



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

FRIDAY 21 JUNE 2019

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BILL (*Public*)

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Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 16 of 2019

Sitting of 21 June 2019

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPER LAID

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, the Paper has been laid on the Table.

Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

The Annual Report 2017/2018 of the Public Officers' Welfare Council.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, 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.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

CEB-ALTEO ENERGY LTD - POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I wish to make a statement following the interventions of the hon. Third Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central on Wednesday 19 June at Adjournment Time, and of the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East on Thursday 20 June in the course of the debates on the Appropriation (2019-2020) Bill 2019.

Both Members referred to correspondence emanating from the Acting General Manager of the Central Electricity Board relating to an agreement purportedly reached between the Central Electricity Board and Alteo Energy Ltd.

I took objection to the tabling of this correspondence. At the time of their interventions, I did not have sight of the letter which they held in their hands.

Madam Speaker, having now had sight of the letter, I realised that my reaction to these two interventions had been prompted by a regrettable confusion on my part. The fact is that Alteo is currently engaged in negotiations with the CEB for the setting up of a new power plant of 70 MW. These negotiations are being held at the level of the legal and financial advisers of both parties and are under strict conditions of confidentiality. No agreement has been reached in relation to this project. If the negotiations are successful, the outcome will need to be ultimately approved by Cabinet prior to be concluded.

At the time of the interventions of the two honourable Members, I was under the erroneous impression that the correspondence was in relation to current negotiations for this new power plant. This prompted my strong objection to any document that might have been linked to these negotiations.

Madam Speaker, it was only after you had delivered your ruling on my objection, and upon sighting the letter, which the hon. First Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East had communicated to you that I realised that the correspondence, in fact, related to an entirely different matter, that is, the extension of the Power Purchase Agreement, which expired in December 2018. That extension was finalised at the beginning of February of this year.

My objection had been based on that misapprehension, the publication of that letter in the Press of Wednesday having escaped my attention.

I have to point out that the extension of the Power Purchase Agreement is for the next three years and includes the production of 3 GWh of electricity from cane trash, a new technology, out of a total of 170 GWh for the extended contract.

Electricity from cane trash will be paid at the rate of Rs4.45 per kWh, of which there is a direct payment to planters and suppliers of cane trash of at least Rs1 /kWh.

The confusion on my part is regretted, but I point out that I had not contemplated that the extension of the existing Power Purchase Agreement was still a matter that could possibly give rise to debate.

(15.10)

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2019-2020) BILL 2019

(NO. X OF 2019)

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

Question again proposed.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha):

Madam Speaker, it gives me immense pleasure, and it is a great honour for me to address this august Assembly on the occasion of this Budget Speech 2019-2020.

The Budget is very inspiring, Madam Speaker, and I think that there are a number of fundamental questions which can be asked. The first one is: Have we delivered on the promise on our nation's birth? This Budget is also the last of the five Budgets of this mandate, and it also includes the 50 years of independence, which we celebrated during those five years.

What was the promise of the birth of our nation? To have a modern Mauritius? To have prosperity? To have unity? Have we delivered on that? For the last five years, my question is: Are we living better than in 2014 in Mauritius today? Is the working class better? Is the elderly community better? Is the common man better? As a country, since we took over in 2014, are we moving forward or are we going down the drain?

Madam Speaker, have our living conditions become better and are we more ambitious today as a nation? And how strong is the voice of Mauritius on the international scene? These are the questions that this Budget raises because, as I said, it is the end of a cycle. And the other question is, when I have answered all these questions, can the Opposition be in a position to do better? This is the question that the nation will ask very soon, Madam Speaker?

I was in Rose Hill at the CEB office, and I was looking at the colossal structure, what we call the girders of the Metro Express – in fact, the first person who was impressed by all this was the Deputy Prime Minister, when the first time we put the first girder. I think, by now, we have put more than a hundred throughout this track, from Rose Hill to Port Louis. And when I look at the girder, I ask myself: when was this put, how did they do it? It is 32 metres, it is 30 tonnes, and I stayed there and I looked at it and I said: “Why and how are we doing it?” It is because we look up to the future. This Government looks up to the future. This girder was put between 10 o'clock at night and 2 o'clock in the morning. We cannot just dream of an infrastructure of a project and then sleep over it, and the next day we find that the project has been done. Whilst we look at the future, we look up, and we have always done that. Many of those who would go at the girder would say, look at the dust, at the mud. Look at the scaffoldings; they have not been well-placed. They have not been arranged properly, there is a problem of traffic. But they don't see the monument that we have erected.

This is the difference, Madam Speaker. This is the difference between this side of the House and the other side of the House. They focus on a number of small issues. But, in the meantime, we are building; we are builders. I have always said that in every one of my speeches, we look up to the future all the time, we have a vision.

On the other side, they look down on the small issues. And when we ask all these questions -

- Are we living better?
- Is our country moving forward?
- Are our living conditions better?
- Are we more ambitious as a nation?

The answer is clear today. Madam Speaker, if we see what we have travelled over the last five years, it is just unbelievable. We have always had a vision. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, at the stewardship of this country, the Prime Minister now, we always had a vision. It is with this vision that since the 80s, we brought factories/industrial zones to the catchment areas of labour in La Flora, in Roches Noires. That's how we started with the industrial revolution in Mauritius, which was to be later termed as the Mauritian miracle.

Hon. Ganoo yesterday said that he was impressed by the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth who started this industrial revolution, but I don't know whether he remembers, between 1983 and 1995, what were the criticisms of the MMM whilst the industrial revolution was there. There was one sentence which remains in my mind. One of the stalwarts of the Opposition then said: "*On est en train de faire de Maurice une nation de chemisiers.*" But, in the meantime, we had 300/400 factories, we became the third world producer of knitwear. We had a vision.

(Interruptions)

Exactement! We are a nation of builders; we brought factories to the remote areas of the land. We build a Cybercity where there were sugarcane, Madam Speaker. This is vision. At the same time, now, we have the vision of transforming Mauritius into a modern sophisticated country with a number of pillars as far as the economy is concerned.

Madam Speaker, my question is: Are we living better these last five years? Let me take the working class. My friends have talked a lot about a lot of things. How many countries in the world have had the courage to implement a minimum wage? Many liberal economies would say that a minimum wage disrupts the whole relationship between labour and capital, but we had the courage to bring this minimum wage/ Madam Speaker, we

brought this negative income tax, why? Because we wanted the downtrodden class to have a minimum to be able to live in dignity, to be able to live and to provide the basic needs to a family, to the children and when it comes to the elderly, I would not say what has happened since 2014. A lot of people have said. The pension has almost doubled, and we remember in 2014 we said, we had moved to Rs5,000, and we said that we had a couple of elderlies with the bonus, at the end of the month they will have Rs20,000. This is what we were saying. But now, Madam Speaker, the working class, we have always had the human touch when it comes to the working class. This working class, Madam Speaker, tomorrow, we are thinking about this portable gratuity. I remember we were in Cabinet from 2000 to 2005. Hon. Paul Béranger was the Prime Minister. We had ministerial committees then because we were thinking that there was this huge injustice that workers, who have been in a factory for years and years, they lost what they had contributed because they were laid out. And it took us 20 years to come to this juncture today, again because of this human touch that we think in terms of the workers. When we had the VRS in the sugar industry, the reform, again we thought about the workers. You know about this. You thought about the workers. This idea of having a compensation, gratuity well above what was they were due, having a plot of land of 7 perches, these were brilliant ideas then and it saved the industry. It saved the workers. This human touch has always been there, Madam Speaker. What about the common man. When we see all the measures which have been announced in this Budget, all that has been done in the other budgets, Madam Speaker, when it comes to social security facilities, handouts, when it comes to the Basic Retirement Pension, when it comes to the compensation which has been given over the last five years, Madam Speaker, it amounts to almost Rs90 billion which have been given to the workers of this country for the last five years. Almost Rs90 billion have been injected in the economy, and it has been given to the workers, the elderly and those who are in the social net, Madam Speaker. That's why the question is: are we living better? And, as a country, Madam Speaker, are we moving forward or are we going down the drain? Of course, the Opposition will say that we are worse off five years later.

Let me now come to the most important project in the history of Mauritius, the Metro. There is one question which has always been said. We had said that we will not implement the Metro Project when we came with our manifesto. This is true. But why did we say so? We said so because in 2012, when we left Government, hon. Jugnauth was the Minister of Finance, the Metro was estimated at Rs17 billion in 2012 and all of a sudden in 2014/15, it came up to 32 billion and when the loan structure was known, it would end up at Rs37

billion. That was why we had said that we would not implement that project at that given point in time, Madam Speaker, But then, when the hon. Prime Minister went to India, and we got the package of Rs9 billion of grant and Rs9 billion in terms of a soft loan with very interesting advantageous conditions, it meant that a Metro which was going to be implemented for 36/37 billion was being implemented for the cost of Rs9 billion as a line of credit for this Government. That's the whole difference. That's why we said we are implementing the project of the Metro, Madam Speaker. Now, there is something else. When they were implementing the Metro, they called it MLRT Mauritius Light Rail Transit System. When we were implementing the same Metro, they said it is a tramway.

Madam Speaker, we have to be serious. This Metro is costing us Rs1 billion per km. Today, 2,700 people are working 24 hours, 7 days a week, on 35 different sites. The other day, I had the opportunity to travel from Port Louis, through the whole track to Rose Hill. What has been achieved, Madam Speaker, is just unbelievable. I will just give you one example. Total utility lines which were diverted, 29km road, water, electricity, wastewater, 29 km of utility network have been diverted just for the CWA, 12 km of pipes were diverted, Madam Speaker; drains: 22 km of drains. This has nothing to do with the Metro itself. It was the shifting of the utilities and the reinstating of the utilities, Madam Speaker. Almost one km of retaining wall just for simple houses, just to make the sites stable for individual houses, we had one km of retaining wall.

Madam Speaker, the girders I have spoken, you can see them. When are they put? They are put between 10 o'clock at night and 2 o'clock in the morning. There are hundreds of them. So, this is a feat which has never been done before. Never ever, Madam Speaker! Never ever in the history of the rail industry, a Metro line of 12 km has been achieved in two years. This has never been done. In two years, this has never been done. And now we have had the idea of extending the Metro from Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes, and it will be done in the next one year. So, Quatre Bornes will have all the facilities of the Metro without having all the hassles of the construction. It is only later that we are going to do the building.

Madam Speaker, as I always said, the Metro is on time and on track. The first train boarded a ship on 06 June. The first train is due to Mauritius in the first week of July, and we are going to have three trucks. The train is 50 metres long, and it will be in three compartments, and we will travel from Port Louis to the depot. I will do that in the first week of July. But, Madam Speaker, what I would like at the end of July, I have talked to Larsen and Toubro, to have a bus with all the MLAs, all of us, going from Port Louis to Rose Hill to

see what has been achieved. All of us, we'll see together. Just for the Grand River North West Bridge...

(Interruptions)

The Grand River North West Bridge, Madam Speaker, is ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please no talking with the hon. Minister!

Mr Bodha: It is an invitation.

Just for the bridge over Grand River North West, it is 220 metres long and 80 metres high, and we have gone on the bridge as well.

Madam Speaker, the simulator has arrived and is being installed this week. The operation command centre will be ready by the end of August, when we are going to receive the other trains. We are bringing six train captains from Singapore because we do not want to have new captains, new trains on a new track. We want people who have experience and who can handle and manage the trains. So, we have six train captains coming from Singapore. We have recruited one from South Africa and one from India, and we are training about as many – eight – in Mauritius with the simulator to be able to operate the trains.

Madam Speaker, we also have the maintenance. The maintenance will be done by the Spanish company CAF for the trains, and they are coming in the weeks, maybe next week to sign the contract for the maintenance of the trains. So, everything is on time and everything is on track and hopefully, at the end of September, we will have a service between Rose Hill and Port Louis.

But Madam Speaker, the train is not enough. We are bringing the feeder buses and the feeder buses will be around three catchment areas of Beau Bassin, Rose Hill and Port Louis for a perimeter of between 5 and 9 kilometres. We are looking forward. We have made a request to the Prime Minister that these feeder buses be electric buses of about between 32 seater buses so that they can go in the catchment area on a circular route. They will be between ten and fifteen minutes because the trains are going to be - depending on the peak time or not - between 8, 10, 12 minutes. So, we will have, what is called, the first mile from home to the station and the last mile from the station to home and there was a launch ceremony of two electric buses in Rose Hill. My colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, was with us, and we are looking forward to being able to have those feeder buses. What we are

doing, Madam Speaker, is that those feeder buses are going to be free for those who are boarding the train.

The feeder buses are going to be free for those who are going to board the train, and we are working on an electronic ticketing system not only for the metro and the feeder buses, but for all the buses in Mauritius so that we can have a more accountable management of the free travel budget of Rs1.2 billion which has been announced in this Budget.

Madam Speaker, I also said we have the extension to Quatre Bornes in September 2020, and then we are looking forward to the last bit which will be between Quatre Bornes and Curepipe. Madam Speaker, the metro, as I always said, is an investment of about Rs18-Rs19 billion but, in the course of the development of this new modern transport system, we want to transform the whole urban landscape from Curepipe to Port Louis. We will start in Victoria Square in the days to come, in the weeks to come.

I wanted also to say that to understand because we have always been saying why is this project taking so much time, Madam Speaker. We had to consider another holding area for 600 buses to be able to do the works in Victoria. We had to consider the relocation of 1000 hawkers, and then we had the taxi people. So, we had to see to it that gradually we relocate all those services and there is no disruption in the livelihood of these people so that the works can start, Madam Speaker.

In this Budget, the Prime Minister has provided a soft loan of Rs300,000 to hawkers who want to take this loan and buy their own stall. We are going to have 1,000 stalls there and the rent is going to be either they pay the rent of Rs4,000 or they pay their own loan because they will be the owner of their stall, Madam Speaker.

You know, I would like to pay tribute here to one person, Mr Hyder Raman who is the president of the federation of hawkers. Since the very beginning, he believed that the project could be implemented, and he has been with us to implement the project, to do the relocation of the hawkers and we are looking forward to work starting very soon at Victoria square, Madam Speaker.

Let us come now to the other terminal of Immigration Square. This is a formidable challenge for a number of reasons: the proximity of the Aapravasi Ghat Trust Fund and the Aapravasi Ghat itself - the World Heritage site and all that go with it to be able to preserve the universal heritage value of this monument. We fought for it at UNESCO for it to be classified and we are working on how to be able to transform this whole area. I am working

with my colleague, the Minister of Arts and culture, with UNESCO to be able to see to it that we will not only bring a modern new city asset, but also we do it in line with the obligations of UNESCO.

In fact, an Action Plan has been completed almost. Where we are going to have the Aapravasi Ghat, we will have the terminal, we will have the slavery museum, and we will also have some other cultural developmental projects. This Action Plan has already been mooted out. We already have the terms of reference of the expert from UNESCO who was going to write on the heritage impact assessment, the visual impact assessment. Once we have the experts, the experts will provide us with all the guidelines that we should respect to be able to implement this project, Madam Speaker. This project is going to cost more than Rs3 billion and transform this part of the city, Madam Speaker. That is why I am saying: are we moving forward or are we going down the drill? We are moving forward, Madam Speaker. People who have not been to this country, when they will come back five years later, they will ask themselves whether they are still in Mauritius because this is the thorough deep-rooted transformation that we are bringing to Mauritius, Madam Speaker.

I would like to say a few words on the Terre Rouge-Verdun issue. Madam Speaker, it has taken us four years to repair that stretch. It was 80 metres on six lanes and 200 metres and it collapsed. You know, Madam Speaker, in France they had a similar problem. It took them eight years to repair it because, first of all, you have to understand what happened. We have to understand to be able to provide the right solution. It took us time. You know what is the right solution, Madam Speaker, 235,000 tonnes of filling. It is 10,000 lorry loads to do the fill and because the substratum was weak, so we had to fill on the rock structure. But to contain the mountain which was moving, because we have two elements, we had to build 190 pillars of one diameter wide and 25 metre inside the terrain. All this has been done to the cost Rs400 m., Madam Speaker. Two lanes have been opened and in weeks to come, the road is going to be used as it was used in the past and this is a showcase in geotechnical development, Madam Speaker. It has taken the time it has taken, but we have delivered on something which will stay there and which has reached a solution.

Hon. Osman Mahomed raised the issue of damages. The document, that is the enquiry, the report, is a 400-page document. The State Law Office is working on it, advising us on how to lodge a case against it.

Madam Speaker, should I speak of all the other projects? I do not think so. There are so many projects that we do not have time to do the site visits. There are so many projects for the NDU. Projects which have already been completed, we have not yet opened; the Pointe aux Sables bus station. We opened one in Piton, the bridge in Albion. There are projects which are on and which I have never been to, La Croisette, Cap Malheureux. We are starting a new bypass in Ebène because we have a huge congestion in Ebène. When you come from the South, you have to go inside Ebène to take the Terre Rouge - Verdun. The project is on, and we are starting the works in the weeks to come, Madam Speaker. I said for Quatre Bornes - because the Metro is going to go into Quatre Bornes; from St Jean to Quatre Bornes - we are going to build an overpass at Hillcrest. The contract has been allocated and the works are starting in the weeks to come.

In the meantime, Madam Speaker, the roundabout of Phoenix is shaping up. And there is something, Madam Speaker; to achieve this, the traffic is on a daily basis the same. We are not disrupting the life of people. The volume of traffic is the same, but we are building. The flow is the same. They have some problems, we may have some problems, of course, but when this will emerge out of the earth, Madam Speaker, it will be again colossal. And this is going to end up in a year. So, we are going to do the piling, and we are going to put the structures in the weeks and the months to come. When it comes down now, we go further down, we come to Sorèze, this famous bridge of over 350 metres from Coromandel to Sorèze. Works are being done on the two sides at Sorèze and Coromandel and when it comes to the bridge, Madam Speaker, it took us six months of testing to understand the terrain. You cannot just build a bridge of 350 metres. It took us six months of geotechnical testing and we have finalised the design. We are starting the works in the weeks to come because the initial design provided that we go 25 metre deep. Now, we are going to go 35 metre deep, Madam Speaker, and we are going to consolidate the clips so that there is no rock fall, Madam Speaker. These are the main projects. But we have so many projects which are being done at the same time.

Madam Speaker, let me now say a few things about where are we moving as a nation. We believe in democracy. On both sides of the House, we say that we believe in democracy, that we have a dynamic democracy, we have elections, we have changing governments, but this is done in a very mature manner. But then, when we say that we are believers in democracy, when we refer to it each and every time and say that we are committed to it, but we are proud to advance the principles and values of democracy. One of the pillars of

democracy, Madam Speaker, is the Judiciary, and it has to be independent. But if you believe in democracy, we have to believe in the Judiciary, otherwise, there is no democracy. If you believe in the Judiciary, we know that in the Judiciary you have a hierarchy of Courts and you have the Apex Court, the Court of last resort. And if you believe in the democracy, you believe in the Judiciary and you believe in the decision of the Apex Court, you have to agree, you have to accept the final decision. It is in this light that the MedPoint case has to be put. We went to the Privy Council. So, if we believe in democracy and the Judiciary, we have to believe in what the Privy Council has said, what the Appellate Court has said in Mauritius. This is the Court of last resort in Mauritius. But when it comes to the Apex Court in the system, in our Constitution and when we say we are believers of democracy, we have to believe in the Judiciary and the Apex Court. So, when there is a decision which has been taken at the highest level and that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has been cleared, declared innocent, we have to accept it, otherwise, we do not believe in our system. We cannot continue to get political mileage from it all the time. You cannot be a winner all the time. I am making an appeal that if we say that we believe in democracy and the independence of the Judiciary and the Apex Court, we have to believe in the decision of the Apex Court and not come back again and again on the issue and bring it back for political reasons. This is the way I see it, Madam Speaker. That is the way it has to be.

Madam Speaker, it is important for us, as a democracy, to believe in our institutions, to believe in our Apex Court, our Court of last resort and in the decisions of the Courts of last resort. In the same manner, Madam Speaker, we have the two other cases, Betamax and CT Power. The two judgments bring a very crucial issue into perspective, Madam Speaker, the issue of public policy and the issue of public interest. Whatever we do, as a Government, as a Minister, as a parastatal body, should be done in the public interest, Madam Speaker. What have the two judgments shown? The two judgments rendered by the highest instances of our judicial system concerning decisions taken during its mandate, have proved that this Government has passed the test of any democratic society, that is, the test of public interest. We were right in doing what we did. We were right in rescinding the contract of Betamax, and we were right to appeal against the judgment that was given by the Supreme Court in the case of CT Power. I am not going to go on the merits of the case because there is one thing, Madam Speaker, when we are at the helm of a country, we have to pay attention to a number of principles and values. Those values and principles should guide us, but the basic tenet should be public interest, Madam Speaker. As I said earlier, we have to preserve the integrity

and respect of our institutions. There is a comparison between what the former Government did and what we have done. Often, it was said that it was witch hunting, that we challenged a number of decisions, like in the Metro, we did not go to Court in the Metro, because there was the economic sense in not doing that project.

But when it comes to public interest, we have all the time to bear in mind that the interest of our people, the future of our people, this should be the guiding principle and I think that, as I have said, public interest is and should be the guiding star of any Government claiming itself to be democratic, and this Government has set standards for future ones to follow in the years to come. In so doing, we have made our contribution towards political history, Madam Speaker. We can't bind the nation. I will say one word about this.

There is a huge debate about the foreign currency reserves which were used to pay the debt. The hon. Prime Minister answered a Private Notice Question. I am sure he will take up this matter again in his résumé and conclusion. What I would like to say is that during those years we have been here, the total reserves have been multiplied almost by two, on the one hand. On the other hand, you had debt, a debt burden in foreign currency. So, what was done? I believe it was a pragmatic decision regarding the debt burden, and it was also a prudent management of our funds as regards foreign currency. It was prudent management of foreign currency, and it was a pragmatic decision as regards the debt burden. Now, what is provided for in the law, the hon. Prime Minister will explain how this will be done as regards the legal procedure, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, there was a question I asked, how strong is our voice on the international scene today. Can little Mauritius have a big voice on the international scene today? I was in Brussels; there was a Council of Ministers of the ACP on the day the resolution was to be voted in New York. In fact, the Council of Ministers gave its support and there was an article in 'The Guardian' - that was the eve - and the 'The Guardian' said that UK may end up having a support in single digit at the UN - less than 10. But I said this is unbelievable, unacceptable, because we know the pressure, the threats we have been enduring. We know the pressure which was put on a number of States in Africa, in Latin America. We know how strong the lobby of the United States and the UK can be. And little Mauritius, we have a few Embassies, a few Consulates, how can we manage to have our voice heard, Madam Speaker?

I also remember Sir Anerood Jugnauth, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor saying that he received a delegation of somebody from the Pentagon, the State of Defence, the State Department, who told him: 'What you are doing should not be done', and threatened Mauritius for consequences which could be terrible for Mauritius. But then, Madam Speaker, that's why my question is, how strong can be the voice of Mauritius on the international scene? I am sure that this victory of this resolution was one of the greatest achievements of a small island State like Mauritius, Madam Speaker.

During those five years, we celebrated 50 years of independence, but it is also the triumph of freedom over colonialism, because the way the motion was mooted, it meant the decolonisation of the continent of Africa and we got the support of the whole continent.

I would like to pay tribute to the irresistible determination of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. He was at the constitutional conference in 1965 at Lancaster House, and so many years later, to be able to see this resolution passed. I think this must be a great achievement and I am sure he must be happy about it. Because he had one thing, he had an undying commitment that the Chagos Archipelago had to be restored to Mauritius. He had this undying commitment, he owed it to the nation. I would like here also to pay tribute to the Chagossian community who have borne so great pain.

You know, the boat which left the Chagos was made to leave in the dark, for them not to see the island receding. Some committed suicide on board, some threw themselves in the water from the deck and they were all struck by what we call this: they just stayed there and they stared at the sea waiting for the mythical ship to come to take them back to the Chagos.

So, it's a tribute to the determination of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, to the Prime Minister and all those who have fought. I think the legal team did a fantastic job, as well. The lobbying of our Embassy also did us a lot of good. I would like to pay tribute to the leaders of the Chagossian community, Lisette Talate, Charlesia Alexis, Fernand Mandarin, they are no more. Hopefully, now in this Budget, there is a line for Rs50 m. for a resettlement programme for the future of Chagos.

It is symbolical, but it is powerfully symbolical, Madam Speaker. Of course, it is symbolical and we are looking forward to a voyage to the Chagos Archipelago, not only with Mauritius, the Chagossian people, but with international observers and those who are close to this cause, we are looking forward to this. This will happen, Madam Speaker, and we will make history again.

Madam Speaker, coming to how strong our voice is on the international scene, we hosted two conferences in these last days. One was on maritime security in the Indian Ocean and the other one was the meeting, the plenary session of the Contact Group to combat piracy off the coast of Somalia which was created by a resolution of the United Nations.

Let me come back to the maritime security issue, Madam Speaker. Mauritius hosted the second edition of that conference. The Indian Ocean, today, has become geopolitically the most strategic ocean on earth. 50% of petroleum products go through the Indian Ocean, 80% of Africa's trade goes through the Indian Ocean. India, China, South Korea, Japan have their oil from the Detroit of Hormuz, from Port Said, from the Middle East. And on this conference, the issue was how can we patrol, how can we control such a huge area of 70 million kilometres square of which little Mauritius has 2.7 million. So, this maritime security issue is going to be a formidable challenge in the years to come. And today, we have the EU Naval Forces, we have the Combined Maritime Forces: India, China and Japan, patrolling that area, because if there is no security, there is no economic or human activity. We have to be able to rise up to the challenge of the surveillance of this huge area.

Now, little Mauritius hosted that conference and under the Indian Ocean Commission, it has been decided that the structure around which this security, all the efforts of about all the countries, all the international organisations like the United Nations Office combating drugs and crime, the structure around which this can be done is going to be the Indian Ocean Commission based in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, we are thinking of having the third edition of this conference next year, and we are also thinking of having a Maritime Security Conference worldwide, a summit, and Mauritius can take the lead, Madam Speaker. We know that it is very difficult for us to do the surveillance of the coast of Mauritius. But Mauritius is taking the lead and all the countries of the region, and the countries as far as Norway, Denmark, Danish shipping Maersk - you have seen the containers - they have 2,000 ships crossing this part of the world in one year.

China presented some figures, Madam Speaker. China assisted, in the last 10 years, 6,600 ships to cross that stretch, Madam Speaker. China has 160 ships at all times patrolling the area. Mauritius is going to be the centre of all this, and we have to play this role, and we will be able to organise what we call 'the legacy of these 10 years' of fighting piracy and

addressing the issue of maritime crime. We will be the custodians of this legacy of 10 years and everything will be done here, in Mauritius, Madam Speaker.

To come back to how strong is the voice of Mauritius, there was the Council of Ministers of the ACP which met with the Council ACP/EU and there was one issue which was raised is the issue of tax matters, that is, jurisdictions where the European Union has come up with a list where you are either in the grey list or in the black list or in the white list.

And there, Madam Speaker, in order to be able to see to it that the interest of Mauritius, the *acquis* are preserved, we put up a very strong case with all the ACP, and the strong case was that we have an international body under the guidance of the United Nations setting up the criteria, because today you have criteria from the OECD, you have the criteria from the European Union, you have the criteria from Member States which put jurisdictions like Mauritius in a very difficult position because there is no visibility. And if there is no visibility, you will have no investment and if there is no investment, then your financial sector cannot prosper. So, we are looking forward, we are going to work with the ACP to have at the International level, at the UN level a body which will be able to regulate international tax jurisdiction, Madam Speaker.

We also had the dialogue with the European Union, my colleagues were with me. Here, we had the eight representatives of the European Union and they were here to be able to provide with Mauritius the guidelines for the years to come. The Cotonou Agreement is coming to an end, and we have to think of the after-Cotonou, and the European Union is proposing to have a foundation agreement and three pillars, one with Africa, one with the Pacific and one with the Caribbean.

Madam Speaker, I have said that we can have a very strong voice on the international scene, we should, and this can be done because Mauritius has shown the way in these four/five months, we had the visit of the President of Mozambique, we had the visit of the President of Kenya, we had the visit of the President of Madagascar, we had the visit of the Vice-President of Nigeria. We have, in this conference last week, that is, last days, we had 200 delegates who came from abroad. We have international organisations like the Monetary Fund, the World Bank. They are setting up their regional branches here. Why? Because Mauritius is emerging as this platform, not only for banking, but a platform for constructive dialogue to find solutions to multilateral problems, Madam Speaker. This is the way forward for Mauritius, that is, to be a platform for dialogue where countries from different parts of the

world can come, sit down, address issues, find solutions and use Mauritius as a base, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we have, I will not say a lot about education, but there is something which has happened, and it has happened so smoothly that we have not even felt it. You know, any reform in the educational system is always very difficult to be able to implement. Any reform in the education system is always very difficult to implement because it touches people in every household, the children, the parents. I would like to congratulate my colleague for the Nine- Year Schooling reform. This has been done very smoothly. Nobody has felt it and we are transforming the future of our children, Madam Speaker, and this is being implemented.

Now, we have the tertiary education which is free, but above all there is something which is very important, Madam Speaker, and I would like to congratulate the Prime Minister on that is the focus which has been put on research and innovation. Rs100 m., Madam Speaker, and this is the way forward for Mauritius, research and innovation.

We have to free the genius of the Mauritian mind and the skills of our people and our young people. My colleague also was very eager to launch the first satellite. This is the show of this innovation, Madam Speaker. Let me tell you one thing. The UK has 70 m. people, so it's about one per cent of the world population, but it's budget for research is 26% of the world budget. And UK is well advanced because it's innovation and research which show you the way towards progress and towards the new jobs of tomorrow, the new skills of tomorrow. There was a Bill which were passed the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council Bill. This is the way for Mauritius to proceed at the University level, at the Polytechnics level and in the Research Centres, Madam Speaker.

We are coming very soon with the Intellectual Property Bill. This Bill has been around for the last 10 years, but Madam Speaker, I am grateful to the Attorney General, we have now done what we call 'the legal scrubbing' and we are going to come forward with this Bill soon, and it will be introduced in in Parliament. This will also change the way we do business and it has to go side by side with the Innovation and Research Bill, Madam Speaker.

When it comes to innovation, when it comes to the new sectors, IT, the future of Mauritius would lie on these new pillars, the emerging technologies, the Internet of Things, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, the right access to higher education but also in the field of research. Often, on Wednesdays, when we sit down in our constituency, you have an old

lady coming with her son, who is a graduate. The son has an A4 envelope with his CV inside. But when you talk to him, and you talk to the lady who has never been to school, she is more motivated, she is more ambitious and she is fighting for him. We know this on Wednesdays, but we have to change this, Madam Speaker. We need to have our young people to be dynamic and to come to ask us what are the new areas where they can have a job tomorrow, what are the new areas where they can start a small business, a starter, where they can get the money, the mentoring to be able to do that. So this old lady, as I said, she is very motivated. She is asking you, *dekh beta*, what can you do? And he is sitting there, because he has had free education at the primary level, free education at the secondary level, he went to the University free and he comes with his CV. And when we ask what do you want, he says: '*guetter ou mem*'. Madam Speaker, we have to change this. And to change it, we should have focus higher education, we should have research, we should have innovation and we should tell our people - we have brilliant people. We have one who just created the robot here. Yes, Diya! Diya shows the light, Madam Speaker.

So, there is something to be done because the Mauritian DNA - we are a land of people who have been trying to find out how to prosper because we have nothing, we have only our human resources. And we should bank on that, we should see to it that the Mauritian genius has all the facilities to be able to blossom, Madam Speaker. And this Mauritian genius, this new generation coming, I am sure, that they have faith in the Prime Minister. This is where we have to win the hearts and minds of the new generation, and the Prime Minister can do that, Madam Speaker.

I would say only one word on the Opposition. The Opposition has never been as divided as it is. I have rarely found one subject matter, one issue on which they all spoke with one voice. It was very rare. We have been in the Opposition, we have sat there and I have always said, sometimes it takes five years to cross this bit.

(Interruptions)

Sometimes it takes five years to cross this bit, some cross it fast. But it takes five years and it takes the blessing of the people, of the nation for you to cross this. We have been in the Opposition, but we have never been like this, as I said, with a zoom scrutinising on small bits and pieces. When I have gone through all the criticisms on this Budget, there were only two issues. One was about the bank and that issue was taken up by everybody. The second one was whether the economy was doing as well as it could. That's all. The rest is

rhetoric, comments on comments, on scandals. The rest is what we say has always been there, it is written. And I will tell you one thing. In their speeches, we will hear : '*Vivement que ce gouvernement s'en aille, vivement que les élections arrivent et vivement qu'un autre gouvernement prenne le pouvoir pour pouvoir donner à ce pays le destin qu'il mérite.*' You will hear this, Madam Speaker.

I will now talk about the Welfare State. I met the Nordic Minister of Foreign Affairs yesterday, and when I told her about how our Welfare State operates, about free education, about healthcare, about social security, we are the only country in the world with a basic retirement pension. No one else in the world offers this, Madam Speaker. I have forgotten about the rice and flour, about the gas cylinder which is being subsidised, Rs1.7 billion. We are the only country in the world to do this. This country is a very blessed country, Madam Speaker. And to be able to move, I will come now to my first question: the promise of our nation's birth, of our founding fathers. Our leaders, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, hon. Deputy Prime Minister, they are bold and courageous. They take bold decisions, bold policies, but they remain the servants of the people. Service to the nation, public interest, this should be and this is the rule of our game, Madam Speaker. The task before us is formidable. We have to be firm, we have to be resolute, we have to be united against all odds, Madam Speaker, because we need to have the optimism to be able to see to it that our people see the future with hope.

Madam Speaker, we have to unite and this is a formidable challenge, unite the people, see to it with the minimum wage that everybody has a fair share after he has worked; with the universal pension, that everybody has a fair share to live in dignity; with a better medical treatment to be able to live longer; a better quality of life. We have to have the sharing. Madam Speaker, we should grasp our collective future with both hands. We should honour the promise of those who created this nation and reach our future with confidence and hope.

I thank the hon. Prime Minister for giving me this opportunity to say a few words on the Budget and a few thoughts about what is being done. Mauritius is being transformed in a way never been in the past. I also thank the Deputy Prime Minister for being in an alliance. You know, once you have an alliance, the second word which goes with it is '*cassure*'. We have lived through that, so many alliances. *Quand il y a une alliance, quand il y aura la cassure?* And I thank the Deputy Prime Minister for being with us, for having stood steadfast. Yesterday, I was talking to him; I asked him where he was sitting in this august Assembly. Once, he stood up, and he resigned on an issue of a passport for Sol Kerzner and

the MMM lost that election after that. But as a man of principle, he stood up and he did it. This is, as I always said, if you believe in democracy, you have to believe in the principles of democracy. My tribute also goes to Sir Anerood Jugnauth for all he has done and for all the guidance he has given, not only to the MSM, to all the alliance he has done, he has been through, but to the nation, Madam Speaker. We have a magnificent diversity in this land and despite our differences and the magnitude of the challenges, I am sure that we will come back again.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bérenger!

(4.17 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Madam Speaker, I shall start by looking at the state of the economy and at the solutions to the problems and threats *du moment*, as proposed in the Budget Speech.

In the Budget Speech, Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance painted a very rosy picture of the present state of the economy. He says therein that since the last elections, I quote –

“The results speak for themselves.”

The economy, I quote –

“is on stronger foundations.”

GDP growth is, I quote –

“firmly on a rising trend.”

But let us look at the facts. Over the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, GDP growth averaged 3.7% per year, whereas it had grown by 4.3% per year over the 10 preceding years. In the Budget Speech, it is estimated to grow by 3.9%, this year, in 2019. I do hope that this turns out to be the case, but going by the figures available since the beginning of the year, including tourism, I believe GDP growth will be slightly less than 3.7%. I believe that the GDP growth will be slightly less than 3.7%, this year, in 2019.

Inflation, true, remains subdued due mainly to depressed prices of oil and commodities. The falling unemployment rate needs to be read in the context of the ageing population. Thus,

employment creation remains poor and underemployment is significant, whilst the unemployment rate amongst the youth is more than 25%.

The public debt worries everybody, including the International Monetary Fund. When all debts committed and not only disbursed as well as all funds borrowed from the Indian Exim Bank and the China Exim Bank are included, the truth is that public debt exceeds 70% of GDP as at June 2019.

Madam Speaker, the budget deficit for 2019-2020 will be more than 5% of GDP when we include the Special Funds as well as all off-budget expenditure. What worries me most is the situation concerning the balance of trade, balance of the current account deficit and the balance of payments. The balance of trade and the current account deficit are continuing to deteriorate. Exports are down and going down! The balance of payments surplus went down by nearly 50% in 2018 compared to 2017. Balance of payments deficit were recorded in the last two quarters of 2018. Foreign Exchange Reserves declined from Rs230 billion in June 2018 to Rs218 billion in December 2018. As a result, Madam Speaker, any significant drop in capital inflows into the country would harm the balance of payments itself. And I must say, whilst I was listening to hon. Bodha, the latest MCB Focus reached me, and it's frightening what I have just said, especially this part on the external trade, external figures, Madam Speaker. If we look at it, all three figures, the balance of trade - just look at the figures - is going down still further this year dramatically; the current account deficit as well. And the overall balance of payments, according to the MCB - and I think they are right - which was more than 6% in 2017, went down in 2018 and is expected to 3.4%, and the figure is that the overall balance of payments for 2019 is going to be only 1.9%. What I had worked out disturbed me, but these latest figures are very, very disturbing, Madam Speaker.

As worrying as the figures, which I just mentioned, is the fact that the productive sectors of the economy - the sugar sector, the manufacturing sector, even tourism and even the financial sector - are all in trouble. I have to say, on the other hand, that the solutions proposed in the Budget Speech to the problems and threats I have just referred to, are not serious. I am talking about the economy, I am talking about fundamentals. The solutions proposed are not serious at all and will not put Mauritius on a sustainable path.

In regard to the public debt - I am not going to come back again now to this idea of the Rs18 billion of the Special Reserve Bank of Mauritius - the idea of using Rs18 billion

from the Special Reserve Fund of the Bank of Mauritius is, according to me, both misguided and dangerous. The hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance rightly explained Monday last, replying to a PNQ, that there are three things at the Bank of Mauritius that need to be kept separately –

- (i) the Foreign Exchange Reserves of the country;
- (ii) the General Reserves Fund of the Bank of Mauritius, to which are allocated at the end of every financial year 15% of the profits, if any, of the Bank of Mauritius, the rest being transferred to Government, to the Consolidated Fund, that is, to Government, and
- (iii) Madam Speaker, a Special Reserve Fund built up from the gains or losses in any financial year arising from changes in the valuation of its assets or liabilities.

The Bank of Mauritius Act has it that the Special Reserve Fund can only be used for monetary purposes. It is proposed in the Budget Speech that the Bank of Mauritius Act will be amended so that the Special Reserve Fund be used to repay part of the country's public debt.

The Special Reserve Fund stood at Rs13 billion in June 2018, but with the depreciation of the rupee of more than 3% as per the dollar, a depreciation of more than 3% from June 2018 to June 2019, this Fund stands at Rs20 m. at present, as the hon. Prime Minister said, replying to the PNQ. And it is proposed that Rs18 billion therefrom will be used to repay part of the public debt of the country.

Madam Speaker, after the 3% depreciation of the rupee I have just mentioned, the fact is that, since March 2019, the rupee is being made to depreciate further. The whole idea of using Rs18 billion from the Special Reserve Fund of the Bank of Mauritius to repay part of the public debt of the country is both misguided and dangerous. It sends a wrong signal concerning the independence of the Bank of Mauritius. It will be perceived as a sign of despair and, above all, Madam Speaker, it will be tantamount to *zouer ar difer* because those Rs18 billion might very well be needed in the near future to meet losses incurred to defend the rupee or to help the country face any external shock or financial crisis.

Madam Speaker, it is to be noted that, in its last report on Mauritius, the IMF wrote, I quote –

“Strong and independent institutions are key to overcoming policy challenges. Staff (...)”

that is, the IMF staff

“urged the authorities - the Mauritian Authorities - to maintain strong and independent institutions to remain an attractive investment and employment destination.”

We know the very diplomatic language which the IMF, the World Bank and even the MCB Focus use – normal. When they feel that it is required for them to put that in a report, it means a lot, and it should be listened to very carefully.

For the above reasons, Madam Speaker, I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance not to go ahead with this idea and, instead, to request from the IMF a study to determine the adequate level of capital that the Bank of Mauritius should maintain as a safeguard against adverse risks and without compromising its ability to carry out its statutory objectives. The coincidence has it, Madam Speaker, that, in India, right now, a High-Powered Committee chaired by a former Governor of its Central Bank has been carrying out just such a study for India since December 2018.

Madam Speaker, in the Budget Speech, it is also proposed that 11 billion of Government non-strategic assets be privatised over the next two years - 5 billion this financial year, 2019/2020, and 6 billion in 2020/2021 - to reduce the level of Government debt, but without any indication as to which assets we are talking about. We should be given an indication thereof, and I have strong doubts that, as in the past, this project will be realised...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, in the case of the sugar industry, all planters will benefit, this year, from a price of Rs25,000 per ton of sugar for the first 60 tons of sugar accrued to them, and the assistance of the World Bank has been sought to provide strategic policy options for making the sugar industry sustainable. Replying to a PNQ last Tuesday, the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry stated that the Rs25,000 assistance scheme would cost Rs650 m. and that the CEB, meaning ultimately the consumers, would contribute Rs500 m. I was a bit surprised by a comment; that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was satisfied that it is the CEB that will contribute. The CEB will take this out of our pockets. When the CEB makes profits, it is because what it is charging to consumers is so calculated. So, let us look at the truth. Small

planters must be helped, we all agree. But, in this case, what I think happened is that Government tried to find the money here and there. And when it couldn't find the money here and there, *la solution de facilité*; get the CEB to take out of its profits because it is making huge profits, it has made billions of profits these recent years, therefore to get it to contribute Rs500 m. The planters deserve it, but this is going to come out of the pockets of consumers and is going to increase the electricity tariff by so much or prevent a decrease by so much. Let us keep that in mind because it can't be done every year either, Madam Speaker. The planters have not been told if this Rs25,000 assistance scheme will be renewed next year - we have not heard a word on that - if the price of sugar remains depressed, and the fact is that the small planters have expressed their dissatisfaction with all this.

Madam Speaker, in the case of the manufacturing sector, it is proposed that the Investment Support Programme (ISP) of the Economic Development Board be converted into a company, ISP Ltd, with Rs1 billion to be made available. So says the Budget Speech. But from what I have seen, with only, not Rs1 billion but Rs1 m. being provided for in the Estimates for this year, for 2019/2020, as equity and, of course, with no reference to the stimulus packages of the past.

What disturbs me a lot, Madam Speaker, is what is proposed for the tourism sector. The financial sector and the ocean blue economy, I find totally inadequate to really have those sectors come out of the trouble they are in and move on a development path. I believe that what is proposed for these sectors is totally inadequate.

What is said in the Budget Speech on climate change and the environment at a time when the issue has become urgent worldwide is also not serious, Madam Speaker. We know that the so-called nationally determined contribution of Mauritius, *c'est-à-dire les engagements pris par l'île Maurice vis-à-vis des Nations unies en 2015 sont complètement dépassés*. The nationally determined contribution of Mauritius, at this stage, proposed reducing by 30% our greenhouse gas emissions by year 2030, at a time when Finland - where the left wing Government has just taken over a few days ago - has just pledged to become carbon-neutral by 2035 - a formidable challenge - and when the Pope, on Friday 14 June last, declared a climate emergency and appealed to governments to act urgently to keep the rise of temperature to 1.5 degrees instead of the 2 degrees in the 2015 Paris Agreement. There is also, in the Budget Speech, no mention of the SIDS/ AOSIS (SIDS, Small Island Developing States and AOSIS, Alliance of Small Island States) in which Mauritius played a leading role

in January 2005 with the UN SIDs Conference held in Mauritius, in the presence of the then Secretary General, Kofi Annan, leading role, which, unfortunately, we lost after 2005.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few things about the Chagos and Tromelin, Agalega and St Brandon and on Rodrigues, especially after the insane things that we heard in this House. The MMM has every reason to be very proud in regard to the Chagos, the Chagossians and Tromelin. We started the struggle to get back the Chagos. We, the MMM, started the struggle to get back the Chagos, and we were the first to support the Chagossians, here, in Mauritius. We obtained that the definition of the State of Mauritius in our legislation be amended to include the Chagos and Tromelin. I remember, those who were in the 1965 Constitutional Conference, how they fought, how they resisted this move by the MMM, and we got Government finally to do it, to amend the definition of our State. I will not say who it was, but I remember a Senior Minister saying that the UK had the right to do that. We had to fight hard to get that. That is in the case of Chagos and Tromelin. But in the case of Tromelin, Madam Speaker, until 1978, Madagascar claimed sovereignty over five so-called *Iles Eparses*. Now, Madagascar calls the islands *les Iles malgaches de l’océan Indien*. Rightly so! Until 1978, Madagascar claimed sovereignty over five so-called *Iles Eparses*, including Tromelin. I obtained, in 1978, in Tananarive, that Madagascar would stop claiming sovereignty over Tromelin, would support our sovereignty claim over Tromelin. And that is why, Madam Speaker, in 1979, Madagascar got the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution, supporting the sovereignty of Madagascar over the so-called *Iles Eparses*, excluding Tromelin. And since then, Madagascar supports our claim of sovereignty over Tromelin, and we support the claim of Madagascar over the four other islands, that is, Europa, Basass da India, Juan de Nova and Les Glorieuses.

Madam Speaker, we hope that the UK will soon open discussions with Mauritius to implement the recent International Court of Justice ruling on the Chagos. But again, once more, we request that the present Government makes clear what is its stand on Tromelin. We, for our part, we wish that France agrees to discuss the sovereignty issue. We should leave behind the so-called *co-gestion* proposed in the past. France, we hope, will agree to discuss with Mauritius sovereignty over Tromelin or would agree to jointly refer the issue to the International Court of Justice for Arbitration.

Madam Speaker, in the case of Agalega, we give all our support to our compatriots in Agalega and will be, with many others, ever vigilant. It is regrettable, Madam Speaker, that, in the Budget Speech, no mention at all is made to St Brandon, part of our Archipelago State.

We are entitled to know what is the situation there these days, because *des dégâts irréparables* can be caused to St Brandon if we are not concerned. I am very worried and, therefore, we are entitled to know what is the situation in St Brandon these days and what is proposed for the protection and development of St Brandon.

In the case of Rodrigues, the MMM is rightly proud of the role we played in 2000-2005 to grant real, genuine autonomy to Rodrigues and to entrench, to enshrine that autonomy in the Constitution of the country. We shall always stand by our Rodriguan sisters and brothers and shall pay close attention to their reaction to the Rs3.8 billion budget for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly provided for in this year's Budget.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words on drugs and corruption. Drugs, and especially synthetic drugs, are killing our people, especially our youth. Let me say clearly that the MMM is not satisfied at all the way the Lam Shang Leen Commission Report is being implemented, or rather not implemented, and the way the Lam Shang Leen Commission Report is not being followed up as it should. Concerning corruption, we are not surprised that not a word is to be found in the Budget Speech referring to corruption, especially considering the numerous cases of *scandale* and *népotisme* we have witnessed since the last elections. For its part, the MMM takes great pride in the fact that concerning every *scandale* of the recent past, be it the MedPoint affair, the Betamax case or the CT Power saga, the MMM has been the only Party to have been on the right side of things on each and every occasion.

Madam Speaker, we take note that no reference has been made in the Budget Speech to the law concerning the financing of political parties, at a time when money politics threatens democracy itself. I hope that, when summing-up, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance will confirm that this piece of legislation will come before the next General Elections. The MMM also requests that the declaration of assets of Members of Parliament be made public before the forthcoming elections, as provided for in the Declaration of Assets Act itself.

Madam Speaker, let me end on the issue whether the present Budget is *électoraliste* or not and on elections. The Budget, it is a fact, contains, numerous *électoraliste, la bouche doux* measures. Not surprising, since elections are coming! But the fact is that the Budget contains numerous *électoraliste, la bouche doux* measures, and we all know that it is the last Budget of the present Government before General Elections, just as we know that the present

Assembly will stand dissolved on 22 December 2019 if it has not been dissolved before. I believe, Madam Speaker, the fact is that, despite the *cadeau la bouche doux* I have just mentioned and contained in the Budget, there has been something of a crisis of expectation of the Government's doing. There has been something of a crisis of expectations because the Government had raised expectations, especially concerning old-age pensions and the PRB.

Then, Madam Speaker, there are the *faux cadeaux*. In the case of the decrease in the price of diesel and *l'essence*, the population knows that excise duty, now being brought down, was increased massively in 2015, disguised as a four-fold increase in the levy charged by the State Trading Corporation on diesel and *essence*. And in the case of the decrease in the price of cooking gas and the so-called 1.7 billion subsidy on the price of rice, flour and cooking gas, the population knows that this sum is, in fact, collected by the STC through levies, again, on the price of diesel and *l'essence*. This is collected by the STC from the consumers and travelling public.

In the case of the 6,000 housing units to be constructed on 16 sites over the next three years in high-rise buildings, with a maximum of six floors, again, the population knows that only 1,283 housing units have been constructed and delivered by the present Government and that those 6,000 units are supposed to be built on a PPP basis by the private sector, and we know what will be the result of that, Madam Speaker.

Finally, Madam Speaker, there are *les déçus et oubliés* of the Budget, especially the fishermen, the artists, the taxi operators and the SMEs. Madam Speaker, this is the last Budget of the present Government. As per the Constitution, the present Assembly will stand dissolved on 22 December 2019, that is, five years as from the first sitting of the Assembly after the last General Elections. So, the present Assembly will stand dissolved on 22 December 2019, if it is not dissolved before. But now, Government has had the nomination day and polling day for a by-election in Constituency No. 7, Piton/Rivière du Rempart, scheduled for 17 August and 13 November. If there is a by-election and a candidate is elected on 13 November, he/she will stop being a Member of the National Assembly a month later, on 22 December. This would be ridiculous, but also a waste of precious public funds.

Madam Speaker, hardly anyone believes that there will be a by-election. But it is wrong. I believe it is wrong for Government to have the whole population to live in such *incertitude*, and it is bad for investment and for the economy in general. The best thing, I believe, as a patriot, as a Mauritian, the best thing for the country and its economy would be

to have General Elections before the end of the year, that is, before the date 22 December when the Assembly will stand dissolved, whatever else happens. If the Government really thinks that this Budget has been well received by the population, it should have no problem with General Elections being held before the end of the year. This is in the democratic spirit. This is in line with the 5-year mandate which the Government obtained in the last General Elections. If, indeed, the Government really thinks that this Budget has been well-received by the population, it should have no problem with General Elections being held before the end of the year, instead of imposing upon the country, as from 22 December, a caretaker Government without a Parliament.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 4.56 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.36 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

The Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues (Sir Anerood Jugnauth): Madam Speaker, I am proud to stand up and speak on the Appropriation Bill 2019-2020 as this Government is once again demonstrating that the progress of the country and the quality of life of our people are its sacrosanct mission.

I congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for presenting yet another caring Budget that addresses each and everybody's concern, both on the social and economic fronts.

Those who criticised from the other side, we listened just now, a moment ago, saying *Budget électoraliste*, now if he had been in our shoes, what sort of *Budget* he would have brought? And then *fer la bouche doux!* Well, he is feeling the sweetness in his mouth, he should be happy.

(Interruptions)

Budget 2019-2020 is strongly anchored in the philosophy that puts the economy at the service of the people.

Madam Speaker, this is the last time I am speaking in this House on an Appropriation Bill since I have already publicly announced that I will not be standing as candidate at the next General Election and will retire from active politics thereafter. I believe that every time I have spoken during the debates on the Budget, even when I was Leader of the Opposition, I

have put the interests of my country first. The Hansard is there to testify. I was really surprised when Members on the other side, especially hon. Ramful who is a barrister criticising the Prime Minister concerning the Commissioner of Police that he is not taking his responsibility, he has done nothing. He should have dismissed the Commissioner of Police. I feel ashamed to hear such things from a barrister. He should know the principle of presumption of innocence. He should know that once somebody is prosecuted then found guilty, then question of dismissal arises. But here, they read nonsense in the newspapers, they listen to all sorts of rumours and I consider it very irresponsible to base oneself on such information and come and attack the Prime Minister which I consider an insult to the Prime Minister. From the very beginning, when I heard about this case of Brasse, I have enquired and I have tried to know exactly what happened in this case. Let me tell you. On 25 August 2016, at Grand' Baie Police Station, Mr J. Brasse reported that, on 10 August 2016, he had lost or dropped his Mauritius passport during a trip from airport to his place of residence. On that same day, he submitted an application for a new Mauritian passport. On 05 September 2016, during the course of an enquiry, the Divisional Commander Northern sent his interim report to the Commissioner of Police respecting a request from Mr Brasse for the issue of the Mauritius passport to allow him to travel to Reunion Island urgently to bring back his speedboat which was under repair thereat. The report reached the office of the Commissioner of Police on 08 September 2016.

On 13 September 2016, the Commissioner of Police, as a routine for all such reports, referred the interim report to the Passport & Immigration Officer for necessary action as per established protocol. Subsequently, on 17 September 2016, the Passport & Immigration Officer, under the authority conferred upon him by virtue of section 3 of the Passport Act, issued Mr Brasse a restricted Mauritius passport with the condition that same would be surrendered on his return to Mauritius. Pursuant to Passport Act, the Passport & Immigration Officer is the sole decider to issue or refuse the passport. On the same day, Mr Brasse used the Mauritius passport to travel to Reunion Island and, on his return, on 29 October 2016, the passport was impounded at the SSRN Immigration desk. The passport is still in possession of the Passport & Immigration Office. At the time, Mr Brasse submitted his application for a new Mauritius passport, as well as when he travelled to Reunion island, he had a clean record. His name was neither borne on the ADSU records for any drug trafficking nor on the PIO controversial list. As per records kept at the Police Crime Records Office and Police

Prosecutor's Office, he was neither borne on the criminal records nor was he on bail for any criminal offence.

It is obvious that, in November 2016, Mr Brasse had travelled to Reunion Island on his own clandestinely without informing the Passport & Immigration Office. When he was arrested during the night of 10 November 2016, he was a clandestine traveller having no travelling document in his possession. I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that he had never, never received nor made any phone call in relation to the case nor had he given any instruction to issue or not to issue the passport. When, in such a case, how do you expect a responsible Prime Minister to dismiss a Commissioner of Police? If you ever become Prime Minister, you do it please, but we are not.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: National Budgets, Madam, as we are all aware, are the drivers of a country's social and economic development. They pave the way for the advancement of a nation.

All the Budgets that have been presented during the 18 years I have been Prime Minister were geared towards building a better Mauritius and I am proud that my Governments delivered accordingly. History is there to testify.

The last four Budgets which bear the imprint of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth have demonstrated the Prime Minister's vision and determination to build a strong modern country with inclusiveness as a sacred mantra.

The Prime Minister is sparing no efforts to satisfy the multiple needs and exigencies of the population while gearing the country towards new heights of development. He has been dedicating every single second of his mandate to the service of the country. We have to heartily congratulate him for that. He deserves it.

Madam Speaker, the 2019-2020 Budget has been widely acclaimed by the population, the different social partners including trade unionists, the firms of accountancy professionals and Business Mauritius.

The positive comments that have been registered speak volumes of the boost in feel good factor and confidence triggered by the Budget.

Madam Speaker, while trade unionists, the honest ones of course, are expressing their appreciation with regard to the numerous measures announced in favour of the working class, the former Prime Minister has qualified those measures of '*solutions panadol*'. He has always panadol in mind. He dreams of panadol and because, as a doctor, he tries to prescribe panadol all the time, he was more successful as a doctor and finally, he thought he should change his profession and go and study law. But, even as a lawyer, he has been nil because I have never heard him take a case in court. This shows that the former Prime Minister is living in his own phantasmagoric world. Perhaps, when speaking about 'panadol' he was thinking of the sexual stimulant pills that were discovered in large numbers in his coffers. But the people of this country are in no trance. They view the comments of the former Prime Minister as an insult and I agree with them.

Because they have not forgotten that the Government of Navin Ramgoolam during 2005-2009 period had prescribed quinine pills, not to say 'lysol' to the population with the series of taxes that were introduced and the massive depreciation of the Rupee that impacted heavily on the prices of commodities. The population was fleeced to the bones while people in Government at that time and their cronies were fattening their pockets unduly. And yet they were repeatedly saying that there was no other alternative. That was another panadol. I hope people have not forgotten that the then Government went as far as deciding to remove that piece of bread that was given in primary schools. They decided to abolish subsidies on rice, flour and SC/HSC examination fees. They concocted a dodgy mechanism to deprive workers of their dues in terms of salary compensation.

Madam Speaker, had it not been for the arrival of hon. Pravind Jugnauth in Government in 2010, our fellow citizens, many, I am afraid, would have starved because from the time of independence, up to 1982, the Labour Party in coalition with PMSD, although PMSD was against independence, they governed the country. MMM took power in 1982, and what did we inherit? An almost bankrupt country! Everything, everywhere, all sectors, even the MBC, the Rose Belle Sugar Estate, all were heavily indebted. Public debt! Today, they speak of public debt, they should know what heritage they left, always Labour and PMSD together. There was not money even to import food. There was only for about 10 to 12 days. When we came, 60/0 MMM/PSM, at that time, what the people were told? *Prepare ou, mange manioc, patate*. It was not a joke, it was serious, it was the only money to buy food. In those days, IMF, World Bank was putting pressure on us, that we should abolish the welfare state, that the country was too poor, it could not afford such a luxury.

They call it a luxury. Many of my friends told me, but what other option we have? Meaning that IMF, World Bank is going to help us financially, and therefore, we must do what they asked us. If I had not been there - people today may criticise, they talk so much - the welfare state would not have existed today. I stood up against IMF, World Bank. I told them, and I told my friends: ‘we have been elected by the people, we campaigned, we criticised the Labour and PMSD Government, asking them to see in what state they have left the country, we said that when we come, we are going to better your situation, and now we come, we take away the welfare state. What does that mean?’ People talk of poverty today. The utter poverty that existed in those days, my friend, hon. Bérenger should know about it, many others may not because they are new comers. The Labour and PMSD, people of those days declared to be blind, they could not see the reality, but I said so long I am going to be the Prime Minister, I am not going to accept that. Finally, I told IMF/World Bank to give me three years, if in three years, I do not change the situation, you will impose harsher conditions, I will agree. They laughed because they were convinced that we are going to be doomed. But I must confess that I took such a stand only because I believed in God. That God was going to help us.

(Interruptions)

And I, afterwards, went round countries to invite people to come and invest in our country because most of the sectors were almost dead. Today, we are living in a world where there is recession internationally almost. We all know in many countries what is happening, but I invited investors from all the countries wherever I had been to come and invest, and especially in the textile industry, I asked them not to concentrate only where previous Government has concentrated, in one spot, in the town, to go round the country and open everywhere textile business. In fact, they did so. But while going round, I arrived in Hong Kong. In Hong Kong, while discussing with the responsible people, they wanted to know what is the position in Mauritius. I had to tell them the truth, in what difficulties we had found ourselves, that people are going to starve by thousands without food. They were surprised and then they told me that Taiwan had got excess of rice and they are going to throw it all in the sea. I was surprised, I say: ‘why throw in the sea?’ They said because the Americans were financing them and the Americans insisted that they should be thrown in the sea, not to put on the market, it was going to spoil the price of rice. When I heard that, I said: ‘look, rice is going to be thrown in the sea while other people in other countries may be starving without food.’ I had to make a choice. We know, I know, we always honour and

respect agreements that we make with other countries. We had an agreement with Communist China, that we recognise only one China, Communist China. We should have nothing to do with Taiwan. We are not even allowed to visit Taiwan, to go as a tourist in Taiwan. Then, I thought to myself: ‘what will I do now?’ When putting everything in balance, I decided to go secretly, tried to bargain with them and tried to get the rice. They saved the situation in my country. Secretly, I arrived there. We had discussions. But, it was not easy because they were insisting that we should recognise Taiwan as a country, we should allow them to open an Embassy in Mauritius and that they would not only give the rice free, but they would help us economically, in many other sectors. There were discussions, then I finally told them: ‘Look! Put yourself in the place of Communist China’ ‘If China were in your place right now, and asking me to do what you are asking me to do, and if I were to do it, how would you feel? Would you be happy?’ They could not answer, they kept mute. Then, finally, I told them: ‘Look! Embassy, no Embassy, what difference will it make. Chinese people from China are doing business with you. Your people are doing business with China. Why can’t we do business?’ And I said: ‘You come and open a trade office, and you will do your activities whatever, I won’t mind.’ I had to say that because I wanted that rice at all costs. Then, finally, they said: ‘Okay, we agree, but on one condition.’ I said: ‘What is that condition.’ They said: ‘When we will have celebration of our National Day, we will invite you. Will you come?’ Of course, I answered on the spot: ‘Yes. I will come, why not? I will come, I will have a drink together with you, we will chat for a good moment and then, I will leave’. Because I told them: ‘I also have a condition.’ They asked me: ‘What is that condition?’ I said: ‘I will leave and in my presence there, there should be no official speech and there should be no toast.’ I said: ‘You do all that when I will have left.’ He agreed and that is how we got - I have forgotten exactly - four or five shipments of rice conveyed to us without spending a penny or a cent. And the rice was better rice than what ration rice we were receiving before. I must say it was godsend that saved the situation and helped us a lot to get out of the mess in which we found ourselves.

But, of course, after some time, this came to be known. My good friend, hon. Béranger, was then Leader of the Opposition. He put me questions, but, obviously, I told him the truth what happened. Well, he made all sorts of remarks and ultimately said that what I did was immoral. I said: ‘Would it have been moral if I had allowed my people by thousands to starve and die.’ I said in the House: ‘I don’t believe in that sort of morality.’ And what they

did outside? They campaigned 'Jugnauth does not believe in morality'. Well, that was not right.

And you know, I was invited afterwards by communist China on an official visit. I went there, I met Ministers, I met the President, and after discussions and all that, I was going to leave, and they didn't put me any question why I went to Taiwan. I raised the question. I told them: 'Look! I must explain one thing to you. I had been to Taiwan. Maybe, you know by now, but in what circumstances, it was to save the life of many of my people.' They told me: 'Why are you raising this? We understand very well exactly what happened. You should not worry about that.' and since then the respect that the Chinese have had for me, then up to this day, among many Chinese, I am very popular in China. So, people with some common sense do try to understand that in certain circumstances, you happen to be forced to take certain decisions. But the Chinese knew that I respected the agreement, we have not recognised Taiwan as one country independent. We have not allowed them to open an Embassy, but trade. Of course, even the Communist Chinese were trading with Taiwan. So, there was nothing wrong in that.

That is why I say, if Pravind Jugnauth had not been in Government in 2010, our fellow citizens would once again have perhaps met the same situation and starved without food. I am serious about that because already vulnerable people fell in the hell of absolute poverty. I invite members of this House to have a look at the Budget presented by hon. Jugnauth in 2010. He reviewed those Labour-PMSD cruel recipes and relieved the population from the excessive burden that was imposed on them. I wanted to mention that because some time people forget. I say to my fellow citizens: beware of the words of deceit. The carnivorous lion cannot be trusted. He feasted abundantly during three mandates, leaving others in dire need and desolation. May by God's grace Mauritius be spared from that beast! You know, his late father on many occasions told me, and not that to me alone, I know he had known told others who were close to him: '*Pas laisse Navin fer politik, zour li pou fer politik, sa mem pou pli gran maler sa pei la.*' Well, who can know his child better than a father? If a father says such thing concerning his son, in all honesty...

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, that is not fair....

(Interruptions)

...Member of the House.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: ...not a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, order! There should be...

(Interruptions)

I would appeal to hon. Members to have a certain element of courtesy amongst each other.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, that is not a point of order, there is nothing unparliamentarily.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. Boolell, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Soodhun!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: And Navin Ramgoolam, during all the time he has been at the Head of Government of this country, where he has taken this country, has proved the father right.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the arguments of the Leader of the Opposition, which smack of dishonesty. He said this Government failed with regard to economic growth. I believe the failure is on his part, because a schoolchild can easily ascertain that 3.9% growth in this year is far better than 3.2% realised when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance in the previous Government.

Let me, once again, remind hon. Duval that in his 2013 Budget Speech he assertively announced a GDP growth of 4% which never materialised. And he shows finger at us, he should look at himself in the mirror first. Confronted with the reality, he stated in his 2014 Budget Speech that “our economy is expected to expand by a good 3.2% in 2013”. For him at that time 3.2% growth was a major achievement. Today he dares to criticise us when we are delivering 3.9% growth this year and more in the coming fiscal year.

If it is not dishonesty, what is it then? The population can make its own judgement.

Madam Speaker, this Government inherited an economic situation that was plagued with crisis in every sector. Confidence in the economy was at its lowest. And to add to that was the BAI time bomb and the difficult international context.

With a series of bold and avant-garde measures, this Government instilled a new confidence in the country and economy. Vision 2030 which is often quoted on the other side which I presented in August 2015 indicated our vision and targets, not for the term in which we were serving, but for the medium and longer term. Just like *dilo 24/7*, in the first term what work is being done about *dilo*? Would you have realised *24/7*? Be honest!

The 2016 Budget unleashed a new era of economic development that leverages on business facilitation, modernisation of infrastructure and innovation. The vision and pathway of the economy was set at that time. Today, when I hear some Members relating that the Budget has no direction, I will say they are wrong, and that they must be looking at the wrong direction.

Obviously this year's Budget is a continuity of our economic and social policies.

The new challengers of the moment have been adequately addressed and that is confirmed by Business Mauritius in its comments to the Budget.

The progress achieved by our country on the economic and social fronts is recognised by international rating organisations. Indeed, Mauritius is 1st in Africa and 20th on 190 countries on the World Bank Doing Business 2019 Index. Mauritius ranks 1st in Africa and on Forbes Survey of Best countries for Business in 2019 and 39th among 161 countries. Mauritius ranks 1st in Africa and 83rd out of 230 countries on the Mercer's Quality of Living Survey. And last but not least, Mauritius rank 1st in Africa and 40th out of 133 countries on Social Progress Index. These are only a few of a long list where the achievements of Mauritius are praised.

Madam Speaker, I have heard some people including Members of the other side of the House affirming that with this year's budget, of course, it was repeated this morning, '*pé fer la bous doux*'. Others are saying it is a '*budget électorale*', I must say to me, these are false and deliberately misleading statements.

Since, his first budget presented in 2004, hon. Pravind Jugnauth has been systematically putting the people of this country first. He has introduced myriads of measures to support the vulnerable and improve the purchasing power and quality of life of this population.

During the present mandate, social measures have been announced and implemented from the very first week after this Government assumed office. Election or no election, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has remained true to himself and to the socialist philosophy that puts the people first. If improving the lot of the population budget after budget is *fer la bous doux*, then the Prime Minister must be congratulated.

Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister could have waited this year's budget to introduce Minimum Wage and Negative Income Tax, for example, if he wanted to get political mileage. He acted otherwise and what motivated him was his willingness to give the best support possible to those who deserve it. He did not wait for elections to do that. Today, in our country, no full-time worker or employee earns less than Rs9,400. Is this *solution panadol*? And Labour and PMSD Government, during those 9 or 10 years, have they sought of this? You know how much people were working for monthly? Rs1,500. And today, they have the guts to criticise this Government for what we have been doing and achieving.

Is this nothing as some want the population to believe? At least, we should be honest in this House, we must acclaimed those measures that improve that lot of the people.

Madam Speaker, for the records and for everybody to recall, it is worth highlighting that from December 2014 till the Budget was presented on 10 June 2019, this Government has put, as has been pointed out by my friend, hon. Nando Bodha, Rs89 billion of additional revenue in the pockets of households. Rs89 billion! Has the previous Government, Labour and PMSD, ever done, ever achieved this sort of thing?

This has been done through –

- (1) increases in Basic Retirement Pension and other basic pensions;
- (2) salary compensations well above inflation rates, including across the board salary compensations of Rs600 with effect from 01 January 2015, Rs360 with effect from 01 January 2018 and Rs400 with effect from 01 January 2019;
- (3) introduction of a subsistence allowance since 2017;
- (4) introduction of the Negative Income Tax and National Minimum Wage in 2018, and
- (5) implementation of the PRB in 2016.

Obviously, the Rs89 billion is a cumulative figure for December 2014 to June 2019 period. This represents an increase of more than 35% in real purchasing power after providing for cumulative inflation rate for the period which stood at 12.4%.

Is that nothing as some want to make us believe? I leave it again to the population to judge.

On the other side of the House, I hear very often people saying “*Premier ministre ine vine ministre par l'imposte*, people never voted him as Prime Minister”. Well, I really feel ashamed to hear people who are supposed to be intellectuals, representing the people here in this House, coming with such argument. Do they pretend not to know that when people go to vote, they do not vote a Minister, they do not vote a Prime Minister, they vote the candidates who were in their respective constituency as Members of Parliament.

Now, how someone becomes Prime Minister? It is according to the Constitution, to our laws; it is President who appoints the Prime Minister, and he is bound to do so, appoint someone who commands a majority in the House. Therefore, when I left, the only person who commanded a majority in the House was Pravind Jugnauth. And no President could do otherwise than according to our Constitution appoint him as Prime Minister. There have been about three cases in Supreme Court and I am surprised that Barristers, Attorneys at law, they take such cases, maybe just to make money, go to Court. They all lost their cases, but even then, in the Opposition they keep on coming with same argument. But to me, that is not honest at all.

Madam Speaker, now with the announcements in the Budget, there is more to come for households in terms of purchasing power. Only for Basic Retirement Pension and other basic pensions, an additional Rs900 m. will be disbursed in the next financial year. With the decrease in the prices of LPG, Mogas and Diesel, the population will be saving as much as Rs1.5 billion in one year. That will add up to the disposable income of families.

Madam Speaker, I heard the Leader of the Opposition saying that the Government has failed on the employment front. Nonsense! Official statistics show that the unemployment rate was 8% in 2013 when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance. Today, it has fallen to 6.9%, the lowest since 2001. Again, a schoolchild can ascertain that 6.9% is better than 8%. And we cannot compare the Leader of the Opposition with a child, but he seems to be worse than a child.

The Leader of the Opposition stated that only 12,000 jobs have been created in the last four years. That again is not true! Only in the public service, there have been 14,800 new recruits. In the private sector, it is estimated that an average of 15,000 jobs have been created yearly in the years 2015-2018 period.

Also, I would like to remind hon. Duval and also hon. Mohamed that during the 2005-2009 period, the then Labour-PMSD Government was boasting of jobless growth. It means what it means. They were proud of delivering jobless growth. Today, they want to teach us lessons!

Madam Speaker, some people complain about unemployment when we have more than 40,000 foreigners working in our country. The inference to be drawn is that unfortunately Mauritians do not want to do many of the jobs that are being done by foreigners. You know, maybe it will be good that I mention to the House that after 1983, when new investors came in the textile sector, mills were being opened around the country. People were queuing in front of our doors begging us to favour them to make them have jobs. Why? Because then they were in utter poverty, they would do any job. But today, everybody who comes to see me for a job wants a white-collar job in the public service, in parastatal bodies. Nobody wants to go in the private sector. Well, we ask ourselves why.

Madam Speaker, I also heard hon. Mohamed saying on a private radio that I promised a GDP growth rate of 5.5% in Vision 2030 document.

Likewise I have previously mentioned that was a target, and it still remains a target which I am sure we will attain in the coming years. We will attain in the coming years.

In any way Vision 2030 was not meant to be implemented in one mandate. For example, in the case of water supply on a 24/7 basis, we all know that it cannot be realised in one term because of the magnitude of the works required to replace all the rotten pipes by new ones. But we have progressed and as the Prime Minister indicated, already 440 kms of these pipes have been replaced so far and in many regions there has been significant improvement in water supply. What did the Labour/PMSD governments do to replace rotten, old and defectives pipes? Nothing! They did not bother to care for water supply.

Madam Speaker, I also wish to highlight that the economic miracle of the eighties was not achieved in one term. It took us a little more than two terms. So, I say have patience.

Madam Speaker, coming back to GDP growth, I wish to refresh the memory of hon. Mohamed and refer him to the sweeping statement made in June 2008 by the then Minister of

Finance who announced a GDP growth rate of 6.5% to 7% in his summing-up speech on the 2008-2009 Budget. This turned out to be a big bluff with actual growth rate reaching only 3.4%.

We all remember the big misleading terms like ‘green shoots’, ‘early harvest’, ‘bumper crop’, ‘robust growth’ that were used by the then Minister with the intent of demonstrating that his so-called reforms were yielding fabulous results. But nothing fabulous happened. In reality, the then government delivered absolute poverty and a gloomy economic situation.

With regard to public debt, Madam Speaker, there have been concerns raised in the House and in some quarters.

Had we borrowed to finance recurrent expenditure, I would have also been worried. But when we have been borrowing to invest in projects that will define the future of the country and bring more wealth to the nation, I do not think that should be a problem. Obviously, we cannot go beyond a certain limit. But that is not a reason to dramatise the situation. This Government is conscious of its responsibilities and that is the reason why the Prime Minister has announced a new target for public debt level in 2020. I will come later to the question relating to using the reserves at the Bank of Mauritius to pay public debt in advance. But before that I would like to ask a simple question to hon. Members on the other side of the House.

What would have happened to public debt had the Labour-MMM alliance won the last general elections and had they borrowed 830 million US dollars to finance the light rail project of the Ramgoolam regime?

I would wish they answer me on that. And I said it before and I repeat it today: they would have put a burden of 37 billion Rupees on the head of each and every citizen of this country if we add up interests on that 15-year loan and provide the currency fluctuation. That was the crime they were prepared to commit against the population! And they dare to show fingers at us!

Madam Speaker, for the Metro Express project we are implementing, we have received a grant of nearly Rs10 billion from India and the remaining Rs8.8 billion is being financed through an Indian line of credit at very favourable terms.

All in all, providing for interests and currency fluctuations, the State will be liable for around Rs12 billion. Three times less than the burden that Ramgoolam/PMSD wanted to

impose on the nation. So, once again, I leave it to the population to judge who is responsible and who is not.

Madam Speaker, concerning the proposed use of reserves of the Bank of Mauritius to reimburse public debt in advance, as far as I remember, those public debts about which the Prime Minister spoke were debts left by the previous Government. I fail to understand how that will put at stake our economy. Only, lowly remunerated surpluses from the Special Reserves Fund would be eventually utilised to reimburse debts contracted in foreign currencies that cost us a lot in terms of debt servicing. I do not see anything sinister in that. Nothing is being jeopardized, as the Opposition wants us to believe.

The reserves of the country are very comfortable, standing at Rs230 billion, against Rs124 billion in 2014. So, I don't see how there can be any risk for the operations of the Bank of Mauritius or for the stability of the Mauritian Rupee. All the assurances have been given by the Prime Minister when he answered to the PNQ on this issue on Monday. Madam Speaker, how many times have we not heard Members from the other side quoting other countries, suggesting that we should do this, we should do that, because other countries are doing it. But in this case also, we know in other countries, they are borrowing, they are taking money from the Central Bank. But why in this case, when we are trying to do what other countries are doing, we are blamed?

By the way, Madam Speaker, we have to remind the nation that in December 2014, public debt had already reached Rs237.7 billion. This is what we inherited from the previous Government, representing 60.6 per cent of GDP. And as indicated by the Prime Minister, 97% of the debt in foreign currencies that this Government proposes to reimburse in advance had been as I said before, contracted by the previous Labour-PMSD Governments.

Madam Speaker, I would now wish to respond to some of the comments made on the other side.

Frankly, having known some of the Members since long, I am sad to see how obsessively negative they can be. Some find nothing good in this Budget and dare to give us lessons. I just want to remind them that in 2005 when my friend hon. Bérenger was Prime Minister, he gave to himself a certificate of utter failure when he stated that the country was in a situation of *l'état d'urgence économique*. Well, he might argue that the then Minister of Finance was Pravind Jugnauth but at that time, the MMM was presenting Pravind Jugnauth as '*chirag*'.

(Interruptions)

‘Chirag’, ‘chirag’. It’s a Hindi word. A rising star...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: And when Pravind presented his first budget in 2004, my good friend hon. Bérenger stated that it was a ‘*coup d’essai, coup de maître*’. I’ll try to convince these people on the other side...

(Interruptions)

...who do not see beyond their nose.

This is how hon. Bérenger and the MMM acted then. For them, it is a tale of permanent double language and betrayal. The people, out there, know what to expect from them.

Now, this morning, hearing hon. Bérenger citing figures from his own mind as regards economic fundamentals, it is clear that he has not changed. *Prophète de malheur* he has been and *prophète de malheur* he still is, but official statistics prove him wrong. The country has not waited for him to move ahead on the right track. Yes, the country is on the right track and the people know it.

I must also point out that planters have always benefitted from our attention at all times and when we have been in Government, we have never fooled them unlike others who have always privileged the sugar magnates. Giving Rs25,000 per tonne to small sugarcane planters producing up to 60 tonnes of sugar is our *acte de foi* in them. They deserve it in this difficult time and saying that this measure will affect the population, alleged increase in electricity prices is an insult to them. Hon. Bérenger will have to bear the responsibility for such insult.

On the MedPoint issue, we have seen how low Members on the other side, including hon. Uteem, hon. Ramful, hon. Baloomoody, how low they can stoop. Honestly, I could not imagine that the whole country knows that the Prime Minister has been cleared both by the Supreme Court and the Privy Council. They say that property was valued at Rs75 m. and it was doubled Rs144 m. as if it was a gift to the owners. That is most unfair because the truth is everybody knows that the first officer who valued the property was a lady who did not care to enter the premises, she stood outside and estimated the property valuing Rs75 m. Of course, this was not acceptable to the owners because there were lots of valuable assets that

were to be found inside the building. Inside, there were three operating theatres, equipment for dialysis, equipment for radiology and many other modern equipment that were necessary to carry out medical tests and closely monitor patients. There were also full-fledged inpatient wards. These assets were taken on board by the second valuer and that explains how the valuation of the MedPoint property increased to Rs144 m. There is nothing sinister or scandalous in that.

Hon. Uteem needs to know that a Mediclinic much less smaller and less equipped than MedPoint that was constructed in Plaine Verte at that time cost almost Rs100 m.

What makes me sad, Madam Speaker, that I am aware, hon. Bérenger was aware of the whole truth as a complete dossier on the matter was forwarded to him when we were in the Remake alliance. It is very sad that today he uses his immunity in the House to attack the integrity of the Prime Minister. As for hon. Uteem, I always thought he was someone who was mindful of his words, but I can only conclude now that for him also only demagogy and hatred matters. The population will be the best judge.

But, once more, I wish to affirm that the MedPoint case was politically concocted from the very beginning. From my experience as a Barrister, I always stated after studying the case that there was no case against the Prime Minister and finally both the Supreme Court and the Privy Council proved me right.

Madam Speaker, the rumbles of the Opposition will not prevent the country from moving ahead. Definitely, Mauritius is progressing and not receding, as Members of the Opposition want to make the nation believe.

For me, there is a complete dissonance between the high appreciation of the Budget by a majority of the population and the vitriolic diatribe of the Members of the Opposition.

These Members and their trumpet blowers have chosen to drown themselves in the apocalyptic seas of utter demagogy. It is their choice and that will not prevent us in Government to assume our responsibilities. Madam Speaker, often law and order issues are raised in this august Assembly and some Members try to darken the situation in an alarmist manner.

I again seize this opportunity of these debates to reassure the nation that safety and security prevail in our country. The Government is sparing no effort to give the required means to the Mauritius Police Force to enhance its operational capability.

Thanks to that, targeted actions have been implemented forcefully, the Mauritius Police Force has been building capacity, sensitising the public and leveraging on new technology to fulfil its mission. Some key initiatives in the outgoing financial year are as follows -

- A new Mauritian model of Community Policing has been launched.
- Special Anti-Robbery Squads have been set up for the constant monitoring of the suspicious movement of habitual and prolific offenders.
- Police visibility at identified strategic locations island wide has been enhanced and the concept of 'hot spot policing' introduced.
- A drone Team has been created to increase surveillance and support targeted operations.
- A common platform has been set up for information sharing between the Police and private security companies for launching of targeted actions.
- A partnership has been sealed between the Police and key stakeholders such as the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce, the Bank of Mauritius, ICAC, FIU and the MRA for combatting financial crimes.
- The design and construction of a Police Academy is on course with the signing of a Project Management Consultancy contract on 11 April 2019 between the Government of Mauritius and the NBCC (India) Ltd.
- The extension of St. Pierre Police Station and construction of a new Police station in Camp Diable have been completed.
- Works in relation to a new Police Station in Pamplémousses have been completed at almost 80%.
- 488 new Police Constables have been enlisted (391 male & 97 female).
- 64,635 contraventions have been established by the Traffic Police for exceeding speed limits (31,344 by fixed speed detector cameras and 33,291 by handheld speed detector cameras).
- 1,540 sensitisation campaigns targeting 82,694 persons, including students were carried out by the Police with regard to crime prevention, road safety, drugs-related offences, domestic violence, juvenile offenders, child protection and community policing.
- 1,070 Police Officers attended different courses, workshop and training, covering Police Integrity, criminal investigation, handling of new multimedia

radio, self-care and counselling skills, substance abuse prevention, gender concept and presentation skills.

- National Coast Guard posts and vehicles have been equipped with a tsunami warning system.
- And, above all, Madam Speaker, the Safe City Project is being implemented. As at now, 976 Intelligent Video Surveillance cameras out of a total of 4,000 have been installed over 672 sites.

This project is expected to increase crime detection capabilities, help to reduce the occurrence of crime, fight drug trafficking and decrease the number of road accidents. Despite the unwarranted criticisms of the Opposition, I am confident that the challenges we are facing on the security and safety fronts can best be met through the use of technology. Singapore which has one of the lowest crime rates in the world is a vivid example.

Madam Speaker, it is worth highlighting that the crime rate (excluding drugs) for the island of Mauritius has decreased from 4.9 per thousand population in 2016 to 4.3 in 2018. This is testimony to the progress we are making. Our aim, as highlighted in the budget documents, is to bring the crime rate further down to less than 4 per cent.

Madam Speaker, our resolve to fight the drug scourge has remained unabated. The continuous detection of drug cases during recent months provides concrete evidence of our efforts. From July 2018 to date, illicit drugs for estimated total market value of 2.1 billion rupees have been seized by the Anti-Drug and Smuggling Unit.

With a view to foster a multi-sectoral approach in the fight against drugs and HIV, a High Level Drugs and HIV Council under the chair of the Prime Minister has been set up in December 2018 to oversee the implementation of the National Drug Control Master Plan 2018-2020 which was commissioned by my Ministry. Also, a National Drug Secretariat has been set up as an apex body to plan, coordinate, oversee, monitor and evaluate all drug control related policies, programmes and interventions to achieve greater coherence, results and impact.

Moreover, recommendations of the Commission of Enquiry on drugs are being assessed and taken on board by respective concerned agencies.

At the level of the Prisons Service, after the ban imposed on telecommunications equipment, all our prisons are tobacco free since 01 February 2019. Enforcement has been enhanced through Drone and CCTV surveillance. Sophisticated jammers will be installed to

disrupt any communication using mobile phones. A buffer zone of 50 metres will be created around the security perimeter wall at Melrose Prison to avoid pelting of prohibited articles.

The Reform Institutions Act will be amended to include murder as a category not to be eligible for remission or release on parole.

Moreover,

- 896 Prison Officers have undergone training at the Prison Training School.
- New programmes have been implemented to better rehabilitate detainees.
- And 348 detainees have followed accredited Vocational and Educational Programmes, including Primary School Achievement Certificate, Music and Distance Learning Courses through the Open University of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, as far as the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration & Exploration is concerned, it is actively pursuing its mission to allow Mauritius to fully develop the potential of its maritime zones.

Following the conferment on Mauritius and Seychelles of a joint jurisdiction of an area of extended continental shelf of about 400,000 square kilometres, a submission has been made to the United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLCS) for an Extended Continental Shelf in the region of Rodrigues.

Moreover, in the light of the Advisory Opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice on 25 February 2019 whereby the Court considered that the Chagos Archipelago had been unlawfully detached from Mauritius by the UK, a submission for an Extended Continental shelf of about 175,000 square kilometres in the Southern Chagos region was lodged with the UNCLCS on 26 March 2019.

Mauritius will prepare a technical and scientific presentation to the United Nations to justify its claims over the extended continental shelf in August next, in line with the Rules of UNCLCS.

I also wish to inform the House that with regard to exploration surveys for hydrocarbon within the EEZ of Mauritius, a Request for Proposal has been launched for the conduct of multi-client seismic surveys that will enable the collection of geophysical data of the earth crust and provide an evaluation of oil and gas prospects.

Madam Speaker, our resolve to develop Rodrigues is once more demonstrated in the 2019-2020 Budget with enhanced support to sustain the island's tourism sector through the

Special Rodrigues Holiday Package, a new housing scheme and provisions for further improving the utilities network.

Furthermore, the subsidies under the Rodrigues Subsidy Account have been increased from Rs158 m. to Rs197 m. to maintain the prices of petroleum products, rice, flour and cement in Rodrigues at par with those prevailing in Mauritius.

I wish also to inform the House that one rescue boat has been commissioned for Rodrigues Police on 14 February 2019 for rapid intervention at sea.

Projects that are high on the Rodriguan agenda are -

- the construction of a new runway at Plaine Corail Airport, and
- the setting up of a Technology Park to promote entrepreneurship and employment in the field of ICT.

Madam Speaker, it is with pride and a sentiment of '*devoir accompli*' that I will now speak on our battle to exercise our sovereignty over the Chagos Archipelago. By the grace of God and the blessings of the population, I made the main oral submission before the International Court of Justice. The Advisory Opinion that was delivered by the Court on 25 February 2019 was clear and unequivocal. It confirmed our long-standing position that the Chagos Archipelago is and has always formed an integral part of the territory of Mauritius.

I am glad that the Prime Minister spearheaded a resounding victory for Mauritius at the United Nations on 22 May 2019 when the resolution to give effect to the ICJ's Advisory Opinion was voted by an overwhelming majority of 116 against 6.

As a nation, we need to stand firm and united in this Chagos battle. Despite the defiant position of the UK and its reluctance to abide by the Advisory Opinion of the ICJ and the UN resolution, we need to remain resolute and steadfast as we pursue our mission to complete the decolonisation of our country. We need to support the Prime Minister in his new initiatives to make the UK change its stance in order to bring an early end to its illegal administration of the Chagos Archipelago. Government has pledged to implement a programme of resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago.

In this regard, we need to appreciate and understand the signal being given through the Budget when the Prime Minister announced a special provision of Rs50 m. for meeting, *inter alia*, expenses relating to resettlement in the Chagos Archipelago. This demonstrates our renewed commitment towards our sisters and brothers of Chagossian origin. The Prime

Minister is going still further by proposing to annex the Chagos Archipelago to Constituency No. 1 (Grand River North West and Port Louis West). And today itself, we welcomed the new Air Mauritius A330 Neo aircraft, named Chagos Archipelago which will convey, wherever it flies to, our message that the Chagos Archipelago is proudly Mauritian.

Madam Speaker, as we speak of patriotism and national solidarity on the Chagos issue, it is with sadness that I witnessed the Members of the Opposition, particularly hon. Bérenger remaining stoic when the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was mentioning in his Budget Speech how it was a special day for Mauritius when the ICJ ruled in favour of Mauritius and how a new milestone was reached with the adoption of the resolution at the UN on 22 May this year.

I believe that attitude again speaks volume of the man's character. It leads me to conclude that either hon. Bérenger is not happy about the outcome registered both at the ICJ and at the United Nations or his ego overrides his thinking. Anyway, we know that hon. Bérenger was of the view that we were not going to secure 10 votes at the time the first resolution was presented at the United Nations in my presence.

When the Prime Minister was going to the United Nations for the second resolution, he commented at a Press conference that he feared lobbying was not being done properly and that he doubted about the outcome of the vote. But he was proved wrong and totally wrong by the overwhelming votes in favour of Mauritius in both occasions. That also is history, Madam Speaker.

I have always believed that one's ego cannot override one's patriotism and duty towards the motherland. The attitude of hon. Bérenger and of all the Members of the Opposition is unacceptable and has to be condemned. Likewise, their silence when the Prime Minister announced a public holiday on 09 September for the visit of His Holiness the Pope is condemnable. The people out there have taken good note.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I shall conclude by saying that the country is definitely in good and safe hands. We are progressing under the wise stewardship of the Prime Minister.

With the experience I have acquired in politics and statesmanship, I am fully confident that no responsible Mauritian would wish to embark upon any new adventure with dishonoured and filthy politicians who had brought this country on the brink of catastrophe each and every time they reigned mercilessly. We simply cannot allow those politicians to

come back and destroy what we have strived to achieve despite the horrific legacy they left. And today, the former Prime Minister has got the guts to say that this whole process of going to the United Nations about Chagos Archipelago was started by him. What a shame!

In any way, I reiterate my pledge to be on the terrain for the next General Elections, alongside the population, to fight the forces of evil that would try to mislead, divide and put at stake the progress we have achieved together as a nation.

Madam Speaker, the 2019-2020 Budget is about pursuing the national and territorial development agenda that carries at its heart innovation, technology driven initiatives, modernisation and inclusiveness. It characterises a strong leadership with a clear vision. It is about making Mauritius shine again as a respected and recognised achiever. It is about propelling further our country towards the selective league of high income economies.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I congratulate again the hon. Prime Minister and wish him well in steering the Republic of Mauritius towards more glory.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr François: Madam Speaker, on behalf of the people of Rodrigues, I would like to raise a point of appreciation to say...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, it is not the time.

Mr François: ...thank you...

Madam Speaker: Hon. François!

Mr François: ...to Sir Anerood Jugnauth for what he has done.

Madam Speaker: Hon. François, please resume your seat!

(Interruptions)

There are procedures in the House.

(Interruptions)

There are procedures in the House and I don't think that I can depart from the procedures to allow you to make a statement right now. I am really sorry. You will have some other opportunity to do that. Hon. Henry!

(7.08 p.m.)

Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Madame la présidente, tout d'abord, je voudrais féliciter le gouvernement qui vient de nous présenter son dernier budget à la veille des élections générales.

Au lieu de rassembler les Mauriciens autour de ce budget et leur donner l'espoir d'un meilleur avenir en consolidant les piliers de notre économie qui sont en danger, la population, au contraire, a été déçue, dupée par les mesures présentées dans ce budget. Déjà, la disparité entre les secteurs public et privé a provoqué la colère des travailleurs du secteur privé. Je ne suis pas contre l'augmentation qui sera accordée aux fonctionnaires en janvier 2020. Est-ce que les travailleurs du secteur privé sont des citoyens de deuxième ordre.

Madame la présidente, il y a eu toutes sortes de spéculations, toutes sortes de rumeurs autour de l'ajustement de la pension des *seniors* au salaire minimum, avec pour résultat une augmentation de R500 payable en janvier 2020. Même les pêcheurs ont été emmenés en bateau avec une maigre augmentation de R30 alors qu'ils attendaient beaucoup de ce budget pour restructurer le secteur de la pêche qui est l'un des enfants pauvres de ce budget.

Il y avait déjà un Fish Auction Market à Les Salines qui a coûté R 55 millions, un Fisherman Investment Trust qui a été jeté aux oubliettes ; des bateaux de 4 à R 5 millions de roupies sont en train de couler à Les Salines. Ils s'attendaient à ce que le ministre vienne avec des propositions concrètes pour résoudre ce problème. Ces pêcheurs ne veulent qu'une chose, une assise de la pêche pour décider de l'avenir de ce secteur avec l'aide des autorités. Au lieu de cela, on a entendu parler de baleines, de requins, rien de sérieux. Le *Blue Economy* devait créer 20,000 emplois, selon le ministre qui répète la même chose depuis plusieurs années. Dans son discours, le ministre de la pêche a répondu à une question du leader de l'opposition. Il avait dit alors qu'il n'avait pas les informations demandées. Et la liste des emplois dans ce secteur qu'il a énuméré lors de son discours ne sont pas de nouveaux emplois, mais des emplois existants depuis bon nombre d'années. C'est du réchauffé.

Madame la présidente, je vais maintenant parler de la construction de logements sociaux. Plusieurs membres de ce côté de la Chambre se sont attardés sur ce sujet. Je voudrais simplement faire ressortir que ce gouvernement avait promis de construire 10,000 logements sociaux. Le résultat final est dramatique. Seulement moins de 1,500 maisons ont été construites et parmi elles, plus de la moitié initiées par l'ancien gouvernement. Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes, encore une promesse non tenue. En parlant de promesse non tenue, je

m'associe à mes collègues de ce côté de la Chambre qui les ont énumérées avant moi. Cela prendrait des heures à les répéter, car la liste est longue. Je m'en voudrais si je ne parlais pas de cette mesure qui n'aurait encore qu'un effet d'annonce comme tant d'autres - le *SME loan scheme*.

Madame la présidente, j'ai lu dans l'Express du 13 juin 2019 une entrevue de monsieur Amar Deepalsing, président de la Fédération des petites et moyennes entreprises, sur les mesures du budget concernant les PME. Dès les premières questions, il dit, je cite –

« Je serais ravi si le gouvernement se montre sérieux et concrétise les mesures annoncées lundi ; mais, selon les expériences vécues sous ce gouvernement, sa capacité et sa volonté, on est refroidi. De toute façon, le ministre des Finances n'a rien annoncé qui soit dans l'intérêt des petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) ! Nous avons été mis de côté ! »

Ces remarques parlent d'elles-mêmes. Il continue en disant, je cite : « Les attentes étaient grandes. Dans les divers budgets présentés, il y a eu pas mal de mesures annoncées pour remédier au souci majeur auquel fait face ce secteur, mais elles n'ont jamais été appliquées. Au fil du temps, nous voyons que ces mesures restent à l'état de parole ; des discours mensongers, de fausses promesses, bien qu'ils soient dits à l'Assemblée nationale. »

Madame la présidente, j'ai lu attentivement toutes les mesures concernant les PME - paragraphes 130 à 141. Je ne pense pas que les jeunes de ce pays vont entreprendre une PME avec ces mesures. D'abord, madame la présidente, nous avons le certificat de la PME. À quoi ça sert ce certificat ? Cela sert à certifier que la compagnie ou l'individu est enregistré et désire commencer un business en tant que PME. Mais l'essentiel dans tout *startup* est d'avoir un *one-stop shop* où il y aurait toutes les informations et les facilités pour obtenir le certificat, la *trade licence*, les facilités bancaires, etc.

Madame la présidente, j'ai été au centre des PME à Port-Louis. Il n'y avait pas une seule personne pour me donner les informations nécessaires. Personne n'était intéressé. Et ce qui est pire, Madame la présidente, quand j'ai regardé de plus près ce que la banque de Maurice offrait, il n'y avait rien d'intéressant, sauf que la banque voulait mettre des *floating charges* sur mes biens pour garantir l'emprunt. Cela est une pratique dans les banques commerciales madame. Nous nous attendions à ce que les PME, la DBM travaillent main dans la main. Une *startup*, madame, trouver, encourager et donner des moyens aux PME, pas

seulement leur offrir un *loan* avec des intérêts exorbitants et des *schemes* qui sont réservés aux femmes.

Je préfère ne pas citer ce que monsieur Amar Deepalsing dit au sujet de ce *loan scheme*. Je laisse le ministre le soin de lire *l'Express* du 13 juin 2019. Un autre secteur qui est dans le coma profond et qui demande beaucoup plus d'attention, c'est le combat contre la pauvreté. Cela cause de la piètre performance du ministre en charge de ce secteur. Un transfuge qui ne maîtrise pas son dossier, qui est incapable de répondre aux *PNQs*. L'industrie touristique, Madame la présidente, est à bout de souffle et demande beaucoup plus d'attention. Je vais maintenant citer quelques réflexions des professionnels dans ce domaine, notamment M. Philippe Espitalier Noël, CEO de Rogers, et M. Philip Taylor, CEO de Hospitality-Plus. Lors de la conférence de Hotel World 2019. Selon eux, le secteur touristique est à bout de souffle ; croissance au ralenti ; perte de compétitivité par rapport aux principaux concurrents ; manque de personnels formés ; environnement dégradé ; lagon abîmé ; plage joncée d'ordures ; la carte postale mauricienne en a pris un coup dans la figure. L'industrie est aujourd'hui à un carrefour. Si elle n'évolue pas, le pire est à venir. Je laisse le soin à la population de tirer leur conclusion sur la performance de ce ministère.

Madame la présidente, je parle maintenant d'un domaine qui me tient à cœur, celui de l'art et de la culture. Malheureusement, le ministre est parti. Hier, lors de son intervention, le ministre des Arts et de la Culture a passé la majorité de son temps qui lui était alloué à faire les éloges du Premier ministre, à lui cirer le pont - et je suis poli -, à dénigrer l'opposition, mais rien de concret sur son ministère, très peu sur ses réalisations. Il a cité une longue liste d'artistes récompensés par son ministère. Une liste de rénovation des sites culturels. Il s'est approprié plusieurs réalisations de l'UNESCO. Les artistes sont restés sur leur faim. Ils voulaient que le ministre accorde plus de considération à leur attente. Où est ce qui a été promis dans les budgets précédents ? Le palais des arts, par exemple, rien n'a été fait. Les artistes attendent toujours un endroit adéquat pour se produire. Nous savons tous le parcours du combattant des artistes pour trouver une venue. Certains avaient dû carrément annuler les événements, faute des lieux appropriés pour se produire, à cause des objections du voisinage, entre autres. La maison des artistes à Batterie de l'Harmonie, pas grand-chose fait, encore des effets d'annonce.

Plus aberrant encore, Madame la présidente, le poste du directeur de la MASA, une institution d'une importance capitale pour les artistes, est toujours vacant. L'impasse complète sur la transformation de la citadelle en un centre pour l'art et de la culture. La

fusion de la *National Art Gallery* et le *National Heritage Fund* est encore dans le flou. Six membres ont démissionné et pas de moindre de ces institutions pour cette raison.

Madame la présidente, les artistes mauriciens attendent toujours une révision du tarif de diffusion sur les ondes, une ébauche a déjà été préparée par les membres de la *MASA* et déposée au ministère des Arts et de la Culture. Ce document est encore à l'étude alors qu'il est vital pour l'avenir de nos artistes. J'ai attiré l'attention du ministre sur ce sujet depuis le budget de l'année dernière. Ce secteur doit définitivement être redynamisé et peut devenir un secteur très important de notre économie. Il faut revoir les priorités de ce ministère et la façon de déboursier les fonds pour la promotion de l'art et de la culture mauricienne. Il faudrait peut-être organiser une Assise des arts et de la culture avec tous les acteurs de ce secteur et les autorités concernées.

Madame la présidente, l'art et la culture peut donner un nouveau souffle à l'industrie touristique qui, comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, est à bout de souffle. Prenons comme exemple, le festival Sakifo à l'île de la Réunion qui a attiré des milliers de touristes, les Seychelles avec leur festival Kreol qui a une réputation internationale. Pourquoi pas nous ? Car nous avons les talents et la compétence voulue.

En passant, Madame la présidente, je voulais souhaiter à tous les artistes mauriciens et à toute la population Mauricienne une bonne fête de la musique.

Madame la présidente, j'ai écouté les différents discours des ministres et d'autres membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre qui nous ont dressé un tableau idyllique des réalisations de ce gouvernement. À les entendre, tout va pour le mieux, dans le meilleur des mondes, alors que nous savons tous que ce gouvernement croule sous toutes sortes de scandales. Cela a poussé la démission de notre présidente et pas moins de cinq ministres, un *Deputy Speaker*, et je passe sous silence ceux qui auraient dû démissionner, mais ne l'ont pas fait. Ce qui a marqué l'écroulement de ce gouvernement est la démission du PMSD quand ils ont voulu s'attaquer à l'indépendance de notre système judiciaire.

Madame la présidente, mes collègues du PMSD et moi sommes fiers d'avoir contribué à protéger la démocratie de notre pays. Ce gouvernement a continué avec des transfuges comme l'honorable Madame Monty qui a joué à cachecache et recevait à notre insu des émissaires du gouvernement. Le pire, Madame la présidente, c'est l'honorable Wong Yen Cheong qui, avec nous tous ensemble, s'est rendu à la State House pour remettre sa lettre de démission du gouvernement, pour changer d'avis quelques jours après. Je vais

produire une photo, il ne peut pas dire le contraire, on avait pris une photo devant la State House et qui était à côté de nous, là ?

(Interruptions)

L'honorable Alain Wong Yen Cheong ! Alors que l'honorable Madame Monty joue à cachecache. Que s'est-il passé entre temps ? On se demande. Cela m'a attristé.

(Interruptions)

Ce n'était pas du PMSD, l'honorable Premier ministre ! Cela m'a attristé, car on les considérait comme un membre de la famille. Tous les amis et les proches de Sir Gaëtan Duval ne lui pardonneront jamais cette trahison. Je ne vais pas m'attarder sur ce mort-vivant de la politique.

Pour conclure, Madame la présidente, je vais parler de ma circonscription, la circonscription N° 12, qui a connu, depuis 2010, des développements considérables. L'honorable Mahen Jhugroo l'a très bien décrit dans son discours. De 2010 à 2016, j'étais PPS de cette circonscription. Toutes les réalisations énumérées étaient sur la liste des projets que j'ai présentée au Premier ministre d'alors, en tant que PPS de N° 12. Tous les PPS de l'époque ont fait la même chose et ne me contrediront pas. Dire que je n'ai rien fait pour la circonscription est malhonnête et une preuve de mauvaise foi.

Pour rafraîchir la mémoire de l'honorable Jhugroo qui se vante d'avoir donné leur titre de propriété aux habitants de Camp Carol, dois-je lui rappeler que c'est le ministre des Terres et de logement d'alors, l'honorable Soodhun, qui l'a fait en notre présence. Malheureusement, l'honorable Hurreeram n'était pas au pays ce jour-là.

Malheureusement, depuis mon départ, certains projets ont été mis de côté, par exemple, Cité Balance. Des réunions ont été organisées avec les habitants concernant la présence de l'amiante dans leurs maisons et au sujet de l'attribution de leur titre de propriété. Ils attendent toujours.

La délocalisation des éleveurs d'animaux à Camp Carol, Le Bouchon, Kareau Acacia avait été décidée, mais rien n'a été fait jusqu'à maintenant. La deuxième phase de la réhabilitation du Coastal Road de Résidence La Chaux ainsi que l'éclairage des terrains de foot de Trois Boutiques et de Grand Bel Air sont toujours en attente, alors que les projets avaient déjà été approuvés et les fonds votés.

Je suis tout à fait d'accord avec l'idée de transformer Mahébourg en un village touristique, mais à certaines conditions. Il faut garder l'authenticité de Mahébourg. Il faut respecter l'environnement et surtout, ne pas faire de développement sans planification urbaine. Les Mahébourgeois doivent être partie prenante de ce développement, pas comme ça se passe en ce moment. La dernière fois, ils ont eu une réunion avec le ministre du Tourisme, rien ne s'est passé. C'est triste. Ce sont des jeunes qui veulent contribuer au développement de leur endroit, mais on ne veut pas les écouter.

Et le pire, Madame la présidente, ce matin – j'ai parlé de ça avec mes collègues tout à l'heure-là – mes mandants m'ont appelé pour me dire ce qui s'est passé hier soir, ce qu'ils ont vu ce matin. En allant vers Mahébourg, vous venez sur la route de Beau Vallon, il y a de grands arbres tout le long du chemin avant d'arriver sur le rondpoint de Beau Vallon. Ces arbres, des flamboyants, sont historiques. C'est magnifique. Ce matin, en passant, qu'est-ce qu'ils ont vu ? Il y a un centre commercial qui est en train d'être construit et plusieurs arbres ont été coupés pour faire l'entrée du centre commercial. Ne trouvez-vous pas que ce n'est pas un crime contre l'environnement ? Et c'est sur les journaux du matin.

Donc, je demanderai au ministre de l'Environnement de voir qu'est-ce qui s'est passé. Ils ont fait ça pendant la nuit. Est-ce qu'ils ont eu l'autorisation ? Qui a donné l'autorisation pour faire ça ? Parce qu'ils ont gâché l'allée menant vers Mahébourg, Madame la présidente.

Pour moi, Madame la présidente, la campagne électorale a déjà commencé à entendre certains membres du gouvernement. Nous les attendons de pied ferme, car il ne faut pas oublier que le PMSD était l'initiateur du clip '*Viré Mam*' et nous serons la cheville ouvrière du prochain changement, Madame la présidente.

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Hon Gayan!

(7. 32 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Madam Speaker, please, allow me, at the outset, to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the highly patriotic and forward looking Budget 2019-2020 he presented to the House on 10 June.

This Budget, Madam Speaker, as other speakers have said before me, on this side of the House, is a follow-up on previous ones which launched our country on a transformative journey.

Today, the hon. Prime Minister is calling on us and the country at large to embrace a brighter future together as a nation. We must not refuse that call. The Budget he presented is one of hope and optimism. The vision of and in the Budget is clear and it has set milestones which, together as a nation, we have to meet in the future.

Madam Speaker, this Budget sets the framework for a brighter and modern Mauritius without neglecting any segments of the society and economic sectors. It aims at propelling Mauritius in the league of high-income nations, promoting a more inclusive society, creating a favourable environment and sustaining the growth momentum of the economy.

But before I proceed, Madam Speaker, I wish to ask the House one question. What would the mood in this House be if we had lost the Betamax case, the Medpoint case, the CT Power case and the Chagos Archipelago case? What have we not heard from the Opposition, Madam Speaker? But I will come later to other parts of this particular mood.

But, Madam Speaker, in spite of major geopolitical changes in our main export markets and global economic slowdown, the hon. Prime Minister has skillfully crafted a Budget that caters for all sectors of the economy and meets the expectations of every citizen: the workers, the elderly, the youth, the civil service, the sugar cane planters, the business community, and more importantly, the vulnerable groups have been given their fair share.

Un budget, Madame la présidente, est un exercice comptable, visant à consolider l'économie tout en garantissant le maximum sur le plan social pour tout le monde. Les attentes de la population sont contradictoires, mais le Premier ministre a su faire usage de son pouvoir d'arbitrage dans un esprit d'unité et d'harmonie nationale. Il a réussi à présenter un budget qui jouit d'un consensus total dans le public, même si tel n'est pas le cas parmi l'opposition.

But, Madam Speaker, we cannot speak about the present and the future without recalling the past. When this Government came to power in December 2014, what was the situation? What was the situation in the economic and social front? The hon. Prime Minister has set it out in the opening part of his Budget Speech, and I wish to quote –

- “Four and a half years ago, the economy and society were on a precarious and uncertain path.
- Economic growth was on a declining trend.
- The prospects were gloomy, especially for the poor. An increasing number of families were sliding into poverty.
- Income inequality was widening.
- As a new Government, it was our responsibility to reconstruct our economy, secure social justice and provide Mauritius with a new beginning.”

Madam Speaker, any person, who is reasonable, is of good faith and is objective, will agree that the results achieved by this Government speak for themselves. The economy is on stronger foundations. This is so, despite all the problems that we have had to endure on account of the unpatriotic handling of corporations like the BAI, Betamax, CT Power, that were bleeding the country. The national interest has been at the forefront of all our endeavours in Government.

Throughout our mandate, Madam Speaker, we have paid special attention to the working classes, as their contribution to making what our country is, must never be underestimated. But the Opposition, Madam Speaker, has addressed the House on the Budget and they have adopted *une politique de terre brulée*, doom and gloom, that is what they have been presenting to the House.

C'est le catastrophisme total qui a été décelé dans les discours des honorables membres de l'opposition. Mais je viendrai plus tard sur d'autres réactions de l'opposition au budget. Mais, pour l'instant, je regrette l'absence de l'honorable Jhuboo. Je viendrai plus tard sur d'autres réactions de l'opposition au budget, mais pour l'instant, je regrette l'absence de l'honorable Jhuboo qui, quand il a parlé au sujet du budget, a dit : le budget est caractérisé par une incompétence indiscutable. Et il a eu le culot de citer un monsieur S. R. - je ne dirai pas le nom - qui est soi-disant expert dans le secteur touristique. S'il avait fait son *due diligence* au sujet de cette personne, il aurait trouvé que cette personne a fait des choses impossibles pour quelqu'un qui se dit un expert dans le tourisme. Je ne dirai pas plus, parce qu'il n'est pas membre de cette Assemblée.

(Interruptions)

C'est pour ça qu'il n'a pas été candidat avec nous.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the Government MSM-ML will go down in history as a Government which has spared no efforts and no means to protect and safeguard the rights of the workers. First, we have introduced a minimum wage to ensure that workers have a decent living and we have tried to protect them from the exploitation of unscrupulous employers.

Second, we have introduced a Negative Income Tax to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor and ensure a fair distribution of income. And now, in this Budget, we are introducing the Portable Retirement Gratuity Scheme, which will recognise the full length of service of a worker irrespective of the number of employers he or she had worked for.

These measures clearly demonstrate the commitment of this Government to safeguard the interest of the workers and uphold their dignity. Hon. Jhuboo would have said “*ça c’est l’incompétence indiscutable*”. *L’université gratuite, “incompétence indiscutable” selon l’honorable Jhuboo.*

Madam Speaker, since this Government came to power, it has been investing massively in building the infrastructure of tomorrow, and a striking example is the metro, which will become a game changer, catapulting Mauritius into a modern city state. My Constituency No. 20 will undergo a fascinating upgrade when the metro starts operations as from September. Beau Bassin, Madam Speaker, will become even more *beau*.

As for my Constituency, hon. Aliphon has already given a list of projects which will improve the quality of life of the inhabitants. The Area Health Centre of Petite Rivière will become operational soon; the tender has been launched for the construction of a mediclinic at Coromandel, and the time limit expires on Monday 24.

The airport and the seaport will be upgraded and expanded with additional facilities to enhance air and sea connectivity within the region and the rest of the world. This will also help, Madam Speaker, in the processing of incoming tourists for customs and immigration purposes.

We are also investing massively in ICT to promote Mauritius as a FinTech Hub for Africa and create new jobs for our youth. The creation of a National Innovation and Research Fund with a seed capital of Rs100 m. will give a further boost to Mauritian creativity,

inventiveness and ingenuity. To breach the digital divide and ensure that all Mauritians have access to the internet, Government is providing free internet facilities to 11,000 families from the vulnerable groups. Again, hon. Jhuboo would have said “*ça c’est l’incompétence indiscutable*”.

Madam Speaker, this Government have lived up to its promise to enhance the welfare of our senior citizens. Immediately when we came to power in December 2014, the Old-Age Pension was increased from Rs3,623 to Rs5,000 per month and this has continuously been increased to reach Rs6,710 a month. It will further increase by Rs500 as from January 2020. The Carer’s Allowance has also been increased - “*incompétence indiscutable*” *dirait l’honorable Jhuboo*.

Madam Speaker, the 2019/2020 Budget is widely recognised by everybody as a Budget which meets the expectations of all stakeholders and provides the means of achieving our vision of a modern, green and inclusive Mauritius where nobody is left behind.

Madam Speaker, while I can understand that the Opposition must say something about the Budget, the least one can expect from hon. Members is a degree of intellectual honesty and a sense of history. Engaging in demagoguery and sterile criticism is demeaning both for the Opposition as well as those who are at the receiving end of their speeches.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition has qualified the Budget as *un budget réchauffé, recyclé et raté*. But, Madam Speaker, all the business stakeholders are commending the measures initiated in the Budget and agree that the right policy measures have been announced to re-energise the traditional sectors and attract foreign investment. Let me quote what Mr Gérard Lincoln, Country Managing Partner of Ernst & Young had to say regarding this year’s Budget and I quote –

“A budget which aspires to be modern, with emphasis on the environment, the social fabric, sport and well-being of Mauritians, whilst remaining responsible and not increasing the budget deficit (3.2%, as in prior year). Small planters are the biggest winners with MUR 25,000 per tonne for the first 60 tonnes of sugar. The budget provides continuity from a fiscal perspective, which is always good as it creates a favourable investment climate. People want clarity, certainty and stability, and we have that!”

Incompétence indiscutable selon l’honorable Jhuboo!

Madam Speaker, when I listened to the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, I must say that I was disappointed. Disappointed, first of all, because he said he was making speech because he is paid to make a speech. I have always believed that when somebody enters politics, he does so because he has the love for his country and he does so because he wants to do good for his country. It is a great privilege for all of us to have been elected here and to address this House. It is a great privilege, a great honour. We are not here because we are paid to be here. We are here because we have been elected to be here.

And everybody who listened to it knew that *le cœur n'y était pas* as he knew that whatever he was going to say smacked of intellectual dishonesty. What did he say, Madam Speaker? He started by saying it was a Tale of Two Cities. And when we look at what he was saying, I take *Week-End du dimanche 07 avril*, do you know what he said? Xavier Luc Duval speaks on the Metro Express – *Li pou enn mirak si fini avan le 31 dessam*.

We have all heard our colleague Nando Bodha give assurances. We all know that when he spoke about a Tale of Two Cities. I also have a Tale of Cities - the tale of Geneva and the tale of Port Louis. When Eric Stauffer said that he had taken the Leader of the Opposition on the Alps in the company of a very pretty lady - but I am not like them to diminish and to degrade the names of ladies in this House - he was making use of public funds as Eric Stauffer said in that article – *C'était un abus de biens sociaux*.

L'île Plate is another episode. When he was interviewed on French TV, he was totally in a state where he could not say a word which anybody could understand. I invite everybody who is interested to go to YouTube and to click on 'Xavier Duval and l'île Plate'. It is easy, and then you will know what sort of...

(Interruptions)

They brag about tourism, the MTPA. Madam Speaker, they brag about nepotism.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Gayan: About all sorts of things. Meritocracy...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh, do not make those sorts of remarks. I think there should be some element of courtesy between hon. Members.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I have that article if anybody is interested about -

« En dénonçant un scandale, un Genevois met l'île Maurice sens dessus dessous. »

Madam Speaker, this is not all. When the PMSD was in charge of the MTPA - They say that they are for meritocracy? - they gave a monthly allowance to one Cader Hossenally of MKHOLIDAYS in London. From 2009 to 2010, he was getting £1,300 and from 2010 to 2014, £2,000. And then, they come and talk about...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me come back to what I was saying with regard to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

Oh, it hurts? That is not the end, you will wait! There is more coming. The Opposition, Madam Speaker, they keep brandishing names of ladies who are not in this House! It is a disgrace for them to do that. If they have the guts, they go outside and say it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Gayan: I have not mentioned the name of any lady here. I have not! I can, but I will not because I have a very high regard for ladies. Do not start, you will get it!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh, what is that kind of language? *Mo pas per twa!* I do not expect that from a hon. lady. I have said several times that there should be an element of courtesy.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, earlier on, hon. Thierry Henry spoke about the events that led to the PMSD leaving the Government in December 2016. Let us look at what really happened. On 23 December 2016, the PMSD left the Government and the hon. Leader of the Opposition acted in a manner totally in violation of the principles of the Constitution. Why? Because everything relating to the amendments to the powers of the DPP was considered by a Ministerial Committee chaired by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He came to Cabinet with a recommendation and after discussions in Cabinet - I am not disclosing anything of the discussions in Cabinet. I am just saying what happened - he disagreed with something and he

asked for another meeting of the Ministerial Committee. Cabinet agreed and the Ministerial Committee met again, under his Chairmanship, and agreed to a fresh set of recommendations. He piloted the recommendations in Cabinet. Cabinet approved them. When he left Cabinet - that was on a Friday - he did not say anything, and he was then bound by the principle of collective responsibility. But the very next day, Madam Speaker, he said he did not agree and he resigned. Had he disagreed in Cabinet...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, this is the second time I am addressing you!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, do you want to stay in the Chamber or do you want to leave?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, this is the last time I am calling you to order. Otherwise, I will order you out!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, I order you out because I have been addressing you ...

(Interruptions)

I have been addressing you several times; you seem to ignore me totally.

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

If he is a liar, you stand up and say so. Do not make comments from a sitting position! Because when you make comments from a sitting position, you are...

(Interruptions)

You know, in the eyes of the public, you are degrading this legislature. There are procedures in the House. Stand up and say so!

(Interruptions)

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. He is saying things that happened in Cabinet. We cannot refute them because it is secret in nature. You should not allow discussions of Cabinet...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: A point of order is raised when it is in breach of the Standing Orders.

(Interruptions)

There is nothing which is in breach of the Standing Orders. That is not a point of order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, I have a point of order, when the House will be silent and quiet.

Madam Speaker, hon. Thierry Henry used the word '*bouffon*' to the address of hon. Gayan. Perhaps he should consider withdrawing it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry, did you say that?

(Interruptions)

You did. So, kindly withdraw, please!

(Interruptions)

No, not 'yes'! You stand up and you say that you are withdrawing.

Mr Henry: I withdraw, Madam Speaker!

Madam Speaker: Yes, that is good! Not from a sitting position, because you have to respect the Chair.

Mr Henry: There is no problem, Madam Speaker! It is ok! Nothing wrong!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I was saying - and the record is there - the Cabinet meeting ended with Xavier Duval still as DPM. It is the next day that he resigned. Had he resigned in Cabinet, I would have had respect for him. But he did not, and that was a gross violation of the Constitution. But, anyway, I am sure that this will be something that teachers on the Constitution will be teaching their students about this violation of the Constitution.

Madam Speaker, we know what kind of words Dr. Khodabaccus addressed to the hon. Speaker. This is the kind of words they use - intellectual dishonesty.

Madam Speaker, let me come...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me come to the PNQ addressed to me by the hon. Leader of the Opposition on tourism. He asked a question for the first five months of tourists' arrivals. Why first five months? Because he knew that between January and April, Air Mauritius, which is the major partner of the tourism industry, had cancelled 110 flights. Inevitably, the numbers will go down. Emirates, in the months of April and May, because of Dubai Expo 2020, they are redoing their runway and they reduced their flights from two to one. So, obviously, when you have an aircraft A380 not coming to Mauritius, carrying about 400 passengers a day, the numbers will go down. That's why they asked a question about the first five months, and then he made a lot of fuss about arrival by sea and arrival by air. Madam Speaker, when I heard about this, I tried to find out from the Statistics Office what had happened, and I have a letter from the Statistics Office, Madam Speaker, which says that it is only since May 2019 that they are disaggregating the numbers by sea and by air. Only since May 2019. So, he knew. And, Madam Speaker, what has happened? They have all been talking about reduction in tourist arrivals by 4.3%. It is true. It is true, but I got Statistics Mauritius to give me the figures by 15 June, this year, and this is the result. I am quoting from the letter of Statistics Mauritius –

“Tourists arrivals for the period 1st to 15th June 2019 increased by 19.5% to reach 46,751 compared to 39,111.

(Interruptions)

“For the period January to 15 June 2019, tourist arrivals increased by 0.5% to attain 604,235 compared to 601,631 for the period last year.”

This is what I call intellectual dishonesty, Madam Speaker. They knew. I have official figures. I don't come to the House to mislead anybody, and this is why I said I must get official figures from Statistics Mauritius, and this is what I am doing.

Madam Speaker, I have said that all the predictions of doom and gloom of the Opposition can be accepted because they happen not to see the reality. But their prediction that the tourism industry is going to collapse, will never materialise. Madam Speaker, we have recently been - my colleagues also - to the reopening of the Club Med at Pointe aux Canonnières. We had the president of Club Med, Henri Giscard d'Estaing who was there. He had just invested billions of rupees in renovating Club Med. Do you think that if these people did not believe in the tourism industry, they would be investing in the tourism industry? No, but the impression is created that if the PMSD is not looking after tourism, nothing can happen. That is their preserve. This is their preserve, but we will show them.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I wish to say that we still have a target of between 4% and 5% in tourism growth, this year. But before I move on other parts of the Budget, because I know my time is limited, Madam Speaker, I must address the issue of unwarranted attacks made against me by hon. Members - hon. Uteem, hon. Bhagwan, hon. Osman Mahomed, hon. Baloomoody and I don't know whether hon. Ameer Meea also made remarks because I was not here.

(Interruptions)

He did! Okay. The hon. Member confirms. Good! - regarding a video clip which any independent observer would dismiss as a fabricated one. I have said right from the moment I saw it that I was a montage. It was a flagrant attempt at distorting what I said on two occasions, separated by months. Madam Speaker, I expect people like hon. Uteem, who is a lawyer, hon. Baloomoody and hon. Ameer Meea, who is a professional - I think he is a professional.

(Interruptions)

No? I am sorry. You are not a professional. You are!

(Interruptions)

Don't worry, I am not afraid.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, I don't think it is ethical to ask those sorts of questions. Please! Please do refrain!

Mr Gayan: I was saying that this was a montage...

(Interruptions)

...and I said that any reasonable person would have asked questions about how come this video, two events, *kole ansam pou fer pase enn message* that I am anti-Islam. Madam Speaker, anybody who has seen it and I'm sure that all the people listening to me *sauront que la vidéo commence avec une image de moi, habillé comme un Arabe. Cette image, Madam Speaker, c'est vrai, était à l'occasion du festival du cinéma, et nous avons organisé une soirée qui avait pour thème 'mille et une nuit', Arabian Nights!* That was the background to this! Does the video anywhere mention this? No! Now, I would expect lawyers, who are trained to detect something which is fabricated, to ask questions. They should have put on inquiry, but they didn't. And they should have known also that it was an extract taken out of context with regard to the other part of the video. I would have had no problem if the whole recording had been broadcast. Then, we would have known what was the truth, because the second part, Madam Speaker, which is a fabrication as well, because it is not the full recording, is about a seminar organised by the Mauritius Family Planning Association on the theme of '*Violence sexuelle entre les partenaires intimes*'. I was then the Minister of Health. I went there and I said to myself, after this happened, why did I mention anything about honour killing then, in 2016? Because then, Madam, anybody can Google 2016 honour killing and they will find that, at that time...

(Interruptions)

2016!

Madam Speaker: Please, don't interrupt!

Mr Gayan: ... there were lots of things in the international community, at the United Nations about honour killing. And I said, in my intervention, that I don't like the thing about honour killing because it is demeaning and it's a barbaric act. I mentioned Pakistan and I mentioned other countries as well.

(Interruptions)

I did not mention! I did not mention! Wait!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order! Hon. Uteem! Okay, if there is no Order, I will suspend. Okay, I suspend the session.

At 8.07 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.14 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, what I was talking about before you suspended the session was commented on by somebody who doesn't hold me close to her heart, and I mean Josie Lebrasse.

In *Week-End* of 26 May 2019, in an article "*Faits et effets*", with a title "*Positivons*", she mentioned all the nasty things about me, but that's okay. But then, she said –

"Mais dans ce cas précis, il nous semble qu'il y ait eu un emballement inutile et orchestré pour pousser à l'échauffement des esprits et exciter les émotions."

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, don't make remarks!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, there are other things that are mentioned, but this is exactly what happened. And I must also say that Finlay Salesse, on Radio One, on the Saturday after this event, he was very reasonable and he addressed the issue in a very calm and very patriotic way. But, Madam Speaker, when Josie Lebrasse speaks of '*orchestré*', in fact, you will recall, Madam Speaker, that, on 21 May, in the course of the debate when hon. Shakeel Mohamed happened to get suspended for three sessions, when he was walking out, he was overheard as saying –

"Aster zot pou kone."

That was on 21 May. On 23 May, at 14.11, Mr Eshan Joomun posts on Facebook –

"Shame on him. La communauté musulmane pena okenn leson pu pren avec toi, Pakistan, pas Pakistan, et décidemment il a un gros problème avec Pakistan. »

And who is Eshan Joomun? I will come to Eshan Joomun.

And then, there is another post on the same date, at 18.19, by 'Shameem one and only'

—

“Mo pas raciste mwa, zame mo pou kritik ou ofans personne so religion mai si li gagn droit, I don’t know me, etc...”

And then, *Sunday Times*, again, comments by hon. Uteem. Madam Speaker, I wanted to know whether really there was *orchestration*.

You know, Mauritius is Mauritius. When people find that something unfair is happening to someone, you find support in people whom you would never suspect as coming to your help. People come; and I am grateful to all those who gave me their support in those difficult times.

I have a son who is in Canada; he was sending me messages every five minutes. “Are you okay?” Because of all the menace and threats.

And when this was happening - I don’t go on Facebook, but friends told me that there are death threats against me on Facebook. That’s when I went to the Police, and I asked the Police to inquire fully about why this was happening and who was behind it, who was behind that *montage vidéo*.

The inquiry is still on, and I hope that we will come to exactly what is the case. This was what hon. Shakeel Mohamed had said. And then, I was sent a photo of Eshan Joomun and Shakeel Mohamed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister, I would advise you, during the course of your speech, not to drop names of people who are not in this august Assembly and who would not be able to defend themselves over here in this august Assembly, please.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I bow to your ruling. I will simply say that there was *orchestration* at the level of the *Sunday Times*, at the level of that gentleman, who, I think, lives in Dubai, and also by a group in Mauritius who always make declarations against my good friend, Showkutally Soodhun.

I hope the Police will be able to investigate fully about these things. But, Madam Speaker, let me – hon. Uteem has been shouting a lot. We, on this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we have said in our Manifesto, in 2014, that we have to set up a Commission of Inquiry on Drugs. They were then together with the Labour Party because they wanted a 60-0...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

(Interruptions)

Hon Baloomoody! Please!

Mr Gayan: I have pictures...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Gayan: I have evidence in my hand where hon. Osman Mahomed, Dr. Ramgoolam are together with Azaree, who is in jail. And hon. Uteem as well! Razack Peeroo! And the people will understand why. There would never have been a Commission of Inquiry had they come to power. And the other drug trafficker, Navin Kistnah, Azaree...

(Interruptions)

...Uteem, Osman Mahomed, Dr. Ramgoolam, Razack Peeroo...

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. May I look at the picture? Because he is mentioning people by names. He tables it!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Hon Minister! I think it is only fair that if you have mentioned the picture, you have shown the picture from there, then, it would be appropriate if you could just show them the picture or hand it over to them.

Mr Gayan: I have no problem at all.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Hon. Baloomoody, I am afraid that it is generating into acrimonious exchanges. In no way, it adds to the credibility of the House, please.

Please proceed, hon. Gayan!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, we have been on this side of the House...

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. He mentioned me with Kistnah. Can he show me where I am with Mr Kistnah?

(Interruptions)

He said Kistnah!

Mr Gayan: I never said Kistnah. I never said...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, please! If that continues...

(Interruptions)

Order, please! If that continues, then I will have to suspend for dinner.

(Interruptions)

I suspend the sitting for one hour!

(Interruptions)

At 8.23 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.51 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

MINISTER OF TOURISM/HON. BHAGWAN - INCIDENT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, following the incidents which occurred earlier today, I wish to inform the House that I had convened hon. Gayan, hon. Bhagwan, hon. Dr. Boolell, the Chief Government Whip and the Opposition Whip in my Office.

The main contentions relate to reference made by the hon. Minister to the recording taken of a workshop organised by the MFPA, which he attended in his capacity as Minister of Health and in the course of which he made reference to honour killing.

Hon. Bhagwan stated that he would wish the hon. Minister to withdraw the words, I quote –

“communauté mulsulmane.”

I have perused the relevant extract of the video recording of the Parliament Television, and it has been ascertained that the hon. Minister did not mention those words. However, he

referred to a post on a social media, posted by one Mr Eshan Joomun. In the circumstances, I cannot request the hon. Minister to withdraw words which he has not uttered in the House.

The other point in issue relates to the photograph exhibited by the hon. Minister, wherein he associated Mr Azaree and Mr Navin Kistnah with hon. Uteem, hon. Osman Mahomed, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam and Mr Razack Peeroo. I have examined the said photograph and I observed that they seem to be different pictures taken on different occasions and assembled on one A4 paper.

I am not in a position to determine the authenticity of the pictures and, therefore, the association of the hon. Members and the other persons with Mr Azaree and Mr Kistnah cannot be ascertained. I, therefore, invite hon. Gayan to withdraw the associations he made based on the said photograph and invite him to take back same.

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, I bow to your ruling.

Madam Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. I listened carefully to your statement. On our side, we still maintain that hon. Gayan said that *la communauté musulmane* is involved in honour killing. He should have the courage to...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No...

Mr Bhagwan: ...apologise to the Muslim community.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, let me say ...

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please, let me say that there is no point of order on the ruling which I have given. Now, it is up to the hon. Members to decide.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan, please proceed with your speech!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, on this side of the House, please!

(Interruptions)

Can we have some order?

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

At this stage, Members of the Opposition left the Chamber.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, please proceed!

Mr Gayan: Madame la présidente, j'aimerais partager avec la Chambre une expérience que j'ai vécue quand j'étais *Crown Counsel* dans le bureau de l'*Attorney General* dans les années fin 70. Et je le fais parce qu'on m'a taxé d'être anti-islam, antimusulman.

Il y a eu un crime commis quelque part à Grand Port et la victime était un musulman. C'était un chauffeur de taxi qui habitait l'Escalier. Le suspect était un hindou, un policier. Je ne vais pas citer les noms parce que je crois que c'est tellement longtemps, on ne va pas citer les noms. Et la pratique voulait que quand il y a un crime, au Parquet, on devait procéder par une enquête préliminaire pour décider s'il y avait suffisamment de preuves pour aller avec un procès aux Assises.

L'enquête préliminaire a été menée par un autre avocat du Parquet, qui était Suleiman Hatteea, qui était mon *senior* au Parquet. Et après que le Magistrat a donné ses *findings* sur

l'enquête préliminaire, le dossier retourne au Parquet et, une fois que c'est retourné, ça passe avec tous les officiers du Parquet pour que chacun donne son idée, est-ce qu'il y a matière à poursuite ou pas. Il y a l'honorable DPM qui est là et qui était au Parquet au même moment, et si je fais une erreur, il va me corriger.

(Interruptions)

1979. Le dossier passe avec tous les officiers du Parquet et chacun donne son avis, est-ce qu'il y a matière à poursuite ou pas. Et j'étais parmi un ou deux qui disaient que les preuves ne sont pas, comme on dit, *groundbreaking and without any doubt*, mais ce n'était pas à nous, au Parquet, de donner un certificat d'innocence au suspect. Et le DPP m'appelle, il me dit 'mais parce que tu es le *seniormost* avec cette idée, c'est à toi d'aller faire le procès aux Assises.' Et j'ai fait le procès aux Assises. Et j'avais contre moi - j'étais très jeune avocat à l'époque - Sir Marc David QC, Madun Gujadhur QC et Guy Ollivry QC. J'ai fait le *case*, et c'est un *case* qui a valeur de précédent sur *circumstantial evidence* aujourd'hui.

Et l'accusé, le suspect a été condamné *guilty as charged, guilty for murder*. Ce n'est qu'après qu'on m'a fait savoir que le suspect appartenait à la même caste que moi comme hindou. Mais j'ai fait mon travail de professionnel ; je suis un Mauricien, je suis un professionnel, et on peut vérifier tout ce que j'ai dit. Et c'est pour cela que je dis aujourd'hui que je me sens fier d'être Mauricien. Je défends les valeurs de la République et j'ai fait mon travail de professionnel comme avocat.

Madame la présidente, j'ai pris assez de temps pour des raisons hors de mon contrôle, mais je vais aller assez vite sur ce qui reste en ce qui concerne le tourisme. J'aimerais dire, Madame la présidente, que le tourisme est entre de bonnes mains et on a confiance que le tourisme va procéder comme cela a été le cas dans le passé. Mais nous avons vécu, Madame la présidente, depuis que ce gouvernement a été formé, un matraquage, un lynchage systématique de la part des médias, que ce soit certaines radios ou la presse. Comme exemple, je vais donner seulement quelques titres de ce que nous avons vécu du magazine *Weekly*. Regardez les titres depuis la formation du gouvernement, et je n'ai pas toute la liste - 'dégoutté, République de voyous, mille fois Ramgoolam. On a vu aujourd'hui qui est qui. Le voyou et l'essentiel. *Breaking news – MSAW captures Ravi. Important but impotent. A tramway called deceit because they are not worth it. The year of the hyenas*. Bienvenu à la dictature. La peste et la colère. Destination: Rogue Island. *From hero to zero*. C'est donc cela la décadence. Gouvernement impopulaire. The Safe City project towards a lawless

authoritarianism, the voodoo Budget.’ This Budget is a voodoo Budget? When the person who wrote this goes to buy a gas cylinder, will she say ‘No, no, this is a voodoo Budget. I am going to pay whatever had to be paid before’? When she goes to the filling station to fill her car, she is going to pay the old price? ‘Sneaking in repression’, et j’en passe. Et le dernier, Madame la présidente. How much blood is it worth? This is the kind of systematic bullying that we have received, again, from the Press.

Madame la présidente, laissez-moi parler un peu du *World Travel Awards* qui vient d’avoir lieu. On va entendre toute sorte de critiques sur le *World Travel Awards*, et c’est bon que je le dise. Quand nous avons organisé le *World Travel Awards*, j’ai invité tous les membres de l’Assemblée, tous les ministres, les députés de la majorité et les députés de l’opposition. Le leader de l’opposition avait répondu oui qu’il allait venir, après il n’est pas venu.

(Interruptions)

Mais je ne sais pas quel engagement il avait. Madame la présidente, c’est bon que je fasse savoir à la population que le *Word Travel Awards* a été un grand succès, et nous avons obtenu pour Maurice - *Indian Ocean’s Leading Destination, Indian Ocean’s Leading Adventure Tourism Destination, Indian Ocean’s Leading Cruise Destination, Indian Ocean’s Leading Wedding Destination, Indian Ocean’s Leading Tourist Board, Air Connectivity*. On a eu tout cela. Je dois aussi dire Madame...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please don’t interrupt the hon. Minister. I think we have lost enough time.

Mr Gayan: Pendant la soirée, Madame la présidente, il y a eu des représentants des médias qui sont venus de plusieurs pays du monde, et demain, entre 19 heures et 20 heures, sur TF1, il y aura un programme de 17 minutes dans le programme ‘50’ Inside’, et ça va donner un *boost* à la destination. Ce n’est qu’un exemple de ce qu’on fait pour promouvoir la destination. ‘50’ Inside’ est un programme qui est très, très populaire, qui est vu par plusieurs personnes. On aura 17 minutes. *It’s priceless*. Si on devait acheter ce nombre de minutes de publicité, cela nous aurait coûté une fortune.

Madame la présidente, quand j’ai pris le poste de ministre du tourisme, j’ai réalisé, étant donné ce qui se passe dans le monde, avec l’appauvrissement de certains pays en Europe, qu’il fallait diversifier notre marché touristique. Nous avons fait des démarches pour

diversifier. Nous sommes en train de travailler pour redynamiser la Chine et j'espère que nous allons arriver à des résultats probants pour la Chine. Mais c'est nous qui avons ouvert la destination sur l'Arabie et, mardi dernier, je cite :

“The cabinet of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia authorised the Chairman of the Saudi Commission for Tourism National Heritage or his Deputy to discuss two draft Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation in the domain of tourism between the SCTH of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Mauritius.”

Unheard of. And we are doing it because we need, during the low season, to attract the maximum of tourists who will come to Mauritius. So, we are promoting the destination in various ways, and this is why it is important that we appreciate that the hon. Prime Minister has increased the budget of the MTPA by Rs160 m. because we need to have the funds to be able to go more to destinations in order to boost whatever we are doing for tourist arrivals.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues have said a lot about the Budget, but I simply wanted to say something about Betamax. There are a lot of things about what we are doing in terms of destination, social media, advertising campaign, but there is one part of the opinion in the Betamax case which I think I must say because I am duty bound to say it. Each time, you will recall in this House, hon. Bhagwan, when he was talking about MedPoint, was doing like this to the address of the hon. Prime Minister. Today, despite the judgment of the Privy Council, which is the highest appellate court for Mauritius, even hon. Bérenger said something about it, and hon. Uteem, and hon. Baloomoody. It is a disgrace because they are lawyers - not hon. Bérenger, but the others. It is a disgrace that they fail to recognise the importance of the highest appellate court for the Republic of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

They do not at all! And I think when the time comes, we need to tell the people that they would like *tribunal du peuple* probably, but we are for democracy. We stand on the principle of the separation of powers and we intend to pursue that journey, because we believe that Mauritius is too important to be left in the hands of people like them.

Madam Speaker, when preparing for my intervention, I went to read, just to relax, Julius Caesar of Shakespeare, and I was struck by what conduct these people have. What struck me was the following, and I quote –

“The evil that men do lives after them.”

and the evil that we have seen tonight will live for ever. I hope it has been captured on television. We want this Assembly to be an Assembly where people can come and debate reasonably and fairly, very forcefully, but all the while respecting the views of the other. This is why, Madam Speaker, it is important that we bear in mind, and we will get the people to remember this, the judgment of the Supreme Court in the Betamax case. I wish to quote one part of that judgment because they spoke of State capture, they borrow all those clichés from all over the world and they come and brandish it in Parliament. Let me quote that extract –

“Besides the guarantee of a 15-year captive cargo, Betamax was also granted a right of first refusal for any additional petroleum products which STC would import in excess of the vessel’s capacity.”

Never in the world has a contract like this been signed. The whole of the secured obligations under the contract of affreightment was irrevocably and mandatorily guaranteed in favour of Betamax by the State of Mauritius.

The contract said the following –

“The State irrevocably and unconditionally guarantees to jointly and severally with the STC, as co-principal debtor, the due and punctual performance of the secured obligations and undertakes that it shall promptly pay any sum of money which STC has failed to pay (...).”

So, if the STC does not pay, Government has ...

(Interruptions)

This is State capture. This happened in Betamax, but it also happened in CT Power. In CT Power as well, it is the same principle, Government has to guarantee all the obligations of CT Power. And what did they do to get that letter of agreement? Because once they have that letter from the Ministry of Energy, that is worth money. They can go and sell it to anybody.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, just control yourself!

Mr Gayan: And the State guaranteed again all the obligations of the CT Power.

Madam Speaker, there are so many things to say, the others have said it, but let me say that we have a Government and a Prime Minister who is lucky. Without luck, we would

not have had a judgment of MedPoint, Betamax, CT Power, ICJ ruling and the United Nations General Assembly Resolutions.

(Interruptions)

Arbitrage BAI. And I started my intervention earlier this evening, by asking the question: if he had lost on all those points? If he had lost even on one, do you know what these people would have been saying?

But let me conclude, Madam Speaker. I apologise to my friends for having taken so much time. But then, I had to say certain things. I have been subjected to so much pressure and so much unfairness that I needed to come to this House and explain exactly what happened. I do hope that the people out there will understand why I had to say what I did say and why again, if I have to say it, I will say it. Because I may be *le fils d'un chauffeur de bus*, my mother, we lived in *lakaz la paille*, my father was a bus driver, yes, we lived in Triolet and my mother used to *maçonner avec la bouse de vache*, our house, every week, every Friday, I still remember, but we have principles. And it is thanks to education that I am where I am. We were very poor, I had an elder brother and my parents hardly had money to pay for his education because then, college education was paid for, it was not free like today. I got the junior scholarship, and in those days when you were a junior scholar, you got a cheque a Rs25 a month from Government. I never saw one cent of the Rs25, Madam Speaker, because that went for the family. And I am proud that today, I can stand in this House and speak up because we have been from there to where we are, but we have not forgotten ...

(Interruptions)

I am not like some of them who have been born into wealth, but I respect poverty and we will always. I listened to Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth earlier today, he knows, we were together when he was talking about Taiwan. I was with him. I was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs. We did go to Taiwan and then when there was a problem regarding hon. Paul Béranger, I came out to say that it was a technical stop in Taiwan. We did go and we got 30,000 tonnes of rice, as he said. That was very important then. This is why, Madam Speaker, we should never forget our origins.

I do not want to read the Article that was published in 'l'Express'. When it was published, I was then being vilified by certain radios, by certain sections of the Press, not all the Press, I must say. And then, that Article came, as someone said, you just take a rock and

you *pile* on somebody. If you are not strong, you have a depression. That is why I said earlier on, I suffered, my family suffered, my kids suffered, but then, I know also that we have a responsibility towards the State, towards our people, and this is why I am proud to be standing in this House tonight and to say what I am saying, and I am proud to be working under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister.

I thank you.

(11.15 p.m.)

Mr R. Rutnah (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today on my feet to address this Assembly and the people of Mauritius on the fifth Budget that this Government is presenting.

Madam Speaker, I am ever so grateful to my leader, the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, when he offered me the opportunity to be a candidate for the 2014 general election. I am also ever so grateful to Rt. hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth at the time when my leader went to the meetings and said that I will be proposed as candidate in Constituency No. 7, then hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, quite happily said yes; he would like me to be his *collistier*.

Madam Speaker, there are people in this House and outside who believe that people of my background should not be a lawyer, that people of my background should not be in this House. But I have worked hard to be where I am, from where I was. I am probably the most insulted Member of this House by our opponents. When we talk about opponents today, not only those who sit on the other side, not only the political opponents, but there are some very dangerous people out there, who I call '*journalistes politiques*'.

I have never had any trouble in my life with any journalist prior to 2014, but as soon as I got elected and I came to this House, on a weekly basis, you will read in *l'Express*, some lines dropped denigrating me and picked up by some other Press, as well. They used to do that religiously. Because, as I said, some people believe that the profession of the law and to be a Member of Parliament belong to a certain clique, and I never replied to any of those journalists. They even attacked my wife, they made false allegations, but when I was treated a dog, then I thought enough is enough, and out of the level of provocation that was on me, I reacted. Even up to now, they have not stopped with me, but many people in Mauritius, in my constituency and people who know me, they know what kind of person I am, and with me

what you see is what you get. People have tried to manipulate my phone; people have tried to interfere with my e-mails, people have tried to set me up, but never ever someone will get me for any act of corruption or fraud. The day those who will lay any blame on me, I am sure I will be able to tackle them in the way that I would feel fair and reasonable, but I will be tough.

Madam Speaker, after the Budget that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance presented, as usual, I go to my constituency and also, by virtue of my profession, I travel a lot over the country going to different Courts, meeting different people, and everywhere that I went other than even my constituency, there was one common theme that I heard. I have to say it in this House and I have to say it to the people of Mauritius who are listening because this will resound what is happening out there. They said: '*Pravind pe fer bien; gouvernement pe fer bien*' and this is telling all over Mauritius.

Let us see on what the Opposition disagree or disapprove or they are against us. When I say the Opposition, I also mean *les journalistes politiques*. They are not with us with the old age pension, the increase from 2015 onwards. They are not with us with the increase in disability pension, and we amended the law that now there is no need for you to become a certain age to claim disability pension, but you can claim even from childhood. They are not with us on National Minimum Wage, and we heard recently what the Leader of the Labour Party said, that as a result of the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, a lot of firms will have to close down. They are not with us on the Negative Income Tax. They are not with us on the Metro Express that this Government is implementing, but they are advocating that the *Métro léger* that was going to cost us Rs38 billion almost, that's they subscribe to, but not the one, the same thing that we are doing that is costing less than half the amount. Hon. Bodha explained the Rs9 billion that we are receiving soft loan and the Rs9 billion that we are receiving as grant. They are not with us on the announcement that the hon. Prime Minister made, during the commencement of this year, that irrespective of the background you come from you can go to University for free. They are not with us on that. They are blatantly not with us on the Safe City Project. We heard what the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the PMSD said, and all his comments, during the PNQ. These are some of the measures that Government has taken on which they are not with us, they criticise us.

Now, let us see insofar as the budgetary measures that we have announced with the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has announced on what they are disagreeing and/or disapproving or otherwise criticising on a daily basis. They are not with us on the

decrease in the price of gas, LPG gas. They are not with us on the decrease in the price of Mogas and diesel. They are not with us on the increase of pension of Rs500 a month. They are not with us on the extension of trade licence that those who pay Rs5,000 will be exempted and it has been extended for three more years. They are not with us on the fact that poor children, some 11,000 poor children will be able to access Internet for free. Oh! They are not with us on the Rs30 increase to the fishermen and they are collectively criticising this measure. We have heard the figures that when the Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance how much he allowed in his Budget.

(Interruptions)

‘Rs9’, says hon. Toussaint. Hon. Baloomoody, lawyer by profession, cannot make the difference between what is wages and what is allowance when you hear him, because, according to him, it should have been aligned with minimum wages.

They are not with us. On the FSC agreement with Gujarat for the Finance Tec-City to recognise Mauritian licensed fund and management companies as qualified to operate in Gujarat as well. They are not with us on that. And with this measure, just a few lines I will say, the opportunity, the advantages we have lost with the Double Taxation Treaty, this measure will compensate that when our licensed traders can go and set up in Gujarat.

They are with us on the increase of Rs1,000 per month that will be given to the civil servants pending the determination of the PRB Report that will come in 2020 or 2021. They are not with us on the Medical Insurance Scheme that the Prime Minister has announced. They are not with us on the Portable Gratuity Fund that has been announced and the Bill which will be presented in this Assembly. They are not with us on the Workers’ Rights Bill and we know that during the Labour-PMSD Government, how much they amended the law in order to curtail the rights of workers in this country. They are not with us on the measure that has been announced that it is going to be mandatory for parastatal bodies to have at least one woman on their Board, and bloomingly marvellous they are not with us on the repayment of public debt from the reserve that the Bank of Mauritius holds. These are some because there are more measures that have been announced, but these are *les mesures phares*, as far as I am concerned which have direct impact on the population, on the people at large and they say they don’t agree, they criticise.

The people out there have said it on other occasions that children of *marsan gato*, children of *sofer bis*, *contoler bis*, children of drivers, and children of *marsan pistas* are today

professionals and we are not fool anymore, be it in the cities or in the villages. People out there are intelligent and they know which side has reason today and which side is acting unreasonably, and when you hear Members of the Opposition, I'm sure this walk-out was all planned. This was all planned, because they don't have the guts, they can't face us. It's a strategy and believe me, Madam Speaker, they are listening to us. They are listening to me tonight from their home or some from their office because they are not bold and courageous enough to come and listen to what I have to say today.

Madam Speaker, a lot has been said about *mirak ekonomik* by them. We heard Sir Anerood Jugnauth earlier on, the Mentor Minister. It took him two mandates to really bring the *mirak ekonomik*. They made people believe out there that *mirak ekonomik* can happen in days or overnight. They make people believe that water can be supplied 24/7 overnight. On this side of the House - and I will use this to respond to hon. Ramful - we have got people with experience, with wisdom, who have the key to miracle economic. Sir Anerood Jugnauth has proved *miracle économique* in this country. But, on the other side of the House, they have got the key; the Labour Party has the key to the coffers, to the safe. On this side of the House, we have got *le père du miracle économique*. On that side of the House, if you would remember, they had *le père de la dévaluation*. Earlier on they were talking about *dévaluation*, depreciation of currency!

Coming now to hon. Ramful about Chagos and the rest of them, Chagos as far as I am concerned, the problem that we are facing today, and I told you earlier, I told the House and I told the people that with me what you see is what you get and I can candidly say today to my population, to my people that the problem that we have faced with Chagos today over which we are still fighting over is a creation of the Labour Party. That's a creation of the Labour Party when you follow the case when it unfolded before the ICJ when Sir Anerood Jugnauth went and pleaded there for us, for the decolonisation, when you see the comments that were made by then Prime Minister of England on Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. The way they were trading, then you know that they did not go there with a view to really fight for the decolonisation of Africa or of Mauritius, Madam Speaker, and I confirm what I say.

I have an article here from a Journal called the 'New Internationalist', the author is Virgil Hawkins. He is an author of *Stealth Conflicts* and he is also currently an Associate Professor of the Osaka School of International Public Policy, Osaka University, Japan and a Research Associate at the University of the Free State South Africa. He wrote on 07 June 2012, 'Diego Garcia's shameful history continues', and listen carefully what he writes –

“Mauritius was convinced to sell these islands to the UK in 1965 under dubious circumstances: the sale was part of the independence negotiations (...) and the prime minister of Mauritius who negotiated the deal was awarded a knighthood soon after the transfer.”

You see, but I think the suggestion is right that I should table a copy of this.

Madam Speaker, today when we hear them criticising, talking about Chagos and when the Prime Minister announced it, you can see them sitting there, jaws dropped like constipated cats.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, today when we hear them criticising, talking about Chagos and when the Prime Minister announced it, you can see them sitting there, jaws dropped like constipated cats. I am glad that, at least, on this side of the House now, we are being cheerful. You know what my grandmother would have said if she would have been here? She would have said *Lajal laika, dhonri dhowata*. You know what does this mean? It means that you see kids sometime they go and try to steal a bar of chocolate or some sweet, and then they get caught by their parents. Then they quickly drop it and they start to touch their navels because they starve, and, at the same time, they are scared. So this is how, like school kids, like constipated cats, they were sitting there not even showing some degree of appreciation...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, try to be a little bit moderate in your language.

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, I am grateful for having reminding me, but I do not see it is any kind of any offence. I am just making metaphorical remarks. When the Labour Party was together with PMSD in Government, whenever their Minister of Finance was presenting a Budget, people all over Mauritius were saying *serré ceinture*. *Serré ceinture* meaning that lots of commodities will have price increase and lots of traders who would not sell so that they can get windfall gains after the presentation of the Budget, but this culture of *serré ceinture* has finished completely. Now *largué ceinture, largué tout. Gaz à gogo, manzer, boire, donner, donne jazz*.

Madam Speaker, when we heard the hon. Leader of Opposition saying that the Budget is *décevant*, including hon. Paul Bérenger and the Labour Party, and including hon. Ganoo, there is one thing they keep saying, that this Budget does not *relance l'économie*. But *l'économie* has already been *ré lancée* a long time ago so what do you have to *relance* again? They have been left behind. Now, listen to this; when the 2016-2017 Budget Speech was

delivered, hon. Leader of Opposition was then in Government and I will just read a little bit what he said –

“Madam Speaker, when I had the occasion to comment on the Budget a few weeks ago, I said that I thought and I meant it, that the Budget is excellent *dans la forme et dans le fond.*”

I think, Madam Speaker, if there is one guy whose *le coeur fer mal*, it must be the Leader of the Opposition, and then the Leader of Opposition was Paul Bérenger who was sitting there for 12 years. That must really make *le coeur fer mal* whereas I have been here very comfortable. *Le coq crie du coeur.* And he said a lot of things about how the measures that were taken in 2016/2017 have given a boost to the economy of Mauritius. When we are reaping the fruits of that boost today, unfortunately he sits in the Opposition. Now he is jealous and that is why they do not like all the measures. Now, the First Member of Constituency No. 3 said during his intervention that, today, we have been left with a divided country; the rich getting richer, the poor getting poorer. We have also divided the country regionally. Are these measures that I referred to earlier on, which the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance announced in the Budget, going to favour only one category of people or are they for all? Do we see that division? When the children of poor people will go to university tomorrow and they are not going to pay their fees for university because it is free, is it going to be only children from the north or children from the south, or children belonging to a particular community or cast? No, it is going to favour all of us, irrespective of community, cast, region where we live. So the country is not divided, the country is ever so united but this is what they want; they want this country to be divided and that is why you see that kind of attitude and behaviour that they depict in the House.

Madam Speaker, let me come to Betamax. A lot has been said about Betamax. Let me deal a bit now with Betamax to see what happened. I am mindful because the First Member of Constituency No. 3 raised a Point of Order yesterday that the matter is still *sub judice*. So, I am going to read what was said in the House but I am also going to reply to hon. Uteem, the scathing attacks that he directed on us, and I am going to take it slowly. On the 16 June 2009, the then hon. Gunness asked question about a double-hull vessel purchase, and the then hon. Baichoo was Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport and Shipping, replied as such –

“(…), a study was commissioned by the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping in 2007 to advise on the procurement of a product carrier/oil tanker and acquisition of a medium sized container vessel; and the stabilisation of Mauritius freight rates. The Consultant, Maritime Logistics and Trade Consultancy, submitted its report on 25 May 2007, and it has concluded that, if Mauritius owns its own tanker, there would be net substantial savings of USD12.6 m., greater control over pricing, delivery, timing and volume of imports; and recommended the purchase of a double-hull tanker.”

And then, at a later stage –

“On the basis of the proposal which Betonix Ltd (…)”

We have heard about Betonix earlier on, Betonix made the *contrat béton*.

“(…) my Ministry informed the promoter on 12 January 2009 that Government has agreed, in principle, to their acquiring and operating a double-hull tanker vessel for the transportation of petroleum products for Mauritius for a period of 15 years as from 2010.”

And, at that time, hon. Lesjongard was sitting in Opposition and he asked a question to the then hon. Baichoo. Quite properly, he asked –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the Minister whether the Ministry concerned did seek advice from the State Law Office before proceeding with the contract?”

And listen to this reply –

“I am not aware of this. In fact, consultations must have taken place.”

And we know, at the time, the State Law Office was weary about this contract. Then we have the PQ of hon. Uteem on the 13 July 2010, PQ 1B/305, and the question was replied was hon. Soodhun. Do you know why I am taking this step by step? Because today, they have used lots of energy and efforts manipulating lots of facts to lay the blame on hon. Soodhun, about Betamax. That is why I am taking it slowly, step by step. In his reply, hon. Soodhun said this on 13 July –

“Regarding the contract for the conveyance of petroleum products, I wish to refer the House to the reply made on 16 June 2009 in reply to PQ No. B/542. I wish to remind the House that the decision to purchase a tanker was taken in the year 2005, and a

study carried out in 2007 by a specialised firm concluded that it would be advantageous for the country to acquire a tanker.”

So, at that time, in 2010, hon. Soodhun was provided the information for the first time that confirmed that the decision to purchase a tanker was made in 2005. Then, hon. Soodhun expressed some reserves, and this is what he said –

“On 12 January 2009, Government agreed to the proposal of the company subject to the conditions, *inter alia*, that -

- (i) the company should fully finance the purchase of a double hull tanker vessel, without any financial commitment of the Government;
- (ii) the vessel should be registered locally, and
- (iii) freight rates would have to be agreed with STC, based on rebates available with regard to the indicative market rate.”

And this is where hon. Soodhun now started to show some cautions, because perhaps, at that time, if you would have been here, probably his memory would have been jogged, that he must have started to discover that there is *anguille sous roche*.

Then we have the second PQ of hon. Uteem B/391 of 24^h May 2011 and hon. Soodhun, in his reply said the following –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some of the weaknesses identified by ST Shipping in that opinion concerned, *inter alia* –

- (1) the capacity of the vessel;
- (2) the number of grades that could be segregated on the vessel;
- (3) the high risk of contamination of products, and
- (4) the risk of loading some products at high temperature in tanks adjacent to those containing Mogas, Jet and Gasoil.

All the issues raised above are, of course, of major concern, and were then discussed at length with Betamax Ltd. The latter then submitted four different reports confirming the suitability of the vessel to carry different grades of products safely.”

And then he goes on –

“As this is a major event, I had requested the STC to liaise with MRPL with a view to ascertain that the shift of the new mode of transport of our petroleum products takes place in the best conditions.”

And he goes on –

“Despite all the care taken so far, I feel it is my duty to inform the House that the risk of contamination of products, as mentioned by Bent Nielsen, remains a matter of concern. As you will be aware, transport of black oils and white oils on the same tanker is not common practice. It does present a number of risks. I am informed that these risks have been fully addressed by the promoters”

And it goes on and hon. Soodhun keeps on giving a truthful and honest answer about Betamax. This is where the trouble started with the relationship between MSM and Parti Travailleiste.

And then, we have the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition, after the award of Singapore. Then, my very good friend, hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo, stated that the Attorney General’s Office which was consulted, did not give its clearance to the contract as proposed by Mr Bhunjun, one of the proponent of Betamax Limited. One of the grounds was that the Public Procurement Act had not been followed despite the issue was pursued by the then Government disregarding the legal advice and it is not a mere coincidence that it was on that very day on which that STC Board was considering the contract of affreightment that Betamax Limited was incorporated, on the same day. Then he goes on, he said –

“The STC has received independent legal advice to the effect that the Betamax Ltd contract was against the “public interest”. Advice was tendered along those lines by local Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney. Advice was also given by Stephenson Harwood, a reputable international firm which is multi-disciplinary, not just law but shipping and other matters.”

He goes on –

“Madam Speaker, the total amount paid to Betamax Ltd for the period May 2011 to January 2015 was USD125,244,128 for the importation of 4,046,703 metric tons of petroleum products, that is, an average freight rate of USD 30.79 per metric ton.”

So, this was the reply of the then Attorney General to the House. And even when the Leader of the Opposition was asking these questions, he was rejoicing because he thought after the

Rs4.5 billion Award that Singapore has awarded, this country is in doom, he even went and made calculations. I will remind the House, he made calculation and he sent a fax simile of his calculation do you know to whom? To *l'Express*. And *l'Express* published it because everything said against this Government, *journaliste politicien*; it is party time for them. So, *l'Express* writes on 21 June 2017 –

“Selon son calcul – le calcul de qui ? Hon. Adrien Duval’s father, Xavier Duval - la STC aurait payé entre 21 et 23 dollars la tonne métrique de produits pétroliers au lieu des 24,25 dollars la tonne métrique facturés actuellement. Pour appuyer ses dires, le chef de l’opposition a fait parvenir son calcul aux salles de rédaction, hier. Cela, accompagné d’une note explicative. Ainsi faisant, Xavier-Luc Duval.”

And really, he made an impressive calculation - because he is an Accountant by profession, he says and he has done his *calcul*. I thought I only get arithmetic wrong, and he always makes comments about this. He produced a table, faxed it to ‘*l'Express*’ and ‘*l'Express*’ continued to write –

“L’autre élément inclus est l’utilisation optimale du pétrolier Red Eagle. Ici, Xavier-Luc Duval utilise une analogie, à savoir un autobus de 60 sièges en route pour un pique-nique avec seulement 30 personnes à son bord. «Évidemment que le coût par passager sera doublé», peut-on lire dans sa note explicative.”

“En somme, dit-il, pour l’importation de quelque 1200 000 tonnes métriques de produits pétroliers annuellement, les économies avec le Red Eagle auraient été de R 84 millions par an.”

My foot! How much we have saved since we rescinded the contract, according to hon. Ashit Gungah? Rs1.4 billion! This is hon. Duval’s calculation, that famous Accountant of this House, the Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

Yes, of course. I am sure hon. Aadil Ameer Meea would have made a better calculation if we would have given him the figures. And you know, Madam Speaker, when hon. Soodhun was speaking the other day, I really felt for him. When you know when hon. Soodhun was speaking the other day, I really felt for him. When he said that after the judgement in Karnataka, he was in Saudi Arabia, the Prime Minister called him and he spoke to Prince Salman because our stock was not enough and he managed to get two tankers of petrol for

our citizens. When hon. Soodhun made that move, he did not make that move for only a particular community, he didn't make that move for only a region of Mauritius, like a true patriot, he did it for the country, for the people of Mauritius, for our children. And what they tried to do? They tried to blame it on hon. Soodhun when even though we won the Betamax case. This judgement on Betamax has been delivered by one of the finest judges of our country, and look at what he says –

“The enforcement of an illegal contract of such magnitude (...)”

He has already concluded that the contract was illegal just like to Attorney General when he replied, said that it was a contract against the Public Procurement Act and even the State Law Office didn't advise to proceed with it. The judge is saying -

“The enforcement of an illegal contract of such magnitude, in flagrant and concrete breach of public procurement legislation enacted to secure the protection of good governance of public funds, would violate the fundamental legal order of Mauritius. Such a violation breaks through the ceiling of the high threshold which may be imposed by any restrictive notion of public policy.

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

For the given reasons we find that the Award is contrary to the public policy of Mauritius within the meaning of section 39(2)(b)(ii) of the IAA, and the Award is accordingly set aside.(...)”

So, the Labour Party, the PMSD and, unfortunately, backed by the MMM, by hon. Reza Uteem, in particular, try to make belief that tail they win, head they win, as well. And interestingly while I am dealing with Betamax, let me say something about CT Power. CT Power was another contract over which they were claiming 4.5 billion to the tune of 4 billion, these figures of 4 billion, how to they get that? How? Is it coincidence? 4 billion CT Power, 4 billion Betamax? They are not plucked from somewhere like this. It's very well planned, calculated to defraud the people of Mauritius. Now, can you imagine if you would have lost 4.5 billion on Betamax, 4 billion on CT Power, 8.5 billion? Then, we will have to buy another

vessel in order to import safe and coffers from other countries because we would not be able to supply in Mauritius to keep that amount of money.

Madam Speaker, now let me deal with this propaganda about Medpoint. In 2009, the current hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance was nowhere near Parti Travailliste, even his party was nowhere near Parti Travailliste. In 2009, the then Minister Dr. Jeetah met the owner of Medpoint, and let me remind the House that one Dr. Beebeejaun, who was in the Government then, also had interest in Medpoint, and when you see the papers on Medpoint, in fact, he has conflict of interest, contrary to the provision of ICAC.

Let us see step by step what the five Law Lords have said. At page two, dealing with the facts, they said –

“In March 2010, before the defendant – that is, hon. Pravind Jugnauth - entered public office as a minister, the Government of Mauritius approved a project for setting up a National Geriatric Hospital (“NGH”). In April 2010 the Central Procurement Board (“CPB”) launched a public call for bids for the NGH project.”

So, well before it was already agreed that they will buy the geriatric hospital. At page 3, paragraph 6 –

“At a Cabinet meeting on 18 June 2010 the NGH project was raised for discussion. The defendant – that is, hon. Pravind Jugnauth - declared a personal interest in Medpoint and left the meeting. In his absence the cabinet agreed that consideration be given to the acquisition of an existing medical facility to accommodate the NGH – that is, the National Geriatric - and that the project should be given high priority with a view to being completed within the calendar year.”

Madam Speaker, before I take the next part that I have to read, when this matter went to the Privy Council and we were awaiting judgement, you know, *les journalistes politiques*, some of them were even pretending to be judges, they were super than those law lords who sit at the Privy Council.

Madam Speaker, I have had an opportunity to work in England and Wales, and I have seen how legal works are performed there in front of judges at the Crown Court in the Old Bailey and the Court of Appeal and the Highest Court there. Those judges are almost genius in their field, and little you say to them, they understand a lot. But here, in Mauritius, some *journalistes politiques*, they were as if writing judgement, they were writing judgement about guilt or innocence, but they would never make a finding of innocence, because, according to

them, it was all out guilty. And then, you realise when you see the way they write the comments that this was a design to finish this man from the political scene of Mauritius because he was a danger to them.

And then, it goes on –

“In the Board’s view, the Intermediate Court did not apply the principles of apparent conflicts of interest in substitution for the elements of the offence as identified above. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court was clearly correct in its statement that it is incumbent on the prosecution to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the defendant took part in proceedings relating to a decision in which the relative had an actual personal interest and that this is not a situation where an apparent interest perceived by a fair-minded observer would give rise to a criminal conviction under section 13(2).”

And then, it goes on, at paragraph 41 –

“(...) the prosecution has failed to establish that the defendant sister had a personal interest in the decision an element of *actus reus* of the offence, contrary to section 13(2) (...). However, it should be noted that the same token, the defendant could not have knowledge of the existence of the facts giving rise to a personal interest in the decision in his sister, because there were none.”

But then, what did they say, including ‘*les journalistes politiciens*’, and those whom we face here? What do they say? Sometimes, I have even heard some members of the legal profession saying: ‘Oh, at least, now we have got a definition of section 13(2) of the POCA’! How intellectually dishonest! Madam Speaker, I have been in the profession for quite long. I have read this judgement so many times; it is so well written that I have not seen anywhere, where the Law Lords have tried to rewrite the Law of Mauritius in relation to section 13. But, even then, they don’t accept that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has won his case and he was innocent from the inception of this matter. All they wanted to do, as we say, *attass enn lake ferblan arr li*, because he was a danger to Ramgoolam, he was a danger to the PMSD, and to Bérenger as well, because hand in hand, hon. Bérenger and Ramgoolam were trying to hijack this country in 2014. They had chemistry.

Now, let me come to this argument about the Reserves to deal with the public sector. Madam Speaker, Reserves are normally mandatory on the fixed exchange rate system. But, we, in Mauritius, we have what we call, the flexible exchange rate chips, which stipulate that

we do need to hold Reserves. And through the good skill of management of public affairs, through implementation of appropriate fiscal and monetary policy, in particular monetary policy, this Government, through its Finance Minister has been able to accumulate excess amount of liquidity in the Reserves in terms of Foreign Currencies. We have currently an inflation rate of 1.5%. In economic terms, it is nothing, it is insignificant. We have the lowest unemployment rate. In such a situation, when we are faced with debts, and the debts that we have been facing with, are not the debts that have been accumulated – the public debts have not been accumulated by this Government. The public debts were accumulated by the Government of Parti travailliste and PMSD. Our external debts today are only 30% out of the total public debts. So, we have almost doubled the Reserves amount that should be kept at the Bank of Mauritius. The IMF World Bank recommended that Reserves should be between four months to six months for your imports. Now, what is wrong in paying our debts rather than keeping that money idle, and then pay about Rs400 m. interest to those who we owe, and most of the money we owe is as a result of the bad finance management of the previous Government. It is like in a household, the father has saved the money, kept some money, and at the same time he has a loan, and while the children are saying: '*Papa paye loan la*', the neighbour from next door is coming and say: 'Don't pay the loan, it is better to keep the money at home than you pay the loan.' This is what they want us to do. So, in economic term – I don't have enough time today to explain the real economic intricacies ...

Madam Speaker: Next time.

Mr Rutnah: ...because I wanted to explain, but I tried to make it as simple as possible, because this is a complex area, and that's why the hon. Leader of the Opposition does not understand...

(Interruptions)

Exactly, he is confused! Now, there were some criticisms levelled by hon. Ms Sewocksingh against my friend, the Minister of Agro-Industry, hon. Seeruttun, in relation to the tea industry. Madam Speaker, in an intervention, she referred to the tea sector and she said, according to her, the tea sector has not taken off.

(Interruptions)

Exactly! I am glad that hon. Toussaint has made this remark, all be it from a sitting position.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: I hope you are not usurping ...

Mr Rutnah: No! Madam Speaker, he literally just takes over from what I was about to say. This is a direct proof that the PMSD are not in contact with the electorate in their constituency. There is a tea factory in Dubreuil that has been opened. Do you know how many people are working in that tea factory, Madam Speaker? I am told hundreds of people are working in the tea factory at Dubreuil and they are growing tea. I am also told that a nursery has been set up at the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security to produce tea plants. Last year, they have already planted 250,000 plants, and 160,000 plants have already been produced. 40 acres of new tea field have already been planted and by the end of the year 100 acres will be planted. This is how this Government is working. Not only to relieve the situation in which the small sugarcane planters are in, - I will talk about the small sugarcane planter in a minute - but also to the tea sector. The tea sector was a dying sector. Hon. Seeruttun, with the blessing of the Prime Minister, they have acted like doctors to save that sector, to revive it. It was a dying sector. When I said earlier on that they always refer to this, because they get the support from '*les journalistes politiques*', so they have got interest to refer to *les journaux qui publient les articles* on which they can rely. So, she referred to an article, alleging that the Minister has favoured his former colleagues of the MSIRI by nominating them in different positions. I wish this hon. Member to go and say the same thing outside. But here, abusing the cloak of immunity, they say things to make believe out there.

And you know what, Madam Speaker, these people whom she mentioned are Doctor in Pathology, Doctor in Biotechnology, Doctor in Entomology, Doctor in Agronomy, they are all highly professionals, worked over 30 years, they have experience in the field. So, if the hon. Minister will not appoint people of this caliber, so do you think the tea industry will take off or do we need to ground it completely?

(Interruptions)

Yes. This is the kind of attitude they display.

(Interruptions)

Before I finish, Madam Speaker, let me deal with the issue of the small sugar planters because I come from Constituency No. 7 Piton/Rivière du Rempart. The majority of my electorate is small sugarcane planters. When the hon. Prime Minister announced in the budget that they will get Rs25,000 per tonne of sugar production, twice the amount that they would have earned, some of them were filled with tears with joy because really that sector

was suffering and is suffering and that Rs25,000 is going to give them a boost and encouragement. And that is why when I went in the constituency, they said *Pravind pe fer bien, gouvernement pe fer bien*. And when they say Pravind, they say with love and with tears and the tears with love.

Madam Speaker, before I go to my constituency, I have to thank the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor for what he has done for the Chagos Island because earlier on when I dealt with the issue of Chagos, I did not deal with it because I wanted to deal with it as a separate subject. I heard hon. Bérenger speaking earlier on about Chagos, about Tromelin. There is a difference between spider-man and birdman; there is a difference between action man and con man; you can talk; you can bluff; you can say a lot of things about a particular issue, but when there is no action, it means nothing, but Minister Mentor this will remain in history and I am proud I was his *colistier*. Next time, I will not be his *colistier* because he has announced that he is retiring from politics. That at his age, he took his wigs and his gown, he travelled from Mauritius with his delegation to the International Court of Justice and fought for his country and for his people and the future of the children of this country, to decolonise. And today he has made history! And that's why I say when this was announced the other day, they were sitting there jaws dropped. They didn't appreciate. So, he is a statesman, a man who will always be remembered for the work that he has done for this nation, for his people.

Madam Speaker, now coming to what has been achieved in my constituency, the list is long. I am going to table a list of at least 84 projects which are ongoing at the moment and the list is from the Prime Minister's Office, National Development Unit as at 27 February 2019. I am very grateful to my friend, hon. Ramkaun, who is the PPS of my constituency and prior to this, a lot of other projects have already been achieved through the Local Government and I am ever so grateful to hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo, the Vice-Prime Minister for the amount of funds that she has allocated to the Local Government in order to complete those projects. So, I propose to put it.

And the recent projects, for example, hon. Bodha recently came to my constituency together with the Prime Minister and we inaugurated the traffic centre in Piton. In Piton, there have been major infrastructural works that have been carried out, including new village hall, volleyball pitch, and traffic centre. There is the project of the multipurpose complex in Roches Noires.

Drains, Madam Speaker, hats off to the Prime Minister! When there was the flooding in Cottage, Mapou, Gokoola and Piton, some Members of the Opposition of the Labour Government who were Ministers previously, they were rushing down there to sympathise with the people and they are the ones, the culprits who have not completed the work that ought to have been completed and they were kicked out from there. I told you the people are not fooled anymore. And when we approached the Prime Minister, he straightaway from emergency fund released the fund so that the work at Cottage, Gokoola, Piton and elsewhere could be carried out and the works are actually in progress and are about to even finish very soon. We have got the project of the water pipes and I thank the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for the effort that he has put in my constituency insofar as water supply is concerned.

Madam Speaker, my constituency suffered a lot. Our elders and grandees, our mothers, our aunties were carrying buckets of water on their head. Sometimes in the morning when you open the tap, there is no water. Why? Because the pipes were so old and rotten that they could not sustain water pressure. Now, in Rivière du Rempart, in Plaine des Roches, in Roches Noires, in L'Amaury and in all over my constituency water 24/7. Thank you, Mr Deputy Prime Minister.

The reservoir project in L'Amitié, also the renewable project, the Batterie in L'Amaury, the Éolienne Project in Roches Noires adding all up together my constituency with this Government has had its fair share of development and more is coming, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I am sure I will have the opportunity to take part in yet another budgetary debate in the foreseeable future in this House because we are going to be back.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 24 June 2019 at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 00.27, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 24 June 2019 at 11.30 a.m.