“Access to educational facilities to students with disabilities will be improved.”

What about access to job? What about training? What about access to public building? What about access to certain mode of transport? And yet, Mauritius, we have ratified the Convention of the United Nations relative to the rights of the people with disabilities. On 28 June 2016, answering to a Parliamentary Question, the then Minister of Social Security, and I think it is the same Minister stated, and I quote –

“My Ministry has reached an advanced stage on work for the production of a Disability Bill which will take on board the activities of the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board, the National Council for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled and the Lois Lagesse Trust Fund. The Bill is still at final drafting stage (...)”

28 June 2016, almost four years later, we are still waiting for this Disability Bill.

M. le président, il ne sert à rien d'avoir de bonnes intentions si on ne se donne pas les moyens de les réaliser.

Unfortunately, the Government Programme is seriously lacking in this respect. How are we going to achieve our goal of becoming a high-income country? Not a word on how we are going to contain our soaring public debt. Our public debt is at an all-time high, above Rs325 billion. And what the Government did first thing they come into power? In November, they come into power, in December they raid the Central Bank and take Rs18 billion out of its Special Reserve Fund. But now, this Fund also has dried up. So, where is the Government going to come up with the money to reimburse our public debt?

It is a matter of real concern, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all economic indicators today are in the red, except for inflation rate and unemployment rate. Private Sector Investment rate is way too low to generate any meaningful growth. The Government puts a lot of emphasis on the improvement in the ranking of Mauritius in ease of doing business in the World Bank list.

This is quite commendable. But, may I ask the Government, why is it that when we are making progress in ease of doing business, this is not being translated into an increase in private sector investment? Why is it that despite all these progress that we are boasting ourselves Foreign Direct Investment is so low? When we take away investment in Real Estate? What is wrong? Why are people no longer coming to Mauritius? Why are people no longer investing in Mauritius? And more importantly, what is this Government going to do to reverse this trend?

Our traditional economic sectors, Mr Speaker, Sir, are facing unprecedented challenges. The cane industry is in dire strait. With the fall in price of sugar in the world market, it is no longer economical for small planters to cultivate sugar cane. Small planters want Rs2,500 per tonne of cane, mills want a better price for bagasse and Independent Power Producers want an increase in price at which they sell electricity to the Central Electricity Board. What is the new package, the reform package which this Government has promised to implement at paragraph 73 of its programme? Five years this Government has been in power. After five years, they are still saying that they will now come up with a reform package. And what about the tourist sector? Tourism is suffering from Brexit and a fall in the economic growth of our traditional markets.

We all know that we need product diversification; we need market diversification; we need to increase air traffic. And five years later, what do you find in the programme? Government is going to re-engineer the whole industry. How? We don't know. It is just we are going to re-engineer after five years.

Far from boosting the economy, our manufacturing sector is regressing with textile factories closing down and thousands of workers being laid off; the industry is asking for a new lifeline from the Government. And what is there in the programme for manufacturing sector? Only one line: the Government will come with a new Strategic Plan. Five years later, again, we will come with it - we have nothing to offer - we will offer something. The Global Business Sector is under attack; on the one hand, by the OECD because of its perceived harmful tax practices, and on the other hand, by ESAAMLG and FATF for its shortcoming in tackling money laundering.

Our image as a well-regulated jurisdiction has been tainted by the so-called Mauritius leaks and now Angola leaks, investigation carried out by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism.

With the amendment to our Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement now being full in force, fewer investors are using Mauritius structures to invest into India. Worse, Mauritius has been classified as a category 2 scheme by the Securities and Exchange Board of India, because we are not compliant with FATF. What does that mean? It means that we are put at a disadvantage from a tax perspective compared to structures in countries which are in the category 1 scheme, such as Singapore which is compliant with FATF.

Small and medium enterprises and micro-enterprises are having to cope with an increase in their cost of operation with the introduction of the minimum wage. Access to finance is still a daunting task. The dismantling of SMEDA and its replacement by SME Mauritius has, unfortunately, not achieved the intended purpose. So, what is the way forward?

The Government is betting on Fintech, Artificial Intelligence, Robotics and Blockchain to move towards industry 4.0. All sounds very grand, you know, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence. But do we have the manpower? 70% of our people are not able to go to HSC and you are talking about Robotics, Artificial Intelligence. Out of 1,100 students who opted for Computer Science in HSC, less than 30% achieve a grade of C and above. And we are still waiting for the ICT Academy. Reference is made again to technopole. There is a technopole in Rose Belle, it is sitting there idle, like *un elephant blanc*, and we are still mentioning technopole. And while we are sleeping on the recommendations of the Fintech and Innovation driven Financial Services Regulatory Committee chaired by Lord Desai, Malta has taken the lead to become an international Fintech hub by enacting a comprehensive legal framework to regulate Fintech.

And last but not least, the blue economy, the favourite of all Governments, for the past 10 years that I have been in this House, every single budget speech, they talked about blue economy, we are surrounded by water, we need to explore our water. For five years what has this Government done?

As far as blue economy is concerned, all that they have been able to do is to deliver one licence for a *barbara* farm, which I understand, is not even operational.

M. le président, le gouvernement ne doit pas sous-estimer l'ampleur de la tâche qui l'attend. Il y a beaucoup de défis à relever dans un contexte économique international des plus incertains. L'attente de la population est grande. Bientôt la période de grâce prendra fin.

Au sein de l'opposition, on s'assurera que le gouvernement tienne promesse, pas paresse, et qu'il concrétise toutes les belles annonces faites dans ce discours programme.

Je vous remercie.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nazurally!

(6.20 p.m.)

Mr Z. Nazurally (Second Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Mr Speaker, Sir, may I, first of all, wish you and all hon. Members, my fellow countrymen, a very good evening on this Valentine's Day.

Let me congratulate His Excellency the President of the Republic of Mauritius on his appointment and for his speech on the Government Programme 2020-2024.

It is an immense privilege that I share with you that I stand today for my Constituency Montagne Blanche/Grand River South East under the banner of Alliance Morisien, who has not just won the election but also created history.

Why do I say so? There are so many young hon. Members in this Parliament hailing from different social and professional backgrounds today. We have a first time Lady Chief Whip, an accommodating Speaker, Members of Government and Opposition with a wide array of skills, experience and expertise in different fields. No doubt, this Assembly gathers the chosen ones, the will of the people. I salute the tireless and heroic sacrifices of our fellow countrymen who have made it possible for us to be here. Democracy has been upheld and shall prevail.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me, therefore, to congratulate each and every one upon their election especially the Opposition who does not have any electoral petition lodged against them and they are heartily serving the nation in Parliament to-day and, without a doubt, they will continue to enjoy the privilege of a parliamentarian for next five years despite their so-called strong Opposition unchallenged. Commendably, they are not subservient to any leaders or any ideology, in fact let me say: you are not a victim of the system nor do you want to play victim. In fact, you have been elected. We have been elected. We must, therefore, fully shoulder our responsibility towards our beloved country. The Court decision, sooner or later, will surely bring comfort to each and everybody's mind and soul.

May I, now, take this opportunity to also send my sincere appreciation, gratitude and greeting to our past and present countrymen, their families who have carved the destiny of

our nation. May I also take this opportunity to extend my respect to all men and women, without whose support and struggle this country would not have reached such height and glory namely all the politicians, the businessmen, the professionals, public officers, police officers, teachers, the Judiciary, the labourers, the farmers, our beloved children and the list is inexhaustive and obviously all the staff of the National Assembly who have been preserving the sanctity of this august Assembly.

May I also send my warmest and sincere greeting to my constituents of Montagne Blanche-GRSE, who have voted for me and also send my greeting to those who voted against me and, I must put it, even to those who have plotted cheaply against me, and my party.

I thank all the Alliance Mauritian team for their collective, honest and hard work that has brought us victory.

May I also express my gratitude towards all hon. Members - the Government and Opposition, especially the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister who seconded me for the post of Deputy Speaker, a post which I shall execute diligently and fairly to the best of my abilities and obviously *pied sur terre*.

Mr Speaker Sir, our country is a small dot on the geographical map, but it has the potential and the means to turn into an economic giant and a model of social and cultural prosperity across Africa and the world; a rainbow nation, a peaceful and truly happy country.

Let me take you back to some five years. Five years ago, who would have believed that the Pope would visit Mauritius? Five years ago, who would have believed a Mauritian would have earned one of the highest distinction from the India Government? Five years ago, who would have believed the metro would, in fact, be a reality in this country? Five years ago, who would have believed that Liverpool Football Academy would be implemented in Mauritius? Five years ago, who would have believed Mauritius would be doing so well on the international stage - let us take the case of Chagos? Five years ago, who would have believed Mauritius would be enjoying such close relationship with countries like India, China and Saudi Arabia? Five years ago, who would have believed the Jeux des Iles would be such an enormous and historical event for this country? Five years ago, who would have believed that phone bills, CEB bills, CWA bills would be paid using mobile phone? Five years ago, it was inconceivable that a citizen at home can report his query on CSU Mauritius.

I am of the opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Government Programme 2020-2024 is a well-established set of ideas that shall benefit the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our beloved nation cares for the pregnant women, and forthcoming parents, it works a combination of factors to counter the ageing effect population. By increasing parental leaves and benefits, couple would be better equipped and safeguarded during pregnancy and early childhood of the new born. The success, in fact, of a nation is related, bonded directly to its young generation who will, by these measures, enjoy longer hours of tenderness and parenthood.

Coming to education, Mr Speaker, Sir, education system is of utmost importance and is a catalyst toward progress and development. New measures in the Government shall ensure that our beloved nation has the right skills and *encadrement* to meet the need of our fellow citizens. It is a fierce world. In Mauritius, this Government has boldly come forward with a system where highly qualified skilled professionals will emerge in various fields. Who can deny the plight or the difficulty one may encounter in finding a plumber, an electrician, skilled workers, ones with high degree of professionalism?

The present educational system not just ensures that our nation is well catered for in the different fields but also leaves the opportunity to youngsters to find success and earn abundantly in the job of their choices where they are all skilled.

I shall, therefore, shall strive my utmost best to contribute towards the social and educational well-being of our children by optimising their abilities. I must, therefore, applaud the Government for ensuring that Mauritius and Rodrigues youth continue to benefit from –

1. one of the best educational system across Africa;
2. up-to-date technology;
3. best *encadrement*, and
4. as it was highlighted early on, access is still made for children with disabilities.

Coming to employment and training, Mr Speaker, Sir, youngsters entering the work world must be protected. Legislations have recently been brought to ensure continuity of service in the various private sectors. New framework are being set up for entrepreneurs, new programs are being included in the training of public officers. It is the sign of a nation reaching its peak. The measures put in place shall continue to maintain a high employment rate and decent working conditions. May I take this opportunity to congratulate our laureates,

the students who have obtained good grades and also those who have done less well? I shall encourage them to keep their efforts ongoing until success is achieved.

Coming to technology, Mr Speaker, Sir, technology well used is an asset for the country; the Government Programme ensures that ample funds are being injected in the domain. The pace is set to match, stand side by side of giants the like of Singapore and India, ranging from tablets, easy internet access, Wi-Fi, artificial intelligence and satellite, all is well planned. The economy and educational system shall definitely benefit. The nation shall prosper with a Government Programme designed to cater for all the present and future technological advancement.

Coming to the environment, Mr Speaker, Sir, Going Green is a slogan; Living Green is an ideology which requests a framework, vision and mastery in the field. It is commendable that the different Ministries are capitalising on the resources available. There are good project and initiatives that are forthcoming, for example –

- a new National Cleaning and Waste Management Program will be introduced;
- a High-Level Ministerial Council shall come to life to promote eco-friendly measures and mitigate risks;
- a new endemic forest will be created and the previous one restored;
- photovoltaic panels are being made more accessible, and
- renewable energy is being promoted.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming to safety, I shall take this opportunity to encourage the Law Enforcement Officers to continue their formidable works, namely the historical seizures they have made.

More so, to curtail the risk of accidents and promote a safer and secure Mauritius, a new Motor Insurance Scheme shall be brought. The camera as well stays.

Coming to sports, a healthy nation is led by healthy leaders and we know we have a healthy leader in this House. It is a matter of pride that Mauritius has accommodated a world-class training academy in Liverpool Football Club. The city where I lived my early adulthood and I read Law. But let me tell you that I am a Manchester United fan because sincerity, loyalty and honesty cannot be sold in time of adversity. It is a matter of pride that our sportsmen have excelled during the *Jeux des Iles* and have been the pride of Mauritius.

Coming to Arts and Culture, Mr Speaker, Sir, art, culture, religion is the identity of Mauritius. There are many measures in the Government Programme to promote further our cultures and values. I, however, also invite each and every one of us to join in effort in preserving our culture, our unique way of life. I shall emphasise that religious institutions, Baitkhas, Madrassas, Churches, Kovils, Mosques, socio-cultural organisations, NGOs, charitable institutions must continue to actively promote our values and culture. There are, in fact, ample measures in the Government programme for all the above institutions to carry forward the good work.

Coming to law and order, Mr Speaker, Sir, a nation is best served with an exemplary Judiciary. The Government will be proud in a few months upon the inauguration of the new Supreme Court, a unique infrastructure across Africa. More so, Government has boldly put in ample guidelines towards strengthening good governance. It is commendable that a new Land Division shall also be created. I am in agreement with the strategies and objectives of the Government.

Coming to Rodrigues and the outer islands, may I, Mr Speaker, Sir, take this opportunity to send my special consideration towards my fellow brothers and sisters in Rodrigues and the outer islands who shall also benefit from the Government Programme.

May I now, Mr Speaker, Sir, state that my real purpose in this August Assembly is to serve, to work my utmost best for my beloved nation, all in honesty and sincerity.

There are many expectations from the Government in terms of jobs in the public service, in terms of infrastructure, in terms of better standard of living. I must say, it is the time now that we all tell ourselves, it is not what the country will do for us, it is what we shall do for our country. Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones. We are the change that we seek.

Presently, amidst the computers, the artificial intelligence, satellite, we must not lose sight of our genuine purpose in life, Mr Speaker, Sir. We crave for genuine happiness, we crave for equality, we crave for meritocracy, we crave for justice.

I do not want to be a preacher nor a saint but I shall like to help each and every one of us. We all want to help one another. Human beings are like that. We want to live by each other's happiness, not by each other's misery. We don't want to hate and despise. In this country, in this world, there is ample room for everyone and the earth is rich and can provide for everyone. But greed, lust of leadership, arrogance of look and speech has poisoned men's

soul, love has become scarce. We have developed speed but shut ourselves in machinery. Our knowledge and cleverness have made us hard and unkind. We think too much and feel too little. More than machinery, we need humanity. More than cleverness and wealth, we need kindness and gentleness. Without these qualities, all will be lost. In fact, humility is required in this House.

Satellites, aeroplanes, mobile phones, Facebook, Instagram have brought us all close together. The very nature of these inventions testifies the goodness in mankind, cries out for universal brotherhood and unity. I want to reach out to the millions of despairing men, women, children, victims of the system across the world that makes a man torture, degrade, disrespect another man.

We witness and testify the atrocities borne by you. Rest assured, we share your pain and misery in this Government, and maybe the Opposition does too. We shall always vote for principle, though we may vote alone, because we believe aggression and dramatisation unopposed becomes a contagious disease. Undoubtedly, the hate, greed, arrogance of men will pass and the power they took from the men will return to men and goodness will never perish. The truth shall always prevail.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have the power to create machine, to create happiness, we have the power to make life free, beautiful and a wonderful adventure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I therefore plead and request we use that power and unite, fight for a new world, a better world that will give all men a chance to work, that will give the future and old age a security. Together we can fight away racial, national, economic, religious barriers, do away with greed, hate, intolerance. To relax our efforts now, will be a mistake that future generation will not be able to forgive. Let us fight for a world of reason, a world where science and progress will lead to all mankind's happiness.

It is through disciplined mass action that our objective will come home. It is not about 63% or 37%. It is about 100% today. It's about all mankind today. It's about mankind who bears the responsibility of the future. It is the time now to intensify our action on all fronts, redouble our effort because today is about democracy, the values that our beloved country embodies, that Mauritius stands for boldly.

It is in my opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, an inclusive Government Programme for an exemplary Mauritius and a visionary leadership with loyal partnership for a better and brighter tomorrow.

Thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: Thank you. Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(6.40 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker Sir. Mr Speaker Sir, please allow me for a few seconds to express my gratitude to the Almighty, to my constituents; my sincere thanks to all of them to have put their trust in me. I shall pay back all of them to have put their trust in me. I shall pay back by representing my constituency at the best of my ability and capability.

I will, during this five coming years, be their voice in this National Assembly and fight for the right of my constituents. But allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to say a few words in relation to hon. Joseph Buisson Leopold's speech. Maybe hon. Joseph Buisson likes it or not; maybe Serge Clair likes it or not. PMSD laid the foundation stone of development in Rodrigues. Today, he is standing in this august Assembly thanks to the PMSD, thanks to all parties here in the Opposition, on this side. He has the right to vote in Rodrigues. Thanks to the PMSD, the Labour Party, the MMM, today, he is standing proud in this Assembly. And don't forget, today PMSD is representing the voice of 27% of the Rodrigues population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleagues of the Opposition, including myself, Members of the Opposition, Members of the Government, we have all been chosen by the population for no other reason but to work for a better Mauritius, to work in view of improving the situation of each and everyone in the country. It's not a privilege; it is a responsibility, Mr Speaker, Sir, entrusted to us. Though our role may differ from the Members of the other side of the House, the essence remains the same, that is, the progress of our country and the well-being of our fellow citizens. Here, I would like to join hon. Tania Diolle - yes, hon. Diolle. Criticisms are not opposition. Criticisms are made to improve on something, which is exactly the role of all of us on this side of the House because at the end of the day, what matters, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the right decisions are taken at the right time. *Pas de monopole de connaissance. Oui, l'honorable Tania Diolle, pour son baptême de feu, a raté le coche. Au lieu d'attaquer le PMSD, le Parti travailliste et le MMM, elle devrait se rafraîchir la mémoire. Quand son Leader, l'honorable Ganoo était malmené par l'ex-Speaker de l'Assemblée, qui s'est montré solidaire avec l'honorable Ganoo, son Leader ? C'est bien le PMSD, le Parti travailliste et le MMM. La reconnaissance, M. le président, est une vertu et il est bon de la rappeler qu'à l'élection partielle de Quatre-Bornes, que n'a-t-elle pas dit !*

(Interruptions)

Nou kine soutenir twa ! To sote ein ! Mo kontan to sote! Mo content to sote!

It is a fact that at one point or the other, almost all of us have worked in collaboration. Today, we are addressing each other as opponents, but we have also been colleagues, hon. Ganoo, at a point in time. Therefore, I am confident that we will be able to work in collaboration, in the future, on important issues for the interest of the nation; for example, on drug issues, on health issues and other important issues. Debate, yes, but always with respect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, bearing in mind the role assigned to me as a Member of the Opposition side, I shall express myself on the Government Programme 2020-2024. Inclusiveness, from what I deduce, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the very core of the Programme. Mr Speaker, Sir, while words are beautifully chosen, we wonder where we will find the money to fund all the projects, considering all the debts we already have. I am personally an advocate of a society whereby all citizens have equal opportunity and access to prosperity and wealth. As I read the measures under this particular chapter, I want to feel optimistic. I want to believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that in the near future, my friends from Roche Bois, from Cité Martial, from Camp Yoloff, from Plaine Verte, to mention a few, will no longer hesitate to write their real address while applying for a job. And yes, I join my hon. friend Ehsan Juman that the inhabitants of Constituency No. 3 should have the opportunity to work in the port sector, which is found in Constituency No. 3, where they reside, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Moreover, a link has been made between education and inclusiveness, which is very good. Very good ! *Alors dans ce même élan, M. le président, j'aimerais que les enfants qui fréquentent l'école de Roche Bois ne soient plus contraints d'aller dans des salles de classe où quand il pleut, ils ont peur, parce que there is leakage in the classroom.* I hope, Mr Speaker, Sir, that leaking roofs, flooded yards will be part of the past. In the same line, I would also like to draw the attention of the House to sections 21 to 23, which refer to housing. The measures read as follows –

“Government will facilitate access to decent housing.”

Section 22 –

“Government will accelerate housing programmes for both low and middle- income families.”

I am sure that my memory is not failing me. These measures have been on the agenda of the same Government during the previous mandate. Mr Speaker, Sir, if we, on this side of the House, say that the Programme has a series of measures, which are, in fact, mere repetition of previous unaccomplished electoral promises or budgetary measures, our friends on the other side of the House will say that we are a bunch of cynical cartoon. Isn't it, hon. Ramdhany? But, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am only stating facts. Only around 23% of the assigned budget of the Ministry of Social Integration concerning housing has actually been used up to date. Only 23%, hon. Members!

In the meantime, what is happening, new applications are being made and there are more demands of social housing. How and when the Government will seriously deal with the issue remains a mystery. Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, we note the Government's intention of investing in specialised public health care, revising and upgrading overseas treatment, which are commendable at first sight only as we are immediately disillusioned, considering the state of existing hospitals and health care centres. Indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, patients who have to regularly or even occasionally visit hospitals will agree with me that it is urgent to improve almost all departments of our hospitals. Emphasis has been laid in the programme on modernity and technology. We are talking about artificial intelligence, but it is sad, Mr Speaker, Sir, that e-health is not properly implemented in our hospitals. There should be, Mr Speaker, Sir, a proper well-elaborated and centralised data collection of medical records.

Today, misplaced documents, loss of medical reports are routine in our hospitals. I will neither defend nor accuse officers working in the hospitals, but when they have to manually go throughout thousands of documents, unfortunate incidence are bound to happen. We take, for example, the Jeetoo Hospital, Mr Speaker, Sir, where some 100,000 people go there for treatment, imagine yourself looking for one document among the 100,000 medical reports! It is a wasting of time, Mr Speaker, Sir, a wasting of resources, adding to the plight of the patients, and above all, taking the risk of losing and confusing documents. If we do not have any option, I would have understood, but not in 2020, Mr Speaker, Sir, not in an era where we are talking about internet. Just like me, I believe we all, here, have at heart the wellbeing of the population. I will remind you, Mr Speaker, Sir, the last Government was the same Government, five years have gone and even now if you go to the Jeetoo Hospital, the situation is the same. A healthy population is a happy population after all. We have many doctors in the House, I would humbly request them to please look into the conditions of our hospitals together with the Minister of Health - instead of wasting time on making

speculation and dreaming about the titanic, hon. Rawoo. To just cite an example, some rooms in the Jeetoo Hospital do not have even proper ventilation. The bottom line, Mr Speaker, Sir, should be that the patients are not stressed or afraid to go to hospital, but rather be fully satisfied of the treatment they get there. I would like to quote something which happened at Jeetoo Hospital while I was visiting the Ward 3.3, the Cardiac Ward. A senior citizen of our country said to me –

“Mo garçon, pa avek malade le coeur ki mo pou mort ici, mais avec sa chaleur ki ena dan sa lasal la.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, there were much debate recently with the SC, HSC results and the implementation of the five-credit criteria. The educational sector, again, having the wellbeing of the population at heart, I will express my humble views on the chapter of Education. Education and skills for the world of tomorrow, my colleague, hon. Gungapersad rightly pointed out the shortcoming of the measures and made great suggestions. Mr Speaker, Sir, not only Members of the House, but I think the entire population, the entire nation will agree that our educational system has way too long been academic driven. For way too long, we have associated vocational studies as a sign of failure: ‘Ah, you could not go through your CPE - now PSAC - *ale fer enn metier*. You are unable to learn science, *ale enn* vocational school’. Mr Speaker, Sir, it is this very mind-set that need to be change. Instead of creating situation whereby vocational studies are the *option de secours*, we should encourage patient driven studies and career possibilities. Will a person not be happier, Mr Speaker, Sir, if he is studying in a particular field out of passion and not worrying about stigmatisation? To this end, I believe, from an early stage, students should be exposed both to academic and vocational studies.

Moving on to a different topic, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would say that I was taken aback *par la totale mise à l'écart des autorités locales*. They have their role to play in the achieving of an inclusive Mauritius, a vital role, I would say. There is a feeling that the Municipal Councillors are no more motivated. *Il faut redonner l'élan, motiver le conseiller*. With our experience - many of us here have been either Mayor, Municipal Councillor or Deputy Lord Mayor. I am more than ready to help, but I am sure my other colleagues here would be ready to help. I believe, we, elected Members of the House, should, from time to time, work with Municipal and Village Councillors in view to enhance the life of the people in this country.

In a pacific island, Mr Speaker, Sir, New Caledonia, the Mayor of the city of Noumea came up with a beautiful project for the well-being of the citizens. You know what she did, she simply closes to traffic an easily accessible road on every last Sunday of the month, each time coming up with a team and encouraging youngsters and elderly persons to come together to just relax and have a good time. She is not doing much; it's just a simple initiative that helps her people feel their happiness and their wellbeing are being taken care of. This initiative of the Mayor took me back to the time when hon. Xavier-Luc Duval was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and he helped in organising the 'Port Louis by Night', which was a big success. We need to come up with more ideas like this for the happiness of the nation. The happiness of the nation, Mr Speaker, Sir, is also very important. In the same vein, the new Minister of Tourism can work in collaboration with the Municipalities, Local Authorities organising events so as tourists can explore the culture and traditions of Mauritius.

I am well aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, that at this particular moment, the Tourism Sector has other emergencies to deal with. In view of what is happening in relation of the Coronavirus, and China being a country where we expect many tourists, I seize this opportunity to express my sympathy to China and pray the Almighty we find a solution in the very near future.

Getting back to what I was saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Ministry of Tourism together with the local authorities can work together *afin de joindre l'utile à l'agréable. Les citadins pourront profiter de différentes animations et fêtes organisées, et en même temps d'autres, tels que les hawkers, les taxis drivers pourront aussi bénéficier de la présence des touristes dans la ville ou d'autres régions de l'île.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot turn a blind eye to the ill-being of our citizens. Drug addiction, theft, murders, rapes are making the headlines of local newspapers too often, Mr Speaker, Sir. *On peut difficilement ne pas sentir le mal-être de notre société.* Just like economy, renewable energy, creating a society où il fait bon vivre should be on the agenda of the Government. I remain convinced that if we, Parliamentarians, succeed in providing the population with the proper service, appropriate space for leisure, pleasant atmosphere, we can cure our society to a large extent. Some areas in my own constituency, Mr Speaker, Sir, No. 3, is particularly affected by the problem of drugs. And it is noticeable that different types of drugs have become more popular among youngsters. I am saying more, as I do acknowledge that we already had the problem before. With the drastic reduction of organisation of

recreational and sport activities, the Municipality should reengage themselves into organising sport and cultural events. Engaging our citizens and mainly our youngsters in sane activities will definitely help in combating the issue of drug abuse.

Before shifting topic, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a humble request to consider coming up with a complete reform of the Local Authorities. A reform is definitely needed as a centralised system is not adapted. I hope that it is on the agenda although not mentioned in the Programme, not even a single line in the Government Programme. Moreover, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning Agalega which falls under my constituency, No. 3, Section 190 only briefly talks about the development that has been done or being done there. Mr Speaker, Sir, what we want to know concerning Agalega right now, is about the agreement with India. I think it is time we get to know about it. The population, as a whole, wants to know about the agreement concerning Agalega. I would like, with your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, to ponder one last measure before concluding. Concerning the public infrastructure, – MPI Sector – we note that new roads, new drains, new flyovers will be built. I would humbly request the Government to also focus on maintenance of old roads, old pavements and old drains, also to properly communicate the dates and eventual inconveniences that construction will cause. A proper communication, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot alleviate the inconveniences, but, at least, the people will be better prepared to face it.

Before I yield the floor to the next orator, I would like to share with the House that I have recently attended an international conference on the Palestinian issue. I hope, and I am looking forward, that the Government will extend their support to the cause of the Palestinian. I do hope the Government of the day will extend their support to the cause of the Palestinian rights in all international forums.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on an ending note, I would like to say that, just like many of my honourable colleagues in the House today, I believe that among several other qualities to do politics, we should have the well-being of our people at heart. Bearing this in mind, Mr Speaker, Sir, and most importantly, not forgetting my role as a Member of the Opposition, that of a watchdog, I would say, I will continue to work for a better Mauritius.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Bholah!

(7.05 p.m.)

The Minister of Industrial Development, SMEs and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Thank you, Mr Speaker Sir. It is my great pleasure to join in the debate, and there are some interesting interventions from both sides of the House regarding the Address of the President, which defines Government's policies and strategies spanning the period 2020-2024.

M. le président, je me tiens en face de vous, dans cette auguste Assemblée, avec un sentiment de gratitude et de fierté. La dernière campagne électorale était une bataille décisive pour l'avenir de ce pays. Allons en arrière. Après avoir détrôné celui qui se croyait « le maître du destin » de Maurice en décembre 2014, les citoyens ont démontré que ce sont eux qui déterminent le destin de tout homme politique.

Après avoir remporté les élections en 2014, nous nous sommes mis au travail pour redresser l'économie, remettre les indicateurs au vert, rétablir la justice sociale, réduire l'inégalité, redonner de l'espoir aux jeunes, accorder un meilleur niveau de vie aux personnes âgées et aux travailleurs au bas de l'échelle, inspirer la confiance, rassembler les citoyens autour des grands enjeux, approfondir la démocratie, consolider l'unité nationale, la paix et l'harmonie.

A ceux de l'autre côté de la Chambre qui évoquent la liberté d'expression et la démocratie, en voici une petite pique de rappel : Pour que votre voix atteigne les citoyens de ce pays, la retransmission des travaux parlementaires en directe est une réalité aujourd'hui grâce à l'Alliance Lepep, comme l'a si bien souligné l'honorable Avinash Teeluck. Nous avons réussi sur tous ces plans. Je suis fier d'être issu de cette équipe qui a pu réaliser de belles choses pour le pays.

Presque cinq ans après, en novembre 2019, « l'Alliance Morisien » s'est présentée devant l'électorat, guidée par les mêmes principes qui ont motivé nos actions durant notre premier mandat. Le sens d'équité, d'écoute et de partage a toujours été notre philosophie.

C'est cette mouvance pour une nation prospère et inclusive qui a permis aux électeurs de voter intelligemment. L'électorat a compris l'enjeu de mettre le pays entre des mains sûres.

Le choix était clair; reconduire un leader qui a fait ses preuves et réitérer sa confiance en une équipe qu'il a présentée. C'est un réel plaisir et un honneur pour moi de faire partie de cette équipe pour ce deuxième mandat. Nous avons vécu une campagne courte, mais très intense. Surtout dans ma circonscription et pour moi personnellement, M. le président, au

numéro 10, Montagne Blanche/Grande Rivière-Sud-Est. Car après une opération « *tik tiké* », on annonçait un certain « *roi lion* », leader du Parti travailliste comme candidat au numero10. En 2014, l'électorat du numéro 5 lui a donné une claque magistrale en lui infligeant une défaite cuisante.

Pour les élections de 2019, en estimant être toujours dans l'œil du cyclone au numéro 5, le leader du Parti travailliste a cru que le numéro 10 pouvait lui servir de centre de refuge. Et souvenez-vous qu'est-ce qu'il a avancé comme raison pour justifier cette décision? C'est un prêtre qui le lui a conseillé, a-t-il indiqué. Moi, personnellement, j'ai un respect énorme pour les prêtres de toutes les confessions.

Mais monter une histoire de toutes pièces, en se servant d'un prêtre, pour cautionner sa présence sur le terrain qu'il n'a jamais labouré et dans l'unique but d'amadouer les électeurs, cela ne se fait pas.

Le leader du Parti travailliste, n'a-t-il pas songé que finalement la voix du peuple, c'est la voix de Dieu? Dieu a voulu qu'après l'électorat du numero5, ce sera au tour de celui de numéro 10 de lui infliger sa deuxième défaite consécutive. Politique de rupture, le leader du Parti travailliste se gargarisait de ces grands mots au quotidien. A force de le répéter, les citoyens ont fini par comprendre qu'il revient à eux de pratiquer cette politique de rupture et d'en finir avec les assoiffés du pouvoir. C'est ainsi qu'ils ont décidé de rompre définitivement avec le leader du Parti travailliste en lui faisant subir une nouvelle défaite, qu'il n'arrive toujours pas à digérer.

Les citoyens ont décidé de surfer sur les vagues de prospérité, de modernité et de progrès.

« *Ensam tou possib* » !

Plus qu'un slogan, c'est cet esprit d'ouverture et d'écoute que nous avons prôné, que nous prôtons toujours, qui nous a reconduit au pouvoir. Je note que les parties de l'Opposition en face de nous, sont tout aussi adeptes d'*Ensam tou possib*... en essayant tant bien que mal d'unir leurs forces. Hélas, pas pour des bonnes causes, je dirais!

Quant à nous, au niveau de l'équipe dirigeante, nous unissons nos forces pour être un gouvernement de transformation, d'inclusion et d'aspiration.

Mr Speaker, Sir, more than a democratic exercise, the last elections of November 2019 was a serious battle of alternatives, between the old and the new, of the persona of political

leadership, of leadership styles, of socio-economic alternatives, of public lifestyles and of models as to who was better suited to lead the country forward.

We knew we had to win that one battle because it was set to be a game changer that would result in drastic consequences on the political scene and initial signs of which are already evident as everybody have noticed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, failure was not and could not be envisaged as it would have seriously undermined the laudable work that we had started during the previous legislature.

We needed to continue the excellent work started for the sake of our country, our social fabric and for future generations. Failure, Mr Speaker, Sir, would have seriously curtailed the most important outcome of it all, the necessary and continuous sanitisation of public life.

Our victory in Constituency Number 10 will remain our modest contribution to this laudable vision of a cleaner, fairer, more inclusive Mauritius. I am proud that as a team we came out winners and I congratulate my two friends for their tremendous efforts, namely hon. Nazurally and hon. Hurdoyal.

As much as acknowledging defeat with dignity is a sign of greatness, Mr Speaker, Sir, non-acceptance of this truth would be a sign of weakness.

Standing here, I feel obliged to pay homage to those who voted for us, throughout the country. Fully confident that in voting us to power, they were making the right choices for themselves and their children. I feel proud that many of our citizens understood our message and I bow to their wisdom.

Advocates of impeding doom and gloom have been and will always be intrinsic part of the political fabric, but nothing replaces the fresh optimism, renewed confidence, energy, and resolve of a rejuvenated team. And Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing pleases me more than the unexpected windfall of the elections of November 2019. Namely the rejuvenation of this august assembly and the sight of the new group of Parliamentarians, all present here, on both sides of the House. May I extend my very warm welcome to them all.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to extend my gratitude to the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, for reiterating his trust in me. I have been assigned the portfolio of SMEs and Cooperatives and in addition for this present mandate, I will also be heading the industrial development portfolio.

This augurs well, as SMEs and Cooperatives are part and parcel of the industrial nomenclature and they are also involved in manufacturing activities.

There is no doubt that we will now be in a better position to bring more synergies, convergence and coherence while designing policies, strategies and support programmes for sustained industrial development.

M. le président, nous avons toujours œuvré dans l'intérêt du pays. Pour la réussite de nos projets et de nos ambitions, nous misons sur le travail d'équipe, avec le soutien de tous les partenaires de notre économie et société. Le discours-programme du gouvernement présenté dans cette auguste assemblée reflète nos ambitions et nos priorités.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we need absolute clarity on what Government should prioritise in an era of obviously finite resources. To govern is to choose and we have made clear choices.

As the main title of the Government Programme 2020-2024 suggests, "*Towards an Inclusive, High Income and Green Mauritius, Forging Ahead Together*", we have set the ball rolling to pursue the journey on which we already embarked on five years ago.

We are committed to building a strong economy, to being fiscally responsible and to providing certainty. We will work with all stakeholders to deliver shared prosperity for all. Major investments will be done in housing, health, education, law and order, and infrastructure. We have also taken into account new challenges which have cropped up and which need to be addressed.

M. le président, afin de transformer notre vision en réalité, il incombera à chaque ministère, à chaque partenaire et à chaque mauricien de retrousser les manches pour la mise en œuvre des actions préconisées. Si vous me permettez, je vais élaborer sur les projets et la contribution de mon Ministère pour la réussite de notre « *Mauritian dream* ».

Mr Speaker, Sir, Vision 2030 acknowledged the critical importance of industrial development in terms of wealth creation and employment generation.

As at now, manufacturing activities account for 12.9% of GDP and around 17% of total employment. A sector has been posting an annual average growth rate of around 1% over the past 5 years. Some 240 Export Oriented Enterprises are in operation, manufacturing a wide range of products for the export market and contributing to 90% of all domestic exports. 360 other large domestic enterprises are producing principally for the local market as a response to import substitution. SMEs on their side are also very active in a wide range of

manufacturing activities with some 18,000 units employing less than 10 employees each. We wish to further enhance the manufacturing base through the process of consolidation, diversification, modernisation and expansion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now briefly elaborate on these strategic imperatives –

On the exports side, Mauritius is an established sourcing destination for a range of products comprising wearing apparel, textile yarn & fabrics, fish preparation, medical devices, watches & clocks, chemicals and related products, amongst others.

Domestic exports in 2018 and 2019 is set to remain at Rs47.5 billion. This stagnation in exports should not be viewed as a setback, given that our enterprises are evolving in an unpredictable trading environment characterised by Brexit, US-China trade war and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the emergence of the new “Coronavirus disease” - Covid-19 if I am not mistaken - in China, world trade is likely to slow down adding to our challenges. But Government is fully determined to safeguard the interests of our Export Oriented Enterprises. We are aware of their immense contribution in terms of value addition, employment generation and foreign exchange earnings. Let me assure the House that we will always be by their side at all times to enhance their competitiveness and visibility on the export market.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is in constant dialogue with Exporters to identify bottlenecks and come up with remedial actions. The Economic Development Board is helping in the elaboration of export and investment promotion strategies for greater market diversification and broadening of the manufacturing base. Furthermore, my Ministry is closely monitoring the implementation of the National Export Strategy (2017-2021) to boost domestic exports and I am glad to announce that around 50% of the NES recommendations have already been implemented.

With regard to business facilitation, the Mauritius Standards Bureau has stepped up its efforts to promote standardization and conformity assessment services among our local economic operators to unlock new markets, and sharpen their competitiveness in the global market. The Mauritius Standards Bureau is also making optimum use of regional and international fora to harmonize standards with a view to facilitating intra-regional trade and multi-lateral trade. The MSB has finalised development of standards and certification in areas such as renewable energy, sustainable tourism, energy efficiency and circular economy which are indeed high on the strategic agenda of Government. Moreover, the MSB, through its

recently set up Sub-office within the premises of the Custom, has contributed significantly in reducing compliance and administrative burdens on the business community by providing one-stop approach to regulatory requirements and thereby promoting ease of doing business.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the manufacturing sector has not adequately adopted technology as an enabler for sustained growth, productivity gains and reduced dependence on labour. It is in this very perspective that Government Programme emphasises the adoption of technologies associated with Industry 4.0 such as automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence which are all set to bring a radical transformation in the manufacturing landscape. Embracing Industry 4.0 implies that the traditional methods of production and the way of doing business have to be fundamentally revisited and manufacturers and service providers move on to the Intelligent Production powered by Internet of Things, Big Data, Artificial Intelligence, robotics, and cloud technology.

Fully conscious of the financial and operational constraints faced by operators to venture in this new pathway, Government remains committed to provide an adequate ecosystem for the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies. In this context, dedicated schemes have already been put in place to assist enterprises in their modernisation drive.

While our medium term efforts are geared to infuse our industrial sectors with components of intelligent production, we also note that some of these enabling technologies are already accessible and are being used by our local operators in their manufacturing processes or while deploying their services. We, therefore, only have to propel the timid efforts of our private sector partners by investing in the pre-requisites which are fundamental to the establishment of an eco-system which would allow Industry 4.0 to thrive in Mauritius.

It is, therefore, with much appreciation and satisfaction that I note the commitment of Government to promote ‘an open data culture’, ‘encourage online and cashless transactions’, ‘consolidate cyber security’ and ‘further democratise high-speed internet’. Mr Speaker Sir, these are undoubtedly the key moves towards a successful unfurling of Industry 4.0 in Mauritius. My Ministry will ensure that operators are sensitised on the benefits of adopting Industry 4.0 technologies and will endeavour to provide the necessary support required by the business community.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the manufacturing sector is in a transitional phase having to adhere to greener production practices to meet the growing exigencies of clients for eco-friendly products. In this context, adoption of energy efficiency technologies, promotion of recycling

activities, minimisation of industrial waste and compliance with environmental certification assume fundamental importance. My Ministry is implementing a series of measures to accompany our enterprises in their endeavour to transit to green manufacturing. In that

context, the second phase of an Industrial Waste Management project, funded by UNIDO, was recently completed and which sensitised operators on the methodologies to reduce, recover and recycle industrial waste.

In addition, the Mauritius Standards Bureau provides institutional support for the labelling of domestic electrical appliances for energy efficiency and has set up a certification scheme for the eco-labelling of products which are environmental friendly. In that context, two types of products namely paint and textiles are currently being granted eco-labels. Furthermore, the Mauritius Standards Bureau is collaborating with the regulatory authority to identify Guidelines and Standards for Renewable Energy with a view to implementing Renewable Energy standards.

Mr Speaker Sir, my Ministry is laying much emphasis on the development of new poles of growth capable to generate higher value-added triggered by cutting-edge technology, creativity and design, research & development and innovation. Apart from compensating for the imbalance over reliance on a few traditional sectors has created, it will also allow inflow of FDI, transfer of technological know-how and capacity building in a new wave of activities. New growth poles, that have already been identified, are medical devices, pharmaceuticals, high-end jewellery, original equipment manufacturing, technical textiles and high precision engineering. To this end, Government has already put in place the necessary incentive framework as well as dedicated industrial infrastructure in form of Technology Parks.

Additionally, the Fashion and Design Institute has designed a new industry-oriented curriculum framework with a view to further developing the Jewellery Sector which comprises of 350 enterprises and employs more than 2500 skilled workers. The Institute will provide the required tools and techniques that would enable the sector to grow further and prepare the workforce to adapt to the changing landscape in the Jewellery sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the strategic imperatives that I have highlighted will constitute the basis for the formulation of the new Industrial Policy & Strategic Plan (2020-2025) that my Ministry has embarked upon with the assistance of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It is expected that the implementation of the Strategic Plan will instil a much needed dynamism in the manufacturing sector which employs 97,000 people and significantly improve its resilience in the face of challenges of a globalised and liberalised trading environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in March 2017, with a view to setting strategic directions for SME development, a 10-Year Master Plan was launched. SMEDA was phased out and SME Mauritius started operations in January 2018 following the proclamation of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Act 2017.

The main objective behind the creation of SME Mauritius was the need to have a fundamental institutional reform to better support and facilitate the promotion and development of SMEs enabling the latter to enhance their competitiveness and sustainability. I have listened carefully to hon. Juman, hon. Reza Uteem and also hon. David with regard to SMEs. We have all to admit that it is a very difficult sector not only in Mauritius but worldwide because they are small, they are microbusinesses and the main problems, here it is four-fold.

Access to finance remains a big problem over here because they are unable to mobilise finance in order to start their business. Market is a problem, technology is a problem, and being given the size of the business, they cannot retain talents and skilled workers as well. But we have done our utmost to be on their side. And there are many small enterprises in Mauritius who are not registered anywhere, that is, they are operating the informal sector. They have their families to work with them, they wake up early in the morning, they prepare whatever they have to sell, they mobilise their resources, they have a good customer base and that works for them and they are not interested to go further. There are thousands and thousands of them, they never come to the offices, and in that case it is very difficult to identify and to help them.

The main objective behind the creation of SME Mauritius was the need to have a fundamental institutional reform to better support and facilitate the promotion and development of SMEs enabling the latter to enhance their competitiveness and sustainability.

In line with Government policy and programme, SME Mauritius has been provided through my Ministry, with all the required enablers and enhancers to achieve the ambition of making the SME sector the engine of growth of the Mauritian economy.

SME Mauritius has, on its coming into operation, been assigned the responsibility of implementing a number of the measures identified in the Master Plan. To this end, more than a dozen of incentives are being implemented by SME Mauritius, including the Mentoring and Hand-holding Programme, Communication and Visibility, Online Presence, Technology and

Skills Transfer Scheme, Barcode Registration which opens a wider market for them, Certification Scheme, and Productivity Improvement Scheme, amongst others.

It is estimated that 62% of all the 86 recommendations of the 10-Year Master Plan has been initiated while over 26% have been completed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, incubators and accelerators for SMEs is a crucial infrastructure when entry costs are high. It is with much pleasure that I share with you plans of SME Mauritius Ltd to set up tech-based coworking facilities, incubators and accelerators at Coromandel and replicate and extend these services to the three regional offices of SME Mauritius at Goodlands, Bel Air and Rose-Belle.

And in order to significantly improve the chances of success of startups and SMEs in their early stages of development - I agree again with the intervention of hon. Juman, that is, it is very likely that more than four or five out of ten will succeed in the first two or three years and more than half of them would die after 24 months or thirty months - all costs relating to hosting and backup facilities offered by SMEs will be borne by SME Mauritius with SMEs being left to focus on innovation, creation, co-creation, networking, sharing of knowledge and experience and synergizing for mutual benefit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to remain at the forefront of innovation, my Ministry in collaboration with SME Mauritius has also embarked in the development of an Innovation Park at Coromandel. The project encompasses a measure announced in Budget Speech 2019/2020 to set up a Design Centre for Leather Products, providing assistance to SMEs on 3D technologies while also dispensing training for the region.

The SME Innovation Park will initially host three lab/studios for pattern-making and prototype production facilities, digital design and printing of jewelry prototypes. The third studio will be a fabrication laboratory with state-of-the-art technology to tailor customized products.

I am pleased, Mr Speaker, Sir, to announce that the procurement of machinery, hardware and software to equip the innovation lab is being completed presently.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has been a beacon for other Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in terms of sustainable development given the number of initiatives the country has taken in renewable energy, clean waste management technologies and public transport infrastructure.

Conscious of its continued importance, the Government Programme 2020-2024 has set ambitious targets towards adopting a responsible and environmentally sustainable development policy in the area of green economy.

In order to contribute towards fulfilling Government's long-term energy strategy, SME Mauritius has been providing a Solar PhotoVoltaic (PV) Rebate Scheme which aims at offering SMEs the opportunity to produce electricity using solar photovoltaic (PV) technology.

Along the same lines, my Ministry is also looking into the possibility of setting an eco-industrial SME Park which will be leased on a long-term basis at affordable costs for the development of a recycling industry in Mauritius.

The proposed park would cater for recycling materials such as waste metals, waste wood, waste electrical and electronic equipment, waste plastics, waste batteries, waste construction materials, waste glass, waste tyres, food waste, amongst others to convert into radically higher value added products.

The eco-industrial park would support SMEs to become compliant with new international environmental standards, identify and use biodegradable raw materials and additives in order to maximise waste reduction and waste recycling, build a new generation of innovative, resource-efficient local businesses.

This will also unlock the possibilities and opportunities of making and exporting clean products to international markets and also could serve as a special designated area to test new environmental management practices and advanced instruments.

This unprecedented transformation of the SME sector support is further emphasised by the new online portal of SME Mauritius dedicated to entrepreneurs. We have made great strides facilitating online registration of SMEs with content to be developed for online Training, a directory of SMEs by sector and live chat modules being launched soon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to ensure the sustained development of SMEs much effort is being placed on capacity building so as to ensure matching and adequacy of skills. In that context, for the period January to December 2019, some 1150 entrepreneurs and aspiring entrepreneurs were trained in crafts and management skills and advanced training was conducted by foreign experts in the field of Madhubani painting, banana fibre extraction and leather craft.

Mr Speaker Sir, SME Employment Scheme is another of those key measures, launched by my Ministry in August 2018, with a view to simultaneously address youth unemployment and assist SMEs in improving performance, productivity and innovativeness to embrace change.

Entrepreneurs cannot and should not remain in their comfort zone or at the lower end of the ladder. As we drive towards an inclusive economy, my Ministry in collaboration with SME Mauritius, is currently implementing a Social Entrepreneurship Programme to lift people out of poverty by converting their talents into profit-making businesses.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all these measures I enumerated will go a long way ensuring that we achieve the following targets by 2026 -

- (i) raising SMEs' contribution to GDP from 40% to 52%;
- (ii) raising SMEs' share of total national employment from 55% to 64%, and
- (iii) increasing current exports to about 18%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, much effort is also being devoted to the framework within which SMEs operate, and to this end two new enabling units have been set up.

An SME Observatory Cell has been set up at SME Mauritius with the primary objective to collect information and data on new technology development, market trends, investment flows, economic trends of competitors, trade agreements, among others and ensure their timely dissemination.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me move to the Cooperative Division of my Ministry. Le mouvement coopératif n'a jamais été aussi visible. Depuis les cinq dernières années, les sociétés coopératives ont été témoins d'un regain de confiance et d'une remontée remarquable du mouvement. Tout cela, parce que nous avons eu un Premier ministre qui a cru dans le potentiel du mouvement coopératif à relever les défis socio-économiques.

Je me réjouis que le discours programme entend insuffler un nouveau souffle aux coopératives pour qu'elles puissent se réinventer et atteindre d'autres horizons.

M. le président, nous avons été réélus par la population sur la base d'un programme solide et réaliste. Nous allons tout mettre en œuvre pour être à la hauteur des espérances. Le travail à abattre est certes colossal.

People will always be at the heart of this Government. Mauritius has a great opportunity to reach new heights. This will take courage. We will have to do things differently. But it is possible, if we include each and every person. Since independence, we have succeeded beyond expectations. We have the people and we have the ability to make it happen.

We join politics to serve the nation and improve the well-being of our people and untold challenges on the macroeconomic front and dire international relations require us to re-focus and regroup in the face of adversity. Whenever required, we have never shunned our responsibilities but have shouldered them bravely, and I am sure that as a team we have the resolve and patience to shape an even better future for one and all in years to come. This may be our own modest trust with destiny. Let this new legislature mark the dawning of that new era.

I believe we can create a better future together. As rightly quoted by the Ghanaian author, Lailah Gifty, and I quote –

“A nation can be mighty, when the citizens put away their political differences, work together for a common vision, a common goal and a common good.”

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Minister Maudhoo!

The Minister of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr S. Maudhoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, with my best wishes to all of you for a Happy Valentine’s Day, I may say night, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 24 February 2020 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

Adjournment, long list. Fourteen Members expressing their wish to raise issues. I would request all the Members to be short, to the point so that we have time for everybody. Thank you.

Hon. Armance!

(7.42 p.m.)

MATTERS RAISED

RÉSIDENCE SIR GAËTAN DUVAL, GRNW - DRAIN NETWORK

Mr P. Armance (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My plea today is regarding Résidence Sir Gaëtan Duval at Grand Rivière North West. I had a visit there and the residents have no drain network. *Les rues sont dans un état déplorable. Donc, je sais qu'il y avait un projet qui avait été initié en 2015, concernant les drains et l'asphaltage des rues. Donc, je demanderai au ministre s'il peut bien veiller que le projet soit entrepris pour Résidence Sir Gaëtan Duval, aussi connue comme Cité Mauvillac.* Merci.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. S. Hurreeram): Thank you, hon. colleague. Mr Speaker, Sir, my colleague, the PPS, hon. Dr. Ms Dorine Chuukowry is looking into the matter. I understand that a project is already in place and due to some wastewater project that we are awaiting to be completed before we can start asphaltting and drain works. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lobine!

(7.43 p.m.)

HERMITAGE ROAD - TRAFFIC FLOW

Mr K. Lobine (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, my question is addressed to the hon. Prime Minister who is not here. Can I address it to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister?

Hon. Deputy Prime Minister, there is a serious traffic flow problem near Hermitage bus terminal, along the Hermitage road. This is causing major disturbance to the inhabitants of this locality. Could the Deputy Prime Minister use his good office to talk to the Commissioner of Police for additional Police assistance in the morning specifically and after

office hours, Monday to Friday in this region? It is a peaceful locality and due to heavy traffic, this is causing havoc to the inhabitants of this region. Can you look into the matter, please?

The Deputy Prime Minister: Of course, this is not Question Time. So, I will not answer, but I am going to ensure the hon. Member that I will pass on the message to the Prime Minister.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(7.44 p.m.)

AIRPORT OF MAURITIUS – CORONAVIRUS – PERSONNEL - SAFETY MASKS

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the hon. Minister of Health and Wellness and it concerns the safety of our people working at the airport.

I have been made to understand by the people working over there that Airport of Mauritius has prohibited them to wear safety masks. So, you know the situation prevailing concerning coronavirus. So, I would urge the Minister to look seriously into the matter and remediate same.

The Minister of Health and Wellness (Dr. K. Jagutpal): Mr Speaker, Sir, all precautionary measures have been taken for the personnel working at the airports, especially the medical personnel. And if any additional measures should be taken, I will be looking into it.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(7.45 p.m.)

TRANQUEBAR, BANGLADESH – BUS SERVICE

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Merci, M. le président. Je voudrais porter à l'attention de l'honorable ministre des Transports un problème que font face les habitants de Tranquebar, en particulier de la région de Bangladesh.

Pendant la construction de drains dans la région de Bangladesh, les autobus ont cessé de desservir ce trajet. Mais voilà que depuis trois mois on a déjà complété tous les travaux, mais les autobus n'ont toujours pas résumé leur service, et cela cause un grand problème à

tous les habitants de Bangladesh qui est quand même assez loin de l'endroit où on est en train de les laisser, qui est à Ste. Anne. Donc, il y a au moins un kilomètre de distance entre l'arrêt de l'autobus et leur maison. Donc, je demanderai à l'honorable ministre s'il peut revoir la situation avec les opérateurs pour qu'ils résumant leur service. Merci.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr Ganoo): Thank you, hon. Member. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will certainly look into the matter. I will transmit the suggestion of my friend and I will talk to the NLTA and also see to it that the bus operators come back along the road which has just been referred by my hon. friend.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(7.47 p.m.)

MAHA SHIVRATRI FESTIVAL - VANDERMEERSCH STREET - DRAIN WORK

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My question is addressed to the Minister of Transport and Light Rail, hon. Ganoo. In the context of the Maha Shivratri Festival...

Mr Speaker: No question! Raise the issue!

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, I am raising the issue. I am asking the Minister if he could ask the Larsen & Toubro Contractor for the Metro Rail project to have the Vandermeersch Street clean. At several spots on the *trottoir*, there are missing slabs and there are wire nettings which are there, which can cause lots of problems to the pilgrims, and also the roads need to be clean, but there are aggregates. You can go and see yourself, there are aggregates, especially near the CEB, where they are doing the drain work, which should have been done, and also along the path, on the exterior on Vandermeersch Street, from Rond Point Beau Bassin to Rose Hill.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to assure my hon. friend that regularly, during these past days, different committees have been sitting and looking at the possible problems concerning the pilgrims going to the Ganga Talao relating to their comfort and their convenience. The particular place which has been mentioned by hon. Bhagwan, along Vandermeersch Street has also been the focus of the different members of this committee. So, I can assure my friend that the Task Force and the different committees, different stakeholders have already, in fact,

considered the problem of Vandermeersch Street, and we will see to it that the pilgrims of Maha Shivratri are given all the necessary security and comfort during the festival.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Navarre-Marie!

(7.47 p.m.)

POINTE AUX SABLES - FOUNDRY - INCONVENIENCE

Mrs A. Navarre-Marie (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Allow me to raise an issue concerning the Minister of Environment. Unfortunately, the substantive Minister is not here, but I am sure the message will be passed on.

The issue concerns a foundry situated at Pointe aux Sables. This is causing much nuisance. The issue concerns a foundry situated at Pointe aux Sables causing, with its toxic smoke screen every early morning, much inconvenience to the inhabitants of the area and the neighbourhood.

In spite, of several complaints, the foundry is still operating outside normal working hours. This situation is impacting negatively on the health of the people.

I would make a humble request to the Minister concerned to look into the matter and take appropriate measures because this is a real health hazard.

Thank you, I have done.

(7.50 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I will report the matter to my colleague.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(7.50 p.m.)

PLAINE VERTE GARDEN – PETANQUE PITCH

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Yes, thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The issue I am raising tonight is addressed to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and it concerns the situation of a *pétanque* pitch which is found on the

premises of the Plaine Verte Garden near the Zario Spare Parts and more precisely opposite the *baz* MSM.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this *pétanque* pitch was constructed in the year 2013 and, following the cyclone Calvinia in December last, a huge trunk of a tree fell on the pitch and unfortunately, up to now, the debris, the branches of the tree are still lying on the *pétanque* pitch.

Therefore, I will request the hon. Minister if he can instruct the Municipal Council of Port Louis to do needful so that the pitch is being restored to its original state.

Thank you.

(7.51 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): I will ask my colleague to refer the matter to the Municipal Council of Port Louis.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

(7.51 p.m.)

ALBION - TRAFFIC JAM

Mr F. Quirin (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): M. le président, ma requête ce soir s'adresse au ministre du transport routier, l'honorable Alan Ganoo et concerne justement le trafic routier à Albion.

En effet, M. le président, chaque matin, les conducteurs qui empruntent la route venant du centre d'Albion et des différents morcellements vers Canot sont bloqués dans un embouteillage monstre causant beaucoup de colère, de frustration, d'impatience parmi ces mêmes conducteurs.

Donc je le disais, M. le président, Albion avec les nouveaux morcellements, le nombre de familles a considérablement augmenté et les véhicules en conséquence. Et ajoutés à cela, les feux de signalisation sont constamment en panne. Les feux de signalisation à la sortie d'Albion sont constamment en panne provoquant d'avantage d'impatience. Nombreux sont ceux et celles qui, à cause de cela, arrivent en retard au travail...

Mr Speaker: What is the issue? Do not make a speech, come with the issue.

Mr Quirin: Et il serait à mon avis urgent à ce que l'honorable ministre fasse le nécessaire rapidement. Trouver une solution avec une seule route ça devient impossible pour les véhicules de l'emprunter le matin et ne pas se retrouver dans un embouteillage, et avoir à faire face aussi à des feux de signalisation qui sont constamment en panne.

Je compte sur l'honorable ministre pour faire le nécessaire.

(7.52 p.m.)

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Too many cars on our road, too many new *morcellements* is a sign of progress, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I will certainly look into the query of my hon. Friend. I will apprise the LNTA and my Ministry of the point made by hon. Quirin.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Nagalingum!

(7.53 p.m.)

ROSE-HILL – FEEDER BUS – DISTURBANCE

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. My request is addressed to the Minister of Land, Transport and Light Rail.

I am raising an issue on behalf of the residents of Decaen Street, Charles de Gaulle Street and Suzor Street in Rose-Hill.

I received a petition, hon. Minister, regarding the high frequency of the feeder buses 512 and 513 onto a residential area where they are causing a lot of disturbance.

Decaen Street is not suitable to sustain the flow of heavy and wide vehicles such as buses and, at its junction at Royal Road, the driver has to be extremely careful not to hit wall on his right hand side and the food outlet on the left hand side.

So, I will urge upon the Minister to look into the matter with due consideration.

I shall table a copy of the petition to the Minister.

(7.54 p.m.)

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): I am aware of this problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, the hon. Member is right. Decaen Street is one of the new routes which the new feeder buses have been using since the 10 of January. This has

caused some inconvenience to the inhabitants of the region because the streets are too narrow for the big buses which are being used for feeder services.

I can assure the hon. Member that officers of the MEL and the LNTA have been in this region, along Decaen street and Charles de Gaulle street.

We are, at the moment, looking at all the problems that have occurred since the entry into operation of the feeder buses and this is one of the issues that is being tackled by the Committee, that is, looking at the constraints caused by the feeder buses.

So, I will certainly raise the matter once again with the officers concerned.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ms Foo Kune!

(7.55 p.m.)

COROMANDEL – FOOTBRIDGE

Ms K. Foo Kune (Second Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Merci, M. le président. J'attire l'attention du ministre du *National Infrastructure and Community Development* sur la situation de la passerelle de Coromandel qui non seulement est dans un état d'insalubrité épouvantable, je dirai, mais surtout avec l'absence de lumière à l'intérieur depuis plusieurs mois déjà, les piétons ne se sentent pas en sécurité d'emprunter ce passage-là.

En raison de ce manque de lumière, la passerelle est fréquentée par des gens qui s'adonnent à des activités illicites, et donc les piétons ne peuvent pas emprunter ce passage en toute quiétude et sérénité et préfèrent prendre le risque de traverser la route principale, même si elle est très mouvementée, à leurs risques et périls.

Donc, je demande que le nécessaire puisse être fait pour assurer la sécurité des usagers de la passerelle de Coromandel. Merci.

(7.56 p.m.)

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry and RDA have already elaborated a plan to uplift of all those footbridges across the island. Work has already started in Bois Marchand; a contractor has already been allocated for Rose Belle. So, I will ask the hon. Member to be a bit patient, it's getting there. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

(7.56 p.m.)

BUILDING PERMITS - ENVIRONMENT TRIBUNAL APPEALS

Mr D. Ramful (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have an issue which concerns the hon. Prime Minister. In fact, it concerns three Ministries - the Prime Minister's office, the Attorney General's office as well as the Ministry of Environment.

Recently, the Supreme Court has delivered a judgement in a case called M L. I Baumann vs The Rivière Du Rempart District Council; it is also known as the Baumann's case, but I will not go into the facts of the case. The interpretation given by the learned judges in that case is to restrict the definition of an aggrieved person to those who have applied for a building permit and who are aggrieved by the decision of a District Council to be allowed to appeal against that particular decision before the Environment Tribunal.

So, this interpretation excludes, for example, a neighbour who feels aggrieved by that particular decision and excludes him from going to the tribunal to challenge that decision.

Now, I have looked at the relevant laws, if we go back to the Town and Country Planning Board, even at that time neighbours who felt aggrieved by a decision...

Mr Speaker: Make sure hon. Member, you do not go in legislation or policy.

Mr Ramful: Yes, I won't go into it.

Mr Speaker: Raise the specific issue.

Mr Ramful: Yes, but I need to go into the Bills so that I can establish the problem. So, if we go back to the Town and Country Planning Board, even at that time a neighbour was allowed to challenge a decision of a particular District Council with regard to building permit.

Now, of course, I respect the decision of the Supreme Court, but, in the light of that recent decision, there are hundreds of cases where neighbours have entered appeals before the Environment Tribunal and those cases will have to be dismissed and there is no quick and effective avenue of appeal to a neighbour against the decision of a District Council.

Now, it is a question of policy, may I request the Attorney General. If protection of environment is high on the agenda for this Government, can he please look into the matter and come up with amendments if need be. Thank you.

(7.59 p.m.)

The Attorney General, Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Gobin): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, my hon. colleague is raising a matter concerning a judgement which was delivered in November by the Supreme Court of Mauritius by a bench composed of two judges of the Supreme Court. I do not propose to discuss the facts and the ruling given by the bench of the Supreme Court. I may come back to the issue at the appropriate stage if need be.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden!

(7.59 p.m.)

PAILLOTE – SLABS, PAVEMENTS & LIGHTING

Mr P. Assirvaden (Second Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Merci, M. le Président. Ma requête est adressée à l'honorable Bobby Hurreeram concernant la région de Paillote. Ce chemin est servi par tous les pèlerins menant à Grand Bassin et je demanderai au ministre de voir. Hier, j'étais dans la région et j'ai eu pas mal de requêtes des habitants concernant les *slabs*, les trottoirs et l'éclairage. Nous savons que la semaine prochaine les pèlerins vont emprunter ce chemin nuit et jour. Je demanderai au ministre de voir si quelque chose peut être fait pour améliorer les trottoirs et les *slabs* dans cette région. Merci.

The Minister of National Infrastructure and Community Development (Mr M. Hurreeram): Mr Speaker, Sir, the PPS, hon. Gilbert Bablee, already raised that matter with me earlier today and he is looking into the matter. Thank you.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(8.00 p.m.)

CONSTITUENCY NO. 2 – BUS SYSTEM

Mr Osman Mahomed (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for allowing me to speak despite missing my turn just now. The issue I would like to raise - I had the chance to discuss with hon. Ganoo earlier, after tea break - concerns the bus system in my constituency. I had the opportunity to talk to

him but the issues are that there have been relocation of bus stops and buses do not have proper time schedule. So, people have to wait for a long time and bus stops are very far, it causes a lot of hardship to the people of Tranquebar, Château d'Eau and Bangladesh. So, as mentioned earlier, I would like to request the hon. Minister if he could kindly request the Commissioner of the NTA to look into the matter and if need be, I would be most willing to explain to him further details. Thank you.

The Minister of Land Transport and Light Rail (Mr A. Ganoo): Yes, I have taken good note of the point raised by my friend. I will certainly look into the matter and, if need be, talk to my hon. friend also so that we can clarify the issues.

At 8.03 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 24 February 2020 at 11.30 a.m.