



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**PARLIAMENTARY****DEBATES****(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****TUESDAY 19 JUNE 2018**

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THE CABINET

(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraaidoo, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	Minister of Tourism
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Maneesh Gobin	Attorney General, Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives

Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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Deputy Speaker	Teeluckdharry, Hon. Kalidass
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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 12 of 2018

Sitting of Tuesday 19 June 2018

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

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID**A Prime Minister's Office**

The Annual Report of the Accountant-General and the Accounts of the Government of the Republic of Mauritius for the Financial Year ended 30 June 2017.

B Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping

The Annual Reports of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute for the year ended 31 December 2013 and 31 December 2014.

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

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

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

Second Reading

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2017-2018) BILL

(No. VIII of 2018)

Order for Second Reading read.

(11.35 a.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, I move that the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill (No VIII of 2018) be read a second time.

The Bill provides for the appropriation of an additional sum of two billion rupees (Rs2,000,000,000) for financing projects under the National Environment Fund.

The Rs2 billion is in excess of the expenditure appropriated by the Appropriation (2017-2018) Act 2017, hence the need for the ESE.

Madam Speaker, during the period 2005 to 2014, the National Environment Commission never met. This Government made a commitment to revive that Commission in order to create better synergy among the various stakeholders and address important environmental concerns and issues.

In fact, in May 2018, I chaired a National Environment Commission meeting to address the critical urgency imposed by climate change that was adversely impacting on the lives of our citizens as well as the damage being done to our natural assets and our economy.

Discussions were centred on the need for the implementation of priority capital projects across the island to address these risks, namely for the implementation of projects that will target environmental protection and coastal rehabilitation.

It was also made obvious that the mobilisation of funding at both the national and international levels was indispensable for Mauritius as a Small Island Developing State to cope with the adaptation and mitigation challenges imposed by climate change.

Subsequently, Government agreed that the existing National Environment Fund would be revamped by amending only certain sections of Part IX of the Environment Protection Act, namely the clauses referring to the objects and composition of the Board.

The Rs2 billion represents an initial contribution from the Consolidated Fund to the National Environment Fund. This amount, however, will be insufficient to meet the environmental challenges that lie ahead. Consequently, the regrouping of environment-related programmes under one roof will facilitate mobilisation of funds at the international level, especially from friendly countries with which we have long standing and very good relations. The Fund will bring visibility to our various development partners on the international front.

In this context, we will mobilise international funds from various international agencies and friendly countries namely, the Green Climate Fund, the Global Environment Facility, the King Salman Humanitarian Aid & Relief Centre - Saudi Arabia.

Madam Speaker, through this Fund, we will also bring greater coordination and synergy amongst various Governmental implementing bodies concerned with issues that I have just highlighted so that holistic and sustainable solutions are brought.

This Fund will be used to support and finance programmes such as –

First, the Rehabilitation, Protection and Management of Beaches and Lagoons Programme which will address erosion of beaches at critical sites as well as re-profiling and rehabilitation of public beaches for the benefit of our citizens.

The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment have identified 13 critical sites for coastal protection works to be carried out as follows –

- i. Grand Baie – Sunset Boulevard;
- ii. Case Noyale;
- iii. Baie du Tombeau;
- iv. Résidence La Chaux (Mahebourg);

- v. Providence (Grand Port);
- vi. Deux Frères (ex-Sand Landing site);
- vii. Deux Frères Village;
- viii. Pointe aux Feuilles to Grand Sable;
- ix. Petit Sable to Bambous Virieux;
- x. Bambous Virieux to Anse Jonchée;
- xi. Bois des Amourettes;
- xii. St Martin (Baie du Cap), and
- xiii. Grand Baie – Le Capitaine.

Second, the Flood Management Programme that will cater for any necessary and urgent action that is required in flood-prone areas to address the problem of flooding.

The objective is to provide the necessary drainage infrastructure to mitigate flooding.

Projects will include the construction of some 200 drains, amongst others, in identified flood-prone regions such as l’Amitié, Gokhoola, Clemencia, Bambous, Mapou, Le Hochet Terre Rouge, Crève Cœur, Les Mariannes, Camp la Boue, Vallée des Prêtres, D’Epinay, Triolet, Pamplemousses, Nouvelle France, Chemin Grenier, La Tour Koenig, Vale, Plaine des Papayes, Camp Thorel, Poste De Flacq, Montagne Blanche, Plaine Magnien, Quatre Bornes, Roche-Brunes, La Marie, Camp-Firinga, Vallée Pitot, Tranquebar, Baie du Tombeau, Coromandel and a number of other flood-prone areas across the island.

It is expected that this programme will bring about better flow of rain water and reduce risks associated with flooding such as economic losses and loss of life.

Third, the Clean Up Mauritius and Embellishment Programme – “*Moris Mo Zoli Pei*”, which will involve a nation-wide campaign to clean up our country. This will also include an Asbestos Treatment Programme.

Fourth, the Solid Waste Management Programme to address the issue of Mare Chicose Landfill which is coming to saturation shortly. The aim of the programme is to extend the life time of the landfill by another 5-8 years through ‘Wedge’ works and vertical expansion plans. The programme also includes plans for the treatment of hazardous wastes.

Fifth, the Landslide Management Programme will provide solutions for areas which are at risks of landslide. So far, three sites have been identified at Coromandel, Chamarel and Terre Rouge-Verdun road.

Sixth, the Disaster Risk Reduction Programme will cater for emergencies arising from any natural disaster.

Over and above these Programmes, the Fund will also –

- (a) promote, support and encourage activities relating to environment protection and management;
- (b) support non-governmental organisations engaged in environment protection, and
- (c) review and coordinate on programmes to prevent and reduce pollution.

Given that we have already identified urgent critical environmental programmes that need to be addressed over the coming 2 years, it is imperative that we earmark the necessary fund to execute these priority programmes as early as possible.

Madam Speaker, I wish to inform the House that although an additional amount of Rs2 billion is being appropriated in this financial year, actual total expenditure for 2017-18 will be below the total voted amount since there is under expenditure under various votes.

Thus, there will be no change in the estimates of the budget deficit for financial year 2017/2018 which will remain at 3.2% of GDP.

With these remarks, Madam Speaker, I now commend the Bill to the House.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Duval!

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, firstly, it is a matter of regret, I must say, it is most objectionable that this Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill is being brought on a Tuesday. It is being brought on a Tuesday, it could have been brought on any day of this week as we are sitting even on a Saturday. It is being brought on a Tuesday with the obvious purpose of preventing the Opposition, not only preventing myself from asking a PNQ, but all Members of the Opposition, of the Assembly, of asking Parliamentary Questions.

I remind the House, Madam Speaker, that the last three Tuesdays we have not sat. The Prime Minister was busy preparing his speech and it would have been only fair and just that this Tuesday, Parliamentary Questions - I am told that there are Parliamentary Questions piled up for the next six months - should have been asked and replied. So, it is most objectionable, Madam Speaker, that a Tuesday has been chosen for the presentation of this Bill which, as I mentioned, has the obvious purpose of preventing Question Time. Probably, next week, we will have, again, Committee of Supply. So, we will have five Tuesdays in a row without Parliamentary Questions.

As far as the Bill itself is concerned, Madam Speaker, what is this Bill doing? It is not doing what the Prime Minister - in fact, that is not the purpose. What the Prime Minister has said, it is not the purpose of presenting this Bill today. The purpose of presenting this Bill today before the end of the financial year is to transfer Rs2 billion from the Budget of 2017-2018 to the Budget of 2018-2019 and beyond. Why would that be done? Because normally when you have money to spend in year 2018-2019, next year, you would spend it out of funds collected, revenue collected, money received from that year, and that would be what we call truth in the figures. You would know what is the amount that has been collected and what is the real expenditure of Government.

So, what is the purpose of this *maquillage* which is happening today? What is the purpose? The real purpose of presenting the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill is to artificially increase capital spending, and artificially increase the budget deficit for 2017-2018, this ending financial year, artificially increase that, and artificially reduce next year's budget deficit. Why would you want to do that? Why would the Prime Minister want to do such a thing? He is doing this, Madam Speaker - no doubt the Bill will pass – because there have been dismal results in capital expenditure all through the year. Even the famous IMF, he is always quoting the report, has asked the Government to review its project management procedures so that they get a better rate of implementation of projects that we are promised year in year out.

If you look at the figures, Madam Speaker, up to March 2018, according to the Bank of Mauritius - published figures again - the Government spent - you know how much - Rs4.1 billion only in acquisition of non-financial assets, which we know is to be capital expenditure. Rs4.1 billion only!

When you look at what the Prime Minister declared recently in the House last Thursday, as far as the Budget out-turn is concerned, he, in fact, stated, Madam Speaker, that the capital spending for the year ending, amounts, I think, it is Rs15.7 billion. This is what he said, Madam Speaker. Obviously, that includes some transfers, but when we look at the March 2018 figures published by the Bank of Mauritius, we see only Rs4 billion. Part of the explanation is the Rs2 billion that we see today.

But the rest of the explanation, Madam Speaker, may well be - I don't know because I don't have the figures, they have not been published - other transfers that the Prime Minister has done, which is not required to come in a Supplementary Expenditure now, it may come later; in a way to pass on hoard monies which should have been spent in this financial year, for instance, transferring to the Central Water Authority, transferring to this and that, so that artificially we look like we spent the Rs15 billion but, in fact, we have only spent a small amount of it.

But why would you say, Madam Speaker, is it important for us to have capital expenditure? Why is it a black mark on the Government for not having spent the capital expenditure? Because capital spending, Madam Speaker, is what? It is money put on infrastructure, money to buy equipment, fire engines and whatever you like. This is what capital expenditure is all about. It prepares the economy for the future and it is supposed to give a better quality of life and more security to our population.

So, when you don't spend it, it is that much money in a way, if you like, that much opportunity, to improve our quality of life, to prepare our economy, which is wasted. These opportunities are wasted by not spending the capital expenditure. Now, Governments are judged as part of their efficiency. How? By the way that they spend capital expenditure. This is one of the criteria where you judge Governments because it is not easy to spend capital expenditure, you like it or not, unless, of course, you create all these little companies left, right and centre and there is no control on how they spend the money. There is no tender procedure that we have seen in the CEB FiberNet, etc. That you can do. There are risks as to corruption. There are risks as to not getting value for money. There are risks as to wastage. Of course, there are, when you are doing what the Government is doing, putting projects in these outside companies which fall completely outside the Public Procurement Act. This is what is done. This is a fact, Madam Speaker. I took it up yesterday briefly.

Now, if you want to do it properly as you ought to, as the Public Procurement Act says, through the Consolidated Fund, through the Central Government, then, as you know, Madam Speaker, you have got to get your planning right. You have got to plan. You have got to know what you want to do. Then you have got to prepare your tender procedures correctly and then you have got to select the people correctly, if you don't, they get taken to Court and to the IRB. There is a whole procedure, a whole technical expertise that is required when you carry out capital expenditure.

We have seen ourselves with this *exercice de maquillage* that Government has not demonstrated the efficiency that it ought to have demonstrated, has not got the expertise, has not got the people, has not got the will, has not got the time to carry out the public expenditure on improving our way of life, improving our security and what not. So, what happens? At the end of the year, under the mask of creating an Environment Fund which should be spent next year, of course, all this money comes in, Rs2 billion, as I said, it is going to have a big difference on the budget deficit. Without these Rs2 billion, the Government would have announced a budget deficit of 2.8% only against the 3.2% and everybody would have seen clearly the Government's failure to carry out capital expenditure. As I said, I am quite certain, perhaps the Prime Minister will tell us what other transfers he has done that he is not legally required to bring here, that he has done at the end of the year just to increase artificially the capital expenditure. It is a bit complicated, Madam Speaker, that is why I don't want to go into too many details.

Now, I must say as to the creation of this particular National Environment Fund, had it been done as it ought to have been done in next year's Budget, I would have had very little to say against it because in my own speech last year, in this House, on the Budget, I had raised the issue of how we should spend our little taxpayers' money insofar as environment is concerned. I was preparing the 2021 COP Conference I remember, and we worked on that at the Ministry two years ago. In fact, there are two ways, as you know, Madam Speaker, of looking at the environment.

One is to say: 'Let's spend our money on mitigation measures'. Somehow, we will say that Mauritius ought to pollute less. We have little taxpayers' money and we say: 'Okay, we put it all in polluting less'. Even if we don't pollute at all, Madam Speaker, climate change will not stop because of Mauritius, global warming will not stop because of Mauritius even if tomorrow we completely cease to use fossil fuels and cease to pollute. So, there is a big argument to say that spending a lot of our hard earned money on mitigation does not, in

fact, solve much. It is not going to stop climate change. It is not going to stop global warming. It is not going to stop the rise of water, etc. It will not because in terms of global warming, Mauritius accounts for 0.004, I think, of total global warming.

So, the argument being, however, despite the fact that we contribute so little to world global warming, there was a report some time ago that actually ranked Mauritius as 8th country in the world most vulnerable to climate change. So, in a way, we pollute very little, but we actually are extremely vulnerable to climate change, the beaches, the flooding, etc., that we are saying. So, in fact, having said all this, I think this Environment Fund is going in the right direction. I don't know if it was in my speech last year, maybe or maybe not, because that is what I had raised, but you can see that a lot of the money, Madam Speaker, is going on what we would call adaptation measures; measures to adapt our country to flooding, measures for landslide management, disaster risk reduction, rehabilitation of beaches, etc. So, this is going in the right direction despite the *maquillage* that has been done to get it going.

But, Madam Speaker, when you look at promises in the future, you have to look at the performance in the past in terms of environment. Madam Speaker, when the Prime Minister just took over this laudable campaign "*Moris mo zoli pays*". But what has happened? It is dirtier than ever, Madam Speaker! If you look at the places and poor Minister of Tourism is trying to bring tourists to a dump yard. You don't do that. What you must realise, Madam Speaker, is that we are one of the most beautiful countries in the world, but we are unable to maintain even basic cleanliness. I am going to table to show - I think you will accept this one - two pictures, one of Flic-en-Flac beach, Madam Speaker.

This is Flic-en-Flac beach two weeks ago! Perhaps, the Minister of Tourism can look at Flic-en-Flac beach two weeks ago. Two weeks ago! This is Flic-en-Flac beach two weeks ago! And this is what "*Moris mo zoli pays*" has brought us to, Madam Speaker.

What a shame that we are unable to even clean our country properly, and if you think I am maybe making it up, on 02 December, in *Le Défi*, there was an article which appeared, and I will table this, of course, '*Flic-en-Flac, l'Eldorado de l'ouest*', signed by one Mr Claude Canabady. And this is what he had to say on Flic-en-Flac beach –

« *Elle est parsemée d'ordures tous les matins. Il y a un manque aigu de poubelles. Les toilettes sont dans un état déplorable (...) Les poteaux qui entourent les aires de stationnement sont cassés (...) La musique est jouée à fond dans certains établissements et bungalows à des heures indues (...)* »

This is our major public beach in Flic-en-Flac after this loud campaign, *Maurice Nou Zoli Pays*.

And so, Madam Speaker, whatever can be said, it is going to be voted. In practice, in effect, are we going to see any visible improvement in our environment? Where I live, perhaps the Minister of Local Government can come and see because it is cleaned by Local Government employees, it is a disaster. Anytime, hon. Vice-Prime Minister, I will take you there. You will see it is a disaster, and you can come any day of the week. This is our situation; people continue to dump cement and all sorts of things. Anywhere they see a little bit of beautiful place, it is a bit lonely, they dump. The *Police de l'environnement*, Madam Speaker, probably good people there, ineffective! Ineffective, Madam Speaker! So, there is a big need to get Mauritius clean.

Secondly, even the *affiches*, the posters which we had, they are coming up everywhere now. That has to be controlled, Madam Speaker. But the real problem, I think, has not to do with Government because there is so much that you can clean, but to do with our citizens themselves. This rubbish comes from somewhere. People deliberately throw and the culture has to be changed, and education must be the priority. I do not see education in that Fund. But education, campaign on television, whatever it is, Facebook, whatever is done, whether it is going to be some competition, *village propre*, culture is the problem, the disregard that Mauritians have for their environment. We all go to Rodrigues, we are very happy. We go to Seychelles, we go to Maldives, there is a different approach to environment by the citizens, which we do not have in Mauritius. And we have plenty of them; we have 1.3 million people, lots of people, and we need to be able, Madam Speaker, to educate them. Whatever amount of *Police de l'environnement* you will put, I think we will not really have that much effect. We are increasing fines on traffic, good! We should increase fines on the environment because we cannot keep fining people and they keep doing the same thing again and again. So, that is perhaps another revenue. Maybe we can do that and stop that.

Madam Speaker, another issue is beach erosion. It is there; perhaps not enough money. With regard to beach erosion, the Minister of Tourism talked yesterday about new techniques to replenish the beaches. Let us see whether some money can be put in that, because that is something that is going to be a real threat to our quality of life, our leisure time and our tourism industry, Madam Speaker. There you go and, of course, Madam Speaker, these numerous *terrains vagues* all through the country. People like buying land in Mauritius. It is a very popular thing; buy the land, leave it there, let it become an eyesore, let

the mosquitoes invade it, let it become a security risk. Nobody cares, nobody does anything about it. A few municipalities have done a few things. But generally, this country is littered with *terrains vagues*, with nobody doing much about it, and it is even a security threat. So, what we need, I think, is some serious work. No talk! The Minister of Environment will talk. I would rather he would not say anything. Just get on with it and in a few months' time, we would see. Because whatever you will promise, we will see in a few weeks whether it happens or it does not happen.

But one thing, Madam Speaker, I wanted to speak on is Disaster Management. Now, we have seen flash floods, we have seen massive cyclones. Massive cyclones! Even regions in America are on their knees - Costa Rica, on its knees and still suffering. We talked about cyclone Alberto in Florida, cyclone Josie in Fiji, cyclone Nate in Costa Rica. These cyclones have put these countries and these regions on their knees. We have seen in the past also, in this region, tsunamis. It can happen again. It is not because it has not happened for a few years that it will not happen again. What we can be sure, Madam Speaker, is that massive cyclones will - hopefully it won't happen now, but sometimes we must prepare for a massive cyclone or even a tsunami hitting Mauritius. We must. And flash floods are happening. What is the response to flash floods, massive cyclones? You cannot build a wall around Mauritius and have a fortress. You cannot build drains everywhere because you will not know where the next flash flood is. It happened in Canal Dayot. It did not happen again. We spent hundreds of millions of rupees there. We spend hundreds of millions of rupees whenever there is a flash flood. Every time it happens in a different area. That is something that is peculiar to flash floods. It happens at different regions.

So, Madam Speaker, the usual international response is preparing the country with lots of equipment, proper equipment which can be used in Disaster Management; whether it is amphibious vehicles; whether it is boats; whether it is pumps - the pumps that never work at the fire brigades are still not working at the fire brigades. All these things must be stockpiled in Mauritius and used when they become necessary because *tôt ou tard*, unfortunately, we will need them. And so, equipment, massive number of equipment to prepare the country and proper training for our rescuers. That are the two things, and I do not see that in this. There is Rs25 m. for Disaster Risk Management, but it is not what I am talking about. It will be used differently. So, there is some money left in that Fund. I think it must be urgently used. Even more is needed than the Rs200 m. or more, the Rs300-400 m. that is left, must be used to buy equipment. We need medical equipment. That may be

necessary. We do not wish it, but we must prepare for it. *Gouverner c'est prévoir*. And we must prepare for these, Madam Speaker.

Last point, Madam Speaker, is this. I do not know whether I got it right. But with the repeal of Part IX of the Environment Protection Act, and with this special Fund being created under Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government. Now, we all know that Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government are managed centrally by the Ministry of Finance. So, is this Fund, now, being transferred from hon. Sinatambou to the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister? Is this what is happening? Because I think this is what is happening. Section IX is being repealed and that's it. That is what the Budget document show, and this is now in the Centrally Managed Funds. Is that a reflection on the current state of affairs? Is that a reflection on the inability of the Ministry of Environment to clean up Mauritius? I do not know. Perhaps we will be told, if my understanding of the situation is correct, that it is being now transferred, like so many things, directly under the aegis of the Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, this is what I had to say. So, I will hear what Government's response is.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnahn!

(12.07 p.m.)

Mr S. Rutnahn (Third Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this Bill is not about artificially increasing capital expenditure or artificially manipulating any figures. It is not about a make-up exercise as put by the Leader of the Opposition, *exercice de maquillage*.

In fact, when you hear the hon. Leader of the Opposition, it appears that the foundation, and the powder and the blush of the PMSD is melting because, in fact, there has been no proper criticism that can be justified in this House about the Supplementary Appropriation of this Rs2 billion. In fact, when I hear the hon. Leader Opposition, it feels that he is completely off his trolley about understanding the very basic of preparedness for an eventuality. Because we are living in an era where we have to be prepared for natural calamities and we have to have foresight in how to manage in case of a disaster that struck our country. It is an exercise that is carried out by all Governments.

Supplementary Appropriation is an exercise carried out by all Governments and it is constitutionally permissible under section 105(3) of our Constitution. It is not something that is done, in order, to artificially boost up figures or otherwise or play with figures as put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Only if they would have realised that the 2000/2005 Government led by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor - at the time Prime Minister - the work that that Government did. I see hon. Bhagwan here. He is the father of the Environmental Protection Act of 2002. It was at that time, in 2000, in the Government Programme of the MMM/MSM Government that they would introduce in this House at the time an Environmental Protection Act. That Act clearly defines how we should prepare ourselves. But, unfortunately, at that time, I think that the PMSD was not in Government or they were not even in Opposition.

After 2005, coming up to 2014, the PMSD was in Government and they did not even convene the National Environment Commission to deal with pressing issues because they had no plans ...

(Interruptions)

No! You levelled the criticism!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

(Interruptions)

Proceed!

(Interruptions)

No interruptions, please!

Mr Rutnah: Madam Speaker, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was on his feet

...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Leader of the Opposition, please, no crosstalk! When you were talking, they were silent. Please!

Mr Rutnah: Yes, Madam Speaker, I extended the courtesy of listening to the hon. Leader of the Opposition when he was on his feet, but never mind, he keeps on distracting me.

(Interruptions)

Only if you would have realised - the law was passed in 2002 - the seriousness about it. The National Environmental Fund was created by virtue of section 59 of the 2002 Act. It says as follows –

“59. The National Environment Fund

- (1) There shall be established a National Environment Fund.
- (2) The Fund shall be deemed to be a Special Fund for the purposes of the Finance and Audit Act.”

(Interruptions)

Wait a minute! I am coming to the objects of the Fund. The objects of the Fund will be –

- “(a) to provide for foreign laboratory support for analysis of environmental samples;
- (b) to carry out programmes to prevent and reduce pollution;
- (c) to promote environmental education and research;
- (d) to support non-governmental organisations engaged in environment protection;
- (e) to encourage local environmental initiatives;
- (f) to publish reports on the environment;
- (g) to promote, support and encourage activities relating to environment protection and management;
- (h) to provide for expenditure incurred as a result of any operation or measure taken under section 34A or section 89(4), and
- (i) to finance the implementation of projects, schemes, or programmes, related to e-waste management.”

The Labour Party and the PMSD, since 2005 to 2014, did not even convene the Commission to do some work on it. Today, they have the cheek of criticising this Supplementary Appropriation. Let us look at what this Supplementary Appropriation is all about. It is firstly about foresight, to prepare, to be able to mitigate and to be able to manage crisis. And it says: ‘Provision required for the implementation of projects islandwide, to better protect our environment and mitigate risks associated with climate change. These include rehabilitation of beaches, solid waste management, flood management, landslide management and other embellishment works.’ Why is this done? We do not want to live the

same episode of 2013 when during flash flood people passed away in Port Louis and elsewhere prior to that. That is why this Government when it came into power, - to answer the hon. Leader of the Opposition about management of the environment - we came with the Land Drainage Authority Bill which became an Act. The function of that institution that is managing the Land Authority is to look at the topography of our country and to recommend how to deal with his land drainage issues.

In order to achieve those objectives, Government need money and that is why we have to carry out this exercise and to do it in a way that is compliant with the law, that is, the supreme law of the country, the Constitution, to come to this House and to explain like the hon. Prime Minister has explained in his opening remarks the amount of work that has to be done. And I am glad that there are works to be done in my Constituency which the hon. Prime Minister pointed out like in l'Amitié, in Gokoola, in Mapou, in Plaine des Papayes, in Rivière du Rempart, in Fond du Sac, islandwide and these works do not cost peanuts. We have to have the necessary resources and money to pay for those works to be carried out so that we are able to control and manage the situation that we are not expecting. We live in an era where we cannot predict what is going to happen climatically.

Madam Speaker, earlier on when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was speaking, he also said that climate change will not stop because of Mauritius and he is right. Climate change will not stop because of Mauritius being a small island. We can be swept away in a fraction of second. Yes! But we have to be prepared for it. We have to be able to avoid what we can avoid. And he is right when he said flash flood and massive cyclones, and that is what we are preparing for, the massive cyclone, the flash flood. There is a need for these capital investments in the country.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Paul Bérenger!

(12.18 p.m.)

Mr P. Bérenger (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Madam Speaker, my colleague, hon. Reza Uteem was going to speak on that Bill, but he is *indisposé*, so I am going to offer a few comments pending his return to the House.

Of course, Madam Speaker, we are all - I think that I can say for sure - in favour of protecting the environment, developing the environment and improving the environment,

especially in a vulnerable place like our small island. I think there is no need to debate that we are all in favour of that.

And secondly, the setting up of special funds is not a crime, but it can be and it has been abused under the Labour party Government, especially Mr Sithanen. Yes, this fund was created in 2002 and should have allowed a lot of other convenient environment. The past is the past. What I do not like at all is the abuse of special funds that took place between 2005 to 2014 under the then Labour Government and especially the then Minister of Finance.

There was an abuse of special funds. We had special funds all over the place, all kinds of special funds. And, of course, an abuse of special funds allows for two things –

- (i) budgetary manipulations - I will talk on that when I will speak on the Budget itself, and
- (ii) lack of control, lack of tendering procedures.

So, there was an abuse of special funds during that period. That is why I remember when those different Sithanen's special funds were abolished, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance himself and others rightly said this is a step in the right direction; we are doing away with those special funds. And probably all of them clapped. And now coming with the massive new special fund of Rs2 billion! That, I find *un pas retrograde*. We are moving back and I repeat, this Government, this Prime Minister, this Minister of Finance presented the abolition of the Sithanen's Special Funds as *un pas en avant, progrès*, yes, and the setting up of that massive special fund cannot be described as moving forward. Two things, Madam Speaker, Rs2 billion and it is going to increase, it does not allow for budget accounting as it should be.

We have been going the wrong way and recently worse than ever in fibbing with figures and through those special funds in the past, you could not know what was the real budget deficit; massive amounts of money were moved from one fund to the Consolidated Fund, then back and so on. You could not have the required budgetary transparency that is essential in any democratic country. We are going back to that now.

And secondly, there is no doubt that setting up this kind of special fund does not provide for better control of expenditure, for better operational efficiency. You are going to have this special fund, the list of its duties is considerable. And it will clash with others like the Ministry of Environment or lots of other Ministries like the Local Government and the Ministry of Housing and Lands. It is going to add to the confusion. Instead of promoting

protection, development of the environment, it is going to add to budgetary confusion; it is going to add to confusion in the execution of projects. That is why I do not think it is a step forward.

Now, part 9, what the hon. Prime Minister said is that Part 9 is being repealed and in his speech, he said that that section of the law will be revamped. I hope he tells us a bit more because at least under the Environment Protection Act, therefore when the National Environment Fund under that Act was set up, there was a good amount of control. There was a Board for all this. Now, it is going to be replaced by what? There used to be a Board, the National Environmental Fund managed by a Board, the Board chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Environment, and the question is a good question, whether we will remain with that, with the environment in charge or whether it is all going to finance now. We need to know more.

When I was listening to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, he seemed to give the impression that part of section 9 is being repealed. No! From what you said with the note at the back of your speech, the whole of section 9 is being repealed. Now, we need to know, it will be replaced by what. What control will be exercised that was exercised in the past by the Board? As I said as far as protecting, developing, improving the environment, we are all agreed, but I do not think that it is the correct way to move forward with creating such a massive special fund with all these different objects.

When the Environment Protection Act was passed and therefore the National Environment Fund was limited to Environment Projects, Environment Protection, development, improvement. Now, look at the list of the objects, what has been announced. As I said, everything is in there, not just the environment, not just drains, nearly everything. Everything that you can imagine, you can put in the objects of that revamped fund. I think we have to be very careful. How is it going to be funded, Rs2 billion? I wish to ask the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. In presenting the source of funds from overseas, we were told that Rs450 m. will come from the Saudi Fund and other funds, all lumped together. If I am not mistaken, from the Saudi Fund, it is Rs260 m. that we have received or that we will receive. Rs260 m.! I would like to confirm as far as the funds from overseas are concerned.

As far as the expenditure is concerned, according to the estimates that have been circulated, we are going supposedly to spend Rs1,590,000,000 in Financial Year 2018/2019. No way! A massive sum in one year, we are already at the beginning of that financial year,

Rs1,590,000,000 in Financial Year 2018/2019. We will be around to see what is the real figure at the end of the day or whether at the end of the Financial Year.

And drain work is *le gros morceau*. We are supposed, according to what I see, to spend Rs965 m. on drains in the same Financial Year 2018-2019. There is no way! As I said again, we will be around at the end of the day, at the end of the financial year.

One thing that really used to make me very angry in the past, and I am still angry at that, it is that I remember - in the 2000-2005 Government, as if it was yesterday - the importance that we gave to drains. We could see what was on the horizon. We put it in the Budget, made speeches. As Deputy Prime Minister and then Prime Minister, I chaired committees on drain development across Mauritius because we could see the trouble ahead. And one of the worst fiascos between 2005 and 2014, one of the worst failures was that this good, fantastic work, visionary work that was started concerning drains in general in 2000-2005 was not developed, was not pursued as it should have done.

So, when I look at that figure, we are supposed to spend Rs965m. on drains in one year. No way! I am tempted to say - when we know what Mauritius has gone through over the last few years – *après la mort la tisane*, but I rather say ‘better late than never’. We have a lot of lost time to catch up as far as the environment is concerned. I agree with a lot of what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said. We are a tourism country. Tourism is becoming one of the main industries.

What we are doing to our environment? ‘*Maurice mo zoli pays*’. Very good as a slogan! But the real facts what they are, so I would rather say better late than never. *Mieux vaut tard que jamais*, rather than say ‘*après la mort la tisane*’. *La mort*, there has been, how many people have lost their lives because we, as a country, have not been doing for the past years what we should have been doing, especially as far as drain development is concerned, but in general. It makes me sad because the intention is good. Clearly, the intention is good; protecting, development and improving the environment. We all agree. The more money we can put into that, the better for Mauritius. I don’t agree with the way we are proceeding. I think we should have reactivated this fund, but for specifically environment work, environment funds. And the rest of the money we should have distributed through capital works in general, through the different Ministries, we would have obtained much better results. That is why I don’t agree that the best way forward, as far as environment protection, development improvement is concerned, as far as drain development; it is true this massive

avec *effet rétroactif* fund, we should have done it the usual way plus putting a good amount of money in that fund, but for specifically environment.

We will be around, as I said, to follow as things move ahead, and I will be listening carefully to the reactions of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development to the points raised by the Opposition.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou!

(12.33 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Thank you, Madam Speaker. A few weeks ago, Madam Speaker, I was giving a speech where we were launching a project called NAMA, Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions in relation to climate change, and I was explaining, as was just stated by the hon. Leader of the Opposition that Mauritius is a very low emitter of greenhouse gases. In fact, contrary to what he is saying, it is not 0.004. It is 0.015. And I was explaining how, however, although we are one of the low emitters of greenhouse gas emissions in the world, we, unfortunately, are most vulnerable to the consequences which is why we put a lot of emphasis on adaptation measures.

I was quite shocked because a few days later I read in a newspaper about my speech '*Les enfumages d'Etienne Sinatambou*'. It sounded so rude and so vulgar, so I took it upon myself to go and check that what '*enfumage*' means.

(Interruptions)

Le Petit Robert said that '*enfumage*' means '*désinformation, intoxication*'. I am sharing that with you in the House today, Madam Speaker, because, unfortunately, I do not think – but fortunately first – that this word was actually applicable to what I had said because when I asked my collaborators at the office to check what I had said. They said: "Sir, we checked and you were right". So, fortunately for me! But unfortunately, I am afraid that what I heard today from the hon. Leader of the Opposition amounts to an *enfumage*. I will explain myself. Although I have quite appreciation for him indeed, I cannot agree with what he has said about this so-called *maquillage*, this alleged artifice.

Indeed, I had actually anticipated that something of that nature would be placed before this House, and then it would probably get, you know, the first news item on some of

the partisan media which claim to be independent. So, I made it a point to go and check what actually was happening when he held big positions, high positions in previous Government. And I went back from 2007 to 2013.

In 2007, a total amount Rs3.12 billion was transferred to four special funds. The funds being the MID Fund, the Human Resource, Knowledge and Arts Fund, the Food Security Fund, the Local Infrastructure Fund. Here, although I must say that I am not often in agreement with the hon. third Member for Stanley-Rose Hill, for once I certainly agree that the former Labour Government with the hon. Leader of the Opposition did, unfortunately, abuse the system because the next Financial Year, in 2008-2009, it amounted to ...

(Interruptions)

May I, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou, don't allow yourself to be guided by what they are saying. Address yourself to the Chair and proceed with your speech.

Mr Sinatambou: However, Madam Speaker, every time, when it comes to the decorum, the discipline of this House, they don't seem to know Standing Order 39 Rule 13 which compels them to just shut up....

(Interruptions)

...when people are speaking.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou, please don't get excited! Proceed calmly with your speech and don't let yourself be carried away by what they are saying. Okay!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Sinatambou: *Ki li pé cozé! Ré dire, ré dire!*

Madam Speaker: Please, hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: *Ki mo pé cozé!*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! I have already drawn his attention.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

I keep calling and trying to calm down the situation, but if hon. Members tend to ignore my authority, I will have to act. Hon. Sinatambou, please!

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I would like, however, having heard a hon. Member saying I was kicked out by hon. Ramgoolam, I would like to tell them that they were kicked out. I resigned. I resigned as a Minister, which they do not know.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Proceed with your debate!

Mr Sinatambou: They need to know, because they keep saying it...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: I am, I will, but he has to be grateful and be thankful to where he is now.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Dr. Boolell, this is not a point of order.

Yes, please proceed!

Mr Sinatambou: So, going back to this hypocrisy of always alleging artifice for others, now we go back to the next Budget, 2009, which was only a six-monthly Budget from July to December 2009, where another Rs2.65 billion was transferred to three Funds. In Financial Year 2010, another amount of Rs3.1 billion was transferred to two Funds. From Financial Year 2011 to Financial Year 2013, a total amount of Rs15...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, once again I tell you not to interrupt.

Mr Sinatambou: A total amount of Rs15,130,000,000 additional was transferred to special Funds. So, I find it to be - I mean I don't apologise to borrowing the word from that newspaper, but I really find it to be - an *enfumage* to come and say today that it is an artifice, a *maquillage*, that we are using this Fund improperly to actually...

(*Interruptions*)

Sorry?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou, I have drawn your attention to the fact that you have to address yourself to the Chair. I will not allow any crosstalking please.

Mr Sinatambou: I really find it to be improper to impute motives to this side of the House to claim that it is most objectionable to actually place Rs2 billion in the National Environment Fund when we find that for years and years and years when he was in Government the...

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on a point of order. If you look at my speech, the most objectionable was concerning today no questions. I think he should listen. I did not mention that. I talked about most objectionable, which was about today no questions.

Mr Sinatambou: Okay, I will rebut that also. I will not quarrel with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, but at least he said it is an artifice. At least he said it was a *maquillage*, and that also I object because he actually did worse when he was in a previous Government.

Now, even that piece about this most objectionable feature of having the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill on a Tuesday, I find it highly objectionable that they think that on the other side the House, they will set the agenda of Government. Why should we have to go by their agenda? Now, in particular, I must say, although I am not involved in the decision making process as to on which day Parliament sits and what goes on the agenda of the House, one thing which I find proper is that the focus of this House, the focus of this country should be on the debates concerning the finances of this country. I personally believe that it is not the time to have, you know, tens of questions to be just set and sent to Ministers to respond and not to have what is, in fact, one of the most, if not the most important feature of our parliamentary mechanism to be discussed now.

So, to me, it is again another instance of - I consider I can say - impropriety to argue that it is something of a *maquillage* to come and say that we are hiding and not to have questions on Tuesday. On the contrary, we are not sitting and doing nothing here today. We are actually doing something important which concerns the finances of this country, and I think that the entire focus of the House and of the country should be on that.

Now, for those who keep thinking that there was some Machiavellian idea behind putting this money into this Fund and coming with a Supplementary Appropriation Bill today, I would like perhaps to go back to how it happened. It happened because after an extremely lengthy absence of the meetings of the National Environment Commission, the hon. Prime Minister decided to convene the Commission, and when we convened the Commission, the agenda of the Commission was very substantial and was found, in fact, to be of an urgent nature. The agenda of the National Environment Commission, when it met, was firstly about disaster risk reduction issues, which they themselves on the other side of the House say is important.

The second other part which they themselves acknowledge is important, which was another item on the agenda of the Commission, was the National Solid Waste Management Programme. Another item on the agenda was coastal protection, landscaping and infrastructural works. A fourth item on the agenda was the implementation of the climate change adaptation policy framework. I am sure the Leader of Opposition would like this one. It is about adaptation. There was also something which was of importance, which is called the Multilateral Environmental Agreement Coordination Committee because this country has ratified about 30-odd environmental conventions or environmental related conventions. But there is not enough synergy, there is not enough inter linkages, and that Committee, which I understand was set up more than 10 years ago, had not met under the previous Government, if I am not mistaken. Can we imagine, Madam Speaker?

So, that is actually the background to what is happening today. When the National Environment Commission met and actually worked on those items on its agenda, we, the Ministers, because the Commission meets with 18 Ministers - 18 Ministers are actually members of the Commission, and when it met and actually went through the agenda of the Commission, it was found that there are so many pressing issues with insufficient funding. That is why we are here today. Not that we are abusing the system - at least, I do see that I am on the same length with the hon. third Member from Stanley & Rose Hill; that the

intention is good. Better late than never. But, even the way we are doing it, I would suggest to this House, is the best one in the circumstances. Because once we found that there was such a need for much needed funds, we are under the obligation, in order not to be late, to do the needful as soon as possible, and this is what is being done before this House today.

Now, this being said, I would like to say that this word ‘artifice’, the way in which it is being done is disputed by the two speakers on the other side of the House. Well, this particular *modus operandi*, as stated by the previous speaker on this side of the House, is provided for by the Constitution. It is not an invention of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development. It is actually found in section 105, subsection 3, paragraph (b) of our Constitution. So, to me, nowhere could it be argued that this is an artifice. An artifice it will become if every financial year over eight financial years you would put billions and billions in innumerable numbers of funds. That is not what is happening here. And, incidentally, I must say that my information is that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has sufficient trust in me in order not to actually repeal part nine of the EPA 2002. It will be revamped and I am sure...

(Interruptions)

My understanding is that this was a mistake in the document...

(Interruptions)

... that the word repeal being used and being interpreted as appearing exhaustively to PART IX. Revamp is the word. The whole of PART IX is not being repealed. The governance structure will stay and with it the Board and other accountability process will stay, but the membership may change. But, all that will come in the course of the day.

Now, what also needs to be stated here is that one will see that particular emphasis in the Bill is laid on climate change. And here, I would like to share with the House something which I consider to be very important when we speak of climate change. Indeed, Madam Speaker, when we went to COP21 in December 2015 in Paris, in the course of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on climate change we made a pledge which was contained in what is called the INDC (Intended Nationally Determined Contributions). And, what we stated there is what we intended to do in terms of mitigation measures and what we intended to do in terms of adaptation measures.

Now, all these measures actually needed financial estimates and the financial estimates to be able to implement our mitigation measures in Mauritius amounts to 1.5 billion

US dollars and the amount of money required as per our estimates in order to implement our adaptation measures is 4 billion US dollars. So, we actually have estimated our expenditure in order to address the issue of climate change in this country to amount to 5.5 billion US dollars which is why, as the hon. Prime Minister stated earlier in his speech, we need to mobilise funding not only nationally but also with our international partners and our development partners because there is just not enough fund available. I would like to be able to prove wrong to the previous Orator and see next year when we come at the end of the financial year before this House, that we have spent the amount of money that we have put in the fund because it is so important that we actually address those issues which are causing a lot of damage to our country.

Madam Speaker, I am sure everyone here has had the chance of going to the beach. Everyone here I hope. What we see today is just so shocking. If you actually note the amount of beach erosion, there are places which I have myself seen near, especially hotels. Hotels used to build artificial reefs in front of their beachfront in order that their beach be preserved so that the tourists who come and pay lots of money can enjoy the beach. Now, what has shocked me is that as the years have elapsed, the sea now has covered the breakwater and is going to actually eat into the beachfront. So, the phenomenon of sea level rise is actually there and will be with us for the rest of our life, which is why, as opposed to having some negative approach towards what we are doing, I hope that the country gets actually the message: we are doing what needs to be done. At least, we are trying to put as much money as we can in order to do what needs to be done to cater for the problem of climate change. I should give you perhaps before we close down for lunch a few figures.

Madam Speaker, you may realise that the pledge that was taken at the 21st Conference of Parties of the UNFCCC in Paris is that we want to try and keep the phenomenon of the rise in temperature to 1.5 % degrees Celsius above its pre-industrial levels as at 2010. So, we know that there is a rise in temperature in the world. We know that this rise in temperature is bringing, for example, the melting of the ice caps, but today we cannot stop that increase in temperature. But, we want to try and keep it to not more than 1.5 degrees Celsius above the 2010 levels. According to the scientists, in order to do that, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 40% to 70%.

So, with all those realities, I really beg to disagree that this side of the House has come up with an artificial mechanism to actually trump the actual figures. I hope that this country realises that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic

Development is doing what needs to be done in order that we actually tackle the problems of climate change in an optimum manner.

With these words, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Prime Minister!

(12.56 p.m.)

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, let me first of all thank all hon. Members who have intervened on this Bill. I shall go straight to the points that have been raised by hon. Members of the Opposition.

First, I shall start with what hon. Paul Bérenger has stated. I must say I have seen contradictions in what he has stated. But let me reassure all hon. Members, first of all, that PART IX of the Environment Protection Act will not be repealed; it will be amended. There has been an error in the Budget with regard to what has been stated, that is ‘repealed’, but it will be amended because we are going to review the composition of the Board and probably some of the objects as well.

Hon. Bérenger said it and sometimes I do not understand. In fact, the Environment Protection Act of 1991 which was voted had lived its time, and we were in Government at that time.

If I am not mistaken, it must have been hon. Bhagwan who was then Minister. *Non?*

(Interruptions)

No, in 2002, when we came up with the new Bill to the House, the Environment Protection Act of 2002!

First of all, I am not creating a new Special Fund and that is in reply to hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. This is the law which still prevails today and herein it is clearly stated that –

“(1) There shall be established a National Environment Fund.

(2) That Fund shall be deemed to be a Special Fund for the purposes of the Finance and Audit Act.”

Now, what do with the Fund? There must be money in a Fund in order to be able to spend on all the objects that have been stated in this law. If the Fund has not been injected with sufficient money in the past, there is no reason for the situation to continue like that. And I shall come in a minute to what has happened to the Commission. Hon. Paul Bérenger’s

saying is as if we are injecting so much money now, Rs2 billion, and it seems that it is too much. I can understand his doubt about whether we will be able to spend that amount during the financial year. Yes, granted! But that is not only for one financial year, I must say. It is for two financial years. But, anyway, it is our duty, as a Government, when we have environment as a priority, when we have especially witnessed what has happened with regard to climate change, to flooding in different parts of the island, to landslide occurring at Deux Frères and some parts of Port Louis also, it is indeed our duty to act. And that is why I have chaired the National Environment Commission, and I do not want to repeat what my colleague, hon. Etienne Sinatambou, has given, at least as indications about what was on the agenda and how much we had, in fact, debated, together with the number of stakeholders. And this Bill today is no coincidence, and it is certainly not trying to *maquiller* or to traffick and so on.

Now, the difference is that in the past - and I agree with what hon. Bérenger has said because it was also my stand in the past - as has been stated earlier by hon. Sinatambou, there had been so many Funds that had been set up - set up outside the Budget - whereas here we have a specific Fund set up by an Act of Parliament and which is today, as I have stated, indeed a priority for this Government.

Hon. Bérenger is saying now: 'How are we going to account for the money that we have put in?' But when this Act was passed, when the Fund was created, how were we going to account for the money that was going to be credited to this Fund then? Then it was ok! Then it could have been accounted for! And now when you are putting more money into that Fund because the challenges are so enormous and so great, now the question is how are we going to account and we will account for that, hon. Bérenger. In fact, surely there will be, in the future, questions that will be put and we shall come in all transparency, as we have indicated today, in transparency on how we intend to spend that money. We could have come to this House and said: 'We are appropriating Rs2 billion to that Fund for Environmental Protection Programmes'. But we are going further. We have given indications. Obviously, in time, surely there will be adjustments because these are estimates that we have made. Definitely, depending on certain urgency probably, there are going to be adjustments.

Now, hon. Bérenger said when the law was passed at that time, the Fund was set up in order to spend on, and limited to environmental projects. Madam Speaker, I do not want to go back again to my speech. And, again here, we have been transparent by publishing that indicative list indicating where we intend to spend be it on rehabilitation, on protection and

management of beaches, lagoons, on Flood Management Programme, on Clean-up Mauritius and Embellishment Programme, including Asbestos Treatment Programme which has not been done for so many years, on Solid Waste Management Programme, on Landslide Management Programme. All these are directly related and concern environment protection.

Well, there is one thing hon. Bérenger asked about, that is the amount that we are going to receive. From Saudi Arabia, we are receiving USD10 m. that is equivalent to approximately Rs350 m. From the Adaptation Fund Board, the Global Environment Facility and Green Climate Fund, it would be around Rs100 m. and then we shall also be tapping from other sources in due course.

Coming to hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, I will join in the argument of my colleague, hon. Sinatambou. He has chosen to leave this Government. Now, he is in the Opposition and he wants to have a say into the order of the day. It is for us, Government, to decide on the order of the day, not for the Opposition! And then, Madam Speaker, this is not the first time that this is being done. I do not know whether he can remember about his colleague, former Minister Sithanen. He also has come up with a Supplementary Appropriation Bill and has been scheduled in the past on a Tuesday. Then, why did not he say anything? Why did not he start criticising and saying: ‘why is it that we are not...

(Interruptions)

Today, he is saying: ‘why is it on a Tuesday?’ And then, we have no lesson to learn. You know, Madam Speaker, it is good for the population to be reminded. At least, he was for some time with a Labour Government, with, at the head, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who had been closing the Parliament for nearly about nine months. But for that part time, not for all the time he has been with that Government. So, we have no lesson to be told with regard to the order of the day of Parliament. But he said now, we are doing things artificially - I have replied to that argument. We are not artificially doing anything, unlike them. What have they done before? They have been setting up special Funds. But this is in the Act of Parliament of 2002.

Now, I am shocked, Madam Speaker, by what I heard. When the Leader of the Opposition said ‘spending so much money on mitigation’, it is as if we are wasting public funds, and it will not stop climate change. In other words, he is saying that we should not do anything about mitigating measures. We should sit down and just look at what is happening. Of course, we are not able to stop climate change. Of course, there is a Global Initiative and it

is unfortunate that the United States have decided to *reculer* from the Global Initiative. But that does not deter us from acting, and acting when it is causing damage to properties, to infrastructure and to people's lives also.

So, we are going to act. We have been acting. More so now when we are going to tap from other international organisations, so that we get more funds. He is concerned about environment! Well, from 2005 to 2014, as has been rightly said previously - 2005 they came to Government, with Dr. Navin Ramgoolam as Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

I will tell the hon. Member.

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt!

The Prime Minister: I was nine months in Government. I will reply.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Prime Minister, please address yourself to the Chair and proceed! Do not let yourself be interrupted by the Leader of the Opposition.

The Prime Minister: 2010 - that was a transit, I must say. We did not even have time to ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, don't provoke!

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, from 2005 to 2014 ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: ...he was then the Leader of the PMSD, a strong partner in Labour/PMSD Government. I hope he had the time to tell Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, what he intends to do about the National Environment Protection Commission. Then I hope he had some time to reflect upon it and to tell him whether he would chair that Committee.

Madam Speaker, so many years have gone by and the former Prime Minister did not, at least, for once, have the time to chair such an important Commission.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

The Prime Minister: He was ...

(Interruptions)

C'est vrai, he was busy doing other things.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

The Prime Minister: He was more preoccupied with his own environment.

So, Madam Speaker, I must say that I am not transferring funds here and there as has been alleged by hon. Leader of the Opposition. Madam Speaker, you will see in the course of debates of the Budget, and I am, of course, taking note of the different criticisms that are being made, and I shall reply. You will see, for example, that the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned about CWA. Well, true it is that we are providing funds because there is heavy investment in regard to the improvement of the infrastructure and other ...

(Interruptions)

Wait, the hon. Member will see!

(Interruptions)

But what? It is as if the hon. Member is not happy that the water tariffs are not being increased. It is as if that he would be a happier a man if we had increased water tariffs in order to be able then to finance a number of projects. So, you can rest assured...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, I have asked you several times, let us complete this work, please! Yes, hon. Prime Minister, please proceed!

The Prime Minister: I am just checking if I have missed any point that has been raised.

Let me conclude, Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

Because there have been no valid points that have been raised by the hon. Member, that is why.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

The Prime Minister: Let me say that apart from this amount of money that is being appropriated with regard to this Fund, there is a number of other Ministries also that are dealing with initiatives with regard to the protection of environment, but I shall not go into the list. I have a list here, but it will be maybe for the summing-up with regard to the Budget that I can enumerate additionally.

I must say that this is the first time, Madam Speaker, since this law was passed, that such an amount is being earmarked and will be spent; of course, it is our duty. We cannot say now, and I agree with the hon. Sinatambou. It is not that we are going to carry out the programmes under this Fund. It will be earmarked and it will be for the different Ministries concerned to carry out the different programmes. I say again that this is the first time that a Government has earmarked so much. We will be trying to tap from international institutions, from friendly countries in order to see to it that we can not only carry out the mitigating measures with regard to the negative effects of climate change, but also see to it that we can set up the proper infrastructure in order to avoid any negative effects from climate change.

Thank you.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ESTIMATES OF SUPPLEMENTARY EXPENDITURE

(2017-2018) OF 2018

Vote 27-1 Centrally Managed Initiatives of Government (Contribution to the National Environment Fund) (Rs2,000,000) was called and agreed to.

THE SUPPLEMENTARY APPROPRIATION (2017-2018) BILL (NO. VIII OF 2018)

The Schedule was agreed to.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and agreed to.

The title and enacting clause were agreed to.

The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2017-2018) of 2018 and the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill (No. VIII of 2018) were agreed to.

On the Assembly resuming with Madam Speaker in the Chair, Madam Speaker reported accordingly.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one and a half hours

At 1.18 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.54 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members I have allowed the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation to make a statement.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

KIBOCUBE 2018 PROGRAM - MAURITIAN INFRARED SATELLITE

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make a statement on the first Mauritian Infrared Satellite (MIRSAT1) for the KiboCUBE 2018 Program.

The Republic of Mauritius is deeply honoured that the first Mauritian Infrared Satellite initiative by the Mauritius Research Council (MRC), operating under the aegis of my Ministry, has been selected for the 3rd round of the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) programme in Vienna. Such announcement was made yesterday, on Monday 18 June 2018, by the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA) and the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA).

A multi-institutional team led by the Mauritius Research Council worked on the technical details leading to the design of the first Mauritian Cube Sat. The MRC also benefited from the collaboration of international agencies having expertise in relevant fields, including Clyde Space (UK) and ASTOS Solutions (Germany).

Mauritius intends to use its first CubeSat platform to acquire knowledge on satellite technology and how to efficiently collect and process land and ocean data coming from space. This big data analysis will lead to better monitoring, decision-making and management of both land based and maritime activities, and advancements in capacity-building, research and development and innovation, which will ultimately benefit the people of Mauritius.

Mauritius will be offered the opportunity to build and deploy the first Mauritian Satellite from the International Space Station (ISS) Japanese Experiment Module (Kibo) the

"KiboCUBE". In particular, data collected by the thermal infrared (TIR) camera on board the nanosatellite will be processed by a ground station based in Mauritius.

Such participation, especially in the field of satellite technology, is a breakthrough initiative as it is the first time that Mauritius has participated in such a competition and augurs well for our youth. This space project can serve as a model for other Small Island Developing States.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2018-2019) BILL 2018

(No. VII of 2018)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2018-2019) Bill 2018 (No. VII of 2018).

Question again proposed.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureewoo): Madam Speaker, I would like to join my colleagues in congratulating most warmly the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for presenting such a Budget that will undoubtedly have a meaningful impact on the life of all Mauritians. In fact, the keyword here is inclusive. Inclusive because the Budget has taken into account the needs and aspirations of all segments of the population.

Madam Speaker, this Budget, I must say, was not presented merely for the sake of doing so. *Ce n'est pas du tout un budget qui a été rédigé à la va-vite.* It was carefully crafted after consultation with major key stakeholders. This includes the private sector trade unions, NGOs, planters, SMEs as well as all the different Ministries. The PPSs were also heard. Not only that, Madam Speaker, Government also invited members of the public to submit proposals. I have been told that many proposals were received, they have been carefully analysed. Relevant and constructive proposals were taken into consideration. So, how can the Opposition now come and say that the Budget does not meet the needs of the people. We have to walk up the streets and feel the pulse of the people.

Yesterday, hon. Minister Seeruttun elaborated on the views of the Trade Unions and the Private sector who have expressed satisfaction to the Budget. Now, what about the views of the people? What do they think? Madam Speaker, you would agree with me when I say that the views of the population are the most important. We have been elected by the people to govern the country and their opinions are what matter the most.

On Friday afternoon, I have had the opportunity to walk up the streets of Port Louis. I have met people from all walks of life and most of them expressed their appreciation of the Budget. So, what more can we ask for? If the people are happy, then we are happy. I am not at all worried by the comments of the Opposition. Of course, if the Opposition comes with constructive criticisms, we are here to listen and take good note. But coming to say that there is nothing good in that Budget is pure demagogic and does not portray at all the seriousness of the Opposition side.

We have a Prime Minister who is responsible, hard-working and who wants to serve the country selflessly. He is always ready to listen to the needs of the public at large. The hon. Prime Minister has taken all the care and attention to present a Budget that is fair, just and equitable. It is all about the willingness of the person leading the country. And I thank the hon. Prime Minister for his willingness to improve the quality of life of the Mauritian people.

Madam Speaker, if you ask me what I think of the Budget, I will tell you that the Budget is full of substance and vision. One should not forget that this budgetary exercise was not easy taking into consideration the state of the global economy. A number of risks loom on the horizon, uncertainty with regard to world trade, geopolitical tension and the soaring price of crude oil will definitely affect the world economy. Small Island Developing countries like Mauritius are especially vulnerable. Still – I say still - the present Budget, I must say strike the right balance between social measures and economic growth.

Madam Speaker, I have read the Budget Speech several times. I can't see where the Prime Minister and the Government have gone wrong. The present Budget contains 60 pages of measures to enhance the lives of the people. Allow me to cite some of the main ones: measures for persons living with disabilities; road safety measures; harnessing new technology; massive investment in infrastructure and land transport; massive investment in the construction and upgrading of drains; focus on food production; removal of restrictions on loans offered by commercial banks to those with an income between Rs15,000 and Rs20,000; tackling the problem of youth unemployment - I leave it here to hon. Callichurn to

elaborate on this good measure. There are also the support for micro, small and medium enterprises; investment in social housing; supporting the empowerment of women and girls; reducing the tax rate to 10% for those earning between Rs305,000 and Rs650,000 yearly. For so many years, I can say the middle class has been left behind. It is good that we have taken care of them in this present Budget.

Allow me to elaborate on some of those measures. Let me start with measures relating to our elderly people. Madam Speaker, for us it is important that we acknowledge the contribution and hard work of our elderly people. They are very close to our heart. We will never miss an opportunity to improve their quality of life. We respect them. We want them to continue living in dignity and security.

Notre priorité c'est de veiller à ce que les personnes âgées aient un encadrement qui leur permet de s'épanouir et de vivre leur quotidien dans la quiétude et le bonheur. Nous sommes là pour implémenter des mesures ciblées pour rendre leur vie plus sereine et agréable. De ce fait, elles reçoivent de l'aide financière et non-financière.

I would like to remind the House that it was this Government that brought the old-age pension from Rs3,623 to Rs5,000, then to Rs5,450, and now to Rs5,810. We are very much concerned, as I have said, by the well-being of our elderly and we will make every effort to give them a decent life. The creation of two elderly day care centres at Bambous and Chemin Grenier; the provision for specialised training for 50 carers, and the increase of the grant to the employees of care homes are most welcome and will help to improve elderly care.

Madam Speaker, since this Government has been elected, we have been working towards an inclusive society. *Notre gouvernement fait de son mieux pour mettre en place toutes les mesures requises afin d'améliorer la qualité de vie des personnes souffrant d'un handicap. Nous sommes conscients qu'il y a beaucoup de travail à faire mais la volonté est là et depuis 2014 nous avons commencé dans cette optique.*

The provision of full duty exemption on the purchase of a motorcar for persons with a disability will definitely provide greater opportunities for increased mobility with reduced financial pressure. I applaud the announcement on investment to improve access to public buildings. One of the key measures that must be taken to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities is making sure that they have the facilities and infrastructure for easy access to all public places. It is a matter of providing equal opportunities for all.

When it comes to Special Education Needs (SEN) students, the setting up of a SEN Authority will provide excellent support to improving our educational efforts towards such students. I must congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for extending the payment of taxi fares to special needs students in Tertiary, Secondary and also Primary institutions. These children often need a specific means of transport to get to school which puts a financial burden on families. I need to highlight that this request has been made several years back, but always fell on deaf ears and I am happy that our Government has taken charge of this measure.

One should also not forget the discrimination that was corrected by our Government when I was Minister of Social Security. Madam Speaker, 40 years of injustice! 40 years whereby children with a disability under the age 15 and suffering from an incapacity of not less than 60% did not receive a Basic Invalidity Pension. I had, in the past, the occasion to meet these families and observe the difficulties they were facing. In many of those cases, although they were having difficulty in making both ends meet, the mothers of those children could not join employment simply because they had to take care of their children. By removing the age criteria, many parents having a child with a disability now have some financial relief.

I must say that I am very pleased that the Prime Minister has announced excellent measures with regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women. Wonderful news for women! Our Prime Minister is a good example of someone trying to do better for women and girls. Since we took office, we are digging deeper into the gender issues. Girls and women need to be continuously valued. This is the first time, I believe, that a Government is bringing so many meaningful measures relating to girls and women. I strongly believe that girls and women have the right to live free from discrimination and violence and to fulfil their potential. Closing the gender gap is one of the top priorities of our present Government.

Madam Speaker, gender equality and women empowerment are not only the concern of the Government or the concern of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Of course, it is the concern of everyone. It is the concern of all Ministries. I have had the opportunity to be at the head of that Ministry for almost one year. We have started implementing a series of measures to empower women and girls, who are now being taken by the present Minister of Gender Equality.

Madam Speaker, gender equality is an issue that is above party politics and should be everyone's concern. Women in Mauritius make up 52% of the population and as such much

must be fully included in all aspects of economic growth and development. We must ensure the empowerment of women, not only from a financial perspective, but also from a social point of view. Since women started to join the job market in the 70's, our economy has grown consistently. They have had a huge contribution to our country's development and we must continue to ensure that they are included in all fields. Achieving gender equality and empowerment of women and girls rests upon unlocking the full potential of women in the world of work. Women's greater economic independence and participation is therefore crucial to gender equality. This is why the Work@Home Scheme is such a meaningful measure. It is an innovative and unprecedented endeavour that will further open the labour market to women. It is essential that we take into consideration the constraints faced by woman when reconciling personal and professional responsibilities, especially if women have children.

Flexibility is an important factor of the modern workplace and schemes to support flexible working are now part and parcel of work regulations in many developed countries. It is essential for Mauritius to catch up. I would also like to commend the efforts made to double the grant under the Crèche Scheme to promote investment in Day Care Centres as well as the double deduction upon corporate tax. This measure ties in nicely with the efforts being made to allow more women to join the labour force.

In an effort to be more inclusive and provide better support to new mothers, we must ensure that no women are left out of provisions related to maternity leave. The Budget provides for paid maternity leave to be extended to all women irrespective of their time of service within a company.

Madam Speaker, let me now say a few words on my Constituency, Stanley and Rose Hill. With all the major development projects going on across Mauritius, I am pleased to say that my constituency and that of the Deputy Prime Minister has not been left behind. Rose Hill is experiencing unprecedented development thanks to the hon. Prime Minister. On the one hand, there is the Metro Express Project, on the other hand, there are the other major infrastructural projects such as the construction of a new and modern urban terminal at Place Margeot; the creation of a beautiful leisure park at Ébène; the upgrading of Avenue Berthaud and the renovation of the NHDC Housing at Camp-Levieux.

Madam Speaker, can you imagine that the NHDC complex is being renovated after 30 years. While Rose Hill is developing at a rapid pace, I could not remain insensitive to the

inhabitants' need for a modern market to replace the one which dates back to the late 1930's. This market no longer meets the requirements of the inhabitants.

The Budget makes provisions also, first, for the construction of a multi-purpose complex at Camp-Levieux, Rose Hill; the construction of a multi-purpose complex at Ligne Berthaud, Stanley, Rose Hill; the construction of a leisure centre at Avenue Independance, Roches-Brunes; the construction of a jogging track at Crétin Avenue, Camp-Levieux, and also the primary school and kindergarten de De Plevitz, Camp-Levieux, among others.

All these facilities, Madam Speaker, along with the construction of a Medi Clinic at Stanley, Rose Hill, and the complete renovation of the Plaza Theatre currently in Phase III of its implementation, will no doubt contribute to enhance the quality of life of the inhabitants of Rose Hill and Beau Bassin.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to come to the measures that have been announced in relation to my Ministry – the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands. As the House will know, the Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands has, under its aegis, 12 local authorities, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services and the Outer Islands Development Corporation.

I must express my satisfaction with regard to the Rs1.2 billion that will be allocated to the local authorities and the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services.

With regard to the works carried out by the local authorities since 2015, this Government has made its priority to reduce the gap between rural and urban areas. We have always provided sufficient funds for major construction projects, street lighting projects and provisions of scavenging services, among others in both rural and urban regions. I am pleased that this Budget has also provided adequate funding to continue the infrastructural improvements across the country.

Modern market fairs are being constructed in various regions with more construction projects in the pipeline. These new market fairs respond better to the need of the population as well as to the international standards. Some examples are the construction of a market fair and traffic centre at Goodlands; the construction of market fairs at Bel Air, Chemin Grenier, Mahebourg; the upgrading of the Pamplemousses Market Fair, and also the complete renovation of the fish, meat and poultry section of the Central Market of Port Louis, among others. I wish to highlight that this section of the Central Market dates back to more than 75 years. Moreover, the hygienic conditions prevailing there are unacceptable for a modern city

and it is good that provision has been made in the Budget for the renovation of that section of Port Louis Market.

At this point, I wish to command the provisions of massive investment in the construction and upgrading of drains in 25 flood prone areas through the National Environment Fund. With the impact of climate change, Mauritius is dealing with unprecedented effects of torrential rainfall and flash floods. This year alone, there have been many instances of flash floods and we have seen the suffering of people in flood prone areas. This is why the construction and upgrading of drains in key areas is an absolute priority. This must, of course, be accompanied by intensive all year round maintenance and the Budget also makes provisions for the 12 local authorities to efficiently carry out the continuous cleaning of drains, rivers and canals.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to say a few words on illegal construction. Illegal construction in Mauritius has become a plague in our modern society. During cyclone Berguita and the heavy rainfalls many houses were flooded in a number of localities. I had the opportunity to visit many of the flooded areas around the country with the hon. Prime Minister and other Members of the Government. One of the reasons for the flooding and water accumulation has been attributed to illegal construction on drains, canals, rivers and other natural and man-made watercourses. *Il y a un laisser-aller* and I think this should stop.

This is why we are proposing two important measures. First, to ensure better post-control for regular inspection, 100 officers of the Inspectorate grade will be recruited and posted in the 12 local authorities. This, I am sure, will allow the local authorities to ensure that all new constructions are in compliance with the conditions of the Building and Land Use Permits issued by the local authorities. Henceforth, there will be no leniency in dealing with such cases.

Secondly, we are also coming up with amendments to the relevant legislation to address properly the issue of illegal construction through Mandatory Pulling Down Order. This is a very

bold measure as defaulters need to be aware that the Government means business, that the Government will no more tolerate wrongdoings.

Madam Speaker, the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service is one of our country's most essential services. Over the years, their responsibilities have grown beyond extinguishing fire to include swift water rescue, high angle rope rescue and dealing with hazardous materials.

We greatly rely on their intervention during flash floods to rescue and evacuate people and remove also water from flooded areas. Given the scope of their duties it is a priority for our Government to provide them with all the resources they need to perform efficiently. I must say since 2015 a total of 388 firefighters have been recruited. Out of these a new batch of 114 has just started training. Provision has also been made in this Budget to recruit an additional 100 firefighters.

Moreover, the Budget has made provision for the construction of new fire stations at Montagne Blanche, Goodlands, Mahebourg and Quatre Bornes. We are also doing the needful for the relocation of the Port Louis Fire Station as I have answered earlier in Parliamentary Questions put to me that the current building is in a very dilapidated state and does no longer constitute a proper environment for firefighters to work in.

So, to enable the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service to better protect the population from fire hazards and other risks, such as flash floods, provision has been made in this Budget for the acquisition of new equipment ranging from an aerial ladder platform to deal with fire in high-rise buildings and also for the acquisition of five water lorries.

In addition, I am pleased to say that the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Service Act 2013 is being amended to address issues related to the fire certificates and the fire code. We cannot continue issuing fire certificates for life. So, major changes have to be brought in our legislation. These amendments, I am sure, will certainly help reinforce safety in buildings.

Last but not least, let me speak about the island of Agalega. Madam Speaker, the development of outer islands, particularly in Agalega, is continuously at the heart of the budgetary measures. Agalega has great potential in terms of the production of coconut oil, the availability of fish and future development in the tourism sector. This Budget, therefore, makes provision for key measures which will certainly improve the quality of life of the people of Agalega.

Madam Speaker, as from September 2018, the inhabitants of Agalega will benefit from Internet connectivity through the provision of satellite bandwidth. This measure will no doubt improve the lives of the inhabitants and also open new opportunities for them. The budgetary provision for Agalega has been increased to cater also for the construction of 50 new housing units and the setting up of a sewerage system.

Moreover, Agalega has a high potential for agriculture and is still free from the use of pesticides. Funds have therefore been provided in this Budget for organic onion cultivation in

Agalega. An experiment was carried out on a small scale last year with good results. This year onion cultivation will be carried out on a much larger scale.

Furthermore, there are around 80,000 coconut trees in Agalega which are being used by Agaleans to produce coconut oil. There is great potential for increased coconut oil production. As such, a sum of Rs3 m. is therefore being provided in this Budget for the construction of an oil processing plant in the South Island to enhance the extraction of coconut oil.

The sea surrounding Agalega, namely around the Nazareth Bank and the Saya de Malha Bank is rich in fish which can be exported to Mauritius. To enable the Agaleans to exploit this fish and earn a living, funds have been provided in this Budget for the construction of a fish landing station. This will, of course, boost the level of economic activities and will continue to consolidating the blue economy. Furthermore, with the support of the Economic Development Board, we will be able to develop fishing and seafood hubs in Agalega.

As I mentioned earlier, Agalega is remotely connected to mainland Mauritius. A ship travels there from Mauritius three to four times yearly, bringing food stuffs for the inhabitants. The acquisition of a new ship, as announced in the present Budget, will surely facilitate timely delivery of food products to Agalega.

Madam Speaker, the food brought to Agalega must be kept in cold rooms. I have been told that there is only one cold room. Foodstuffs such as flour are frequently spoiled and have to be thrown away. So, we could not neglect this particular issue. Provision has been made in this Budget for the construction of a second cold room in the south island.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, the Budget 2018-2019, I must say, provides good measures that touch the lives of all Mauritian people. As I have said, the people are happy, we are happy. The Budget accelerates development in all sectors of the economy. It does a remarkable job on the social front by integrating the youth and women in the process of growth. It supports job creation in many sectors. I think that the Budget has taken care of all people living in Mauritius, Rodrigues and also Agalega.

So, Madam Speaker, I will join my colleagues on this side of the House to provide my full support to the budgetary measures and also to their realisation.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

(3.30 p.m.)

Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Going deep into this Budget, Madam Speaker, we cannot find anything concrete. We find only cosmetic measures announced by the Minister of Finance, trying to make the ‘masse’ happy simply for a short-term period. Rs30 decrease in the 12Kg LPG cylinder, no increase in tax on cigarettes and alcohol, reduction of income tax, that is all. But what about measures to attract foreign direct investment, to boost up the economy, to combat inflation, to reduce national deficit and so on? Nothing. The House must be aware that the hon. Leader of the Opposition, when he was Minister of Finance, brought the Youth Employment Programme, and this Government criticised the programme and even said that there won’t be YEP programme again. What do we see now? It has been re-introduced.

Madam Speaker, if we now look at the measures being taken for youth employability after YEP, the Government is now bringing the Youth Service Programme. We will not have the YSP, the YEP and the National Apprenticeship Programme, which are all temporary measures, with no certainty of obtaining a substantive post at the end of the training. They are only short-term measures by the Government to mask the increasing unemployment problem in the country. And now we hear the Work@Home Scheme, which leads to a complete discordance. How will there be an increase in productivity, as being stated by the Government, with this scheme?

What type of working population will the Government be targeting? What type of sectors can adapt to such a scheme when we know that most sectors require their employees to be at their workplace, since they do not have a fully computerised intranet system or for confidentiality reasons? Even employees of the private sector have the leniency of working at home on certain occasions. But it is a fact that due to certain limitations, they cannot perform as efficiently as at their workplace. The Government is also proposing the setting up of a Civil Service College, costing Rs160 m. of public funds when there is no lack of Government-owned buildings which can be available to accommodate this College. Maybe it could have used the three brand new campuses built at Montagne Blanche, Pamplemousses and Réduit, standing like monuments for the past three years. There had been so much talking in last year’s Budget. I have done my homework, Madam Speaker, and noticed that almost all the Ministries have spent not more than 20% of the Capital Budget. Yes, only 20%. And we

see the vanity from the other side about being a Government of people who make things happen.

The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development came out with a project of online monitoring of Budget with the Ministries. What happened? A big fiasco! There is even a big frustration among the civil servants. Almost all the Ministries *sont en panne*. When listening to the Budget Speech, we all get a soothing sensation, but deep inside, it is hollow. We can see the other end through the hole. We have very little positive aspects of the Budget.

Madam Speaker, the fatality trend on our roads has become a rising problem, and with casualties having grown into a very serious road traffic situation concern for a small island like Mauritius. The measures being taken by the Government in increasing the fine, Rs10,000, for those exceeding speed limits by more than 25km/h and Rs100,000 for those driving without licence come at the right moment to decrease the casualty records on our roads. However, Madam Speaker, I firmly believe that the Minister of Finance should have gone deeper in these measures. I am here referring to the vulnerability of the motorcyclists. We have been experiencing an increasing number of accidents involving the two tyres, especially among the youngsters. The *moto-école* is expected to bring positive changes in the future. But we need to tackle the urgency of the problem now. And since we do not have special lanes for motorcycles and bicycles, the Government should have brought forward stringent measures for motorcycles with learners: the imposition of new laws for restricting the number of roads and hours and limit the time period for holding learner driver, rendering it null and void if time frame is lapsed; the restriction of carrying passengers for learners and those with a one-year old licence. We have recently seen the vulnerability of a child on a two-tire and its fatality. We cannot do politics on such a sensible topic. Therefore, more drastic measures were expected in this Budget with regard to road safety.

Our health sector! If we look at the measures announced for the health sector, it is a real shame, Madam Speaker, when we hear the Minister of Finance self-realising that on health care, this Government is delivering on all its promises. The provision for the acquisition of a full-fledged mobile caravan to promote early detection of breast and cervical cancers is a positive measure, being a good means to meet a greater and more remote number of women who can receive these health services. However, if we look at the other measures, most of them will remain only trailers. A hospital here, a medical hub there and to be set up in Côte d'Or found in the most privileged Constituency!

Madam Speaker, there is also the setting up of the new Cancer Centre, which we all are hearing since years and the E-health project which we have been hearing since 2015. With this E-health project, where an amount of Rs100 m. has been earmarked, is it a feasible one? There has been no report on the pilot project which has been initiated at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital as stated by the President of the Medical and Health Officers Association. Whilst the Victoria Hospital is crippling down for ages now due to damage radio therapy and defective machines, nothing is there to improve the quality of service, but only investment in capital projects. It is known that the beds of our hospitals are infested by bugs which suck the blood of the patients when all their blood are sucked out, now what we hear, the Government announces the instalment of nine additional funeral incinerators.

Madam Speaker, when is the Government coming forward with urgent solutions for the rescue of the ailing population? We do not see any measures by the Government to counter the high wastage in the public health service as reported alarmingly in the latest National Audit Report, where it is being unable to maintain the current infrastructure, plant and machinery, repairs of radiotherapy machines which are costing too much to the State. Then, where will the funds be sourcing out for the vast medical infrastructures being promised to the population?

Madam Speaker, if we look at the measures announced for the Food Security Programme, here also we can find a few positive ones. Like subsidies on onions and potato seeds, the monthly income support of 50 cents per kilo of tea leaves harvested by small planters during the three months winter period, the group Life Insurance Service Scheme for registered fishermen to cover any accident and losses at sea, but, it is a fact that most measures announced therein are mainly cosmetic ones. The writing off of the loan for pig breeders has been brought on a piecemeal basis during the past three Budgets of this Government.

In the 2015/2016 Budget, it was announced that for pig breeders, the arrears of interests and penalties will be waived on the loans advanced under the Pig Sector Restructuring Programmes. In the 2016/2017 Budget, it was announced that 50% of the outstanding balances on the loans together with the interests due which were contracted by big breeders under the Pig Sector Restructuring Programme will be waived if they pay back the remaining balance before 30 June 2017. In the 2017/2018 Budget, the Finance Minister announced the writing off of the outstanding balances on the loans under the Pig Sector

Restructuring Programmes. As for the other cases, the loan repayment was extended for another year. And this year's Budget, we hear, and I quote –

“We are exceptionally offering solutions to a heavy financial burden that some pig breeders have been carrying for too long. I am pleased to announce that the DBM has agreed to write off all outstanding loans contracted under the Pig Breeders Relaunching Scheme.”

Madam Speaker, I am far from talking here against the hardship undergone by the pig breeders, but we have a Development Bank of Mauritius operating with public funds. The question which arises is: what has been its role in recovering outstanding loans when the Government has provided the bank a leeway since 2015 or even back in 2008 when the relaunching activities and empowerment programme were instituted?

We also do not have any clue on the actions taken by the DBM, but a Government which is coming year in year out with the same issue. What about those pig breeders who tightened their belts to repay diligently their loan? We also cannot see in this Budget any support measures for other livestock breeders, like cattle, cow, poultry etc. This surely gives a strong smell of elections with the Government trying to charm a certain section of the population. As for the sugar sector, it is having a slow death. Small planters are suffocating and here we are making an appeal to the Government to rescue this sick industry.

The Finance Minister has been a previous Minister of Agriculture and I am sure he will agree that it is not the time to make blame games, but he should rather come forward with strong measures and solutions to save our sugar cane industry.

The ocean economy sector! The measures taken for the ocean economy sector show that we have a Government which is unaware of the potential and the challenges of this sector. Again, the Finance Minister comes with a social Bill for the registered fishermen to cover any accident and losses at sea, which is a positive one, since the work of the fisherman is one of the hardest and deserves to be supported. However, Madam Speaker, we do not see any of the bold initiatives in the Budget as announced in its vision 2030, where it was stated –

“Our fishing industry is being given its due and importance. In this regards, we are already negotiating with major international fishing companies for the setting up of fishing and seafood processing facilities locally. We are also in discussion with fishing companies and port authorities for the development of fishing ports in the country to transform Mauritius into a major regional

fishing centre. Moreover, a National Ocean Council has been set up to drive and implement projects as regards the ocean economy.”

Madam Speaker, where is the National Ocean Bill and the National Ocean Council, the amendments of the Maritime Zone Act, the new Maritime Training Institute? They are still on papers, Madam Speaker? Even the top audit firms have raised the issue regarding the implementation of the budgetary measures based on the vision declared and the past Budgets of this Government. The Government again takes the population for a ride with the setting up of an Ocean Economy Unit with the responsibility of preparing a National Ocean Policy Paper. The merger of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute and the Albion Fisheries Research Centre into one single institution.

We cannot forget all the mergers proposed by this Government in its Public Sector Reform most being still in their incubator. In order to increase the availability of fish locally and in line with the import substitution strategy, the Government will now allow foreign industrial fishing companies to fish in our shallow water banks provided they sell all their catch on the local market. And just now I heard the hon. Vice-Prime Minister say that she is also inviting the Agalega people to develop the fishing hub in Agalega. When here we are suffering, how can we develop fishing hub in Agalega?

Madam Speaker, what about the so-called impulse type of fishing which takes place in the shallow areas or benches. The catches which are sold locally, today we are in a situation where the vessel owners are having difficulty to sell their fish, seafood and, therefore, fighting to sustain their business. Now, this Government seems to be completely ignorant of the challenges of the fish business in trying to allow foreign industrial to fish in our shallow water banks. Most of them do not respect our marine environment and are destroying our coral reefs and marine life during the fishing campaigns.

Maybe the Government should conduct a study of the state of our maritime zone before encouraging these foreigners. We were expecting measures by the Government for the island to reach self-sufficiency for fish and seafood, by encouraging our local fishing companies which are having difficulty to sell their chilled and frozen fish on the local market due to imported fish and seafood purchase at low prices from India, Indonesia, Vietnam and China which are invading the local market. Our supermarkets are invaded with imported fish when we are surrounded by seas and a very rich maritime zone. With this measure being

brought for foreign industrial fishing companies, Government in putting an end to the survival of these local fishing companies.

Madam Speaker, I would here quote from a recent interview of Mr Pierre Dinan when he was questioned on the Smart Cities which this Government is banking on and where he said –

“We need something with greater importance and more opportunities for the future. The important thing is to use the one resource that we have. We are not using properly and that is the sea. We have 2.3 m. square kilometres of maritime territory that is exclusive. According to the United Nations, 0.4 m. out of that is shared with the Seychelles. The Seychelles is using its share to generate energy (...).”

What are we doing with ours? Madam Speaker, the pertinent question is: ‘why we are not exploiting the rich potential of our marine resources when we know that Indian Magnate like reliance power is roaming in our territory.

The last measure I will talk on, before ending, Madam Speaker, is the measures proposed by the Government for the granting of the Mauritian Passports and the Mauritius Citizenship to High Net Worth individuals.

We all know that last year’s Budget was financed by the grant provided by the Government of India and this year’s Budget is being financed by selling Mauritian Passport and Citizenship. Even though certain criteria and due diligence ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please proceed!

Mr Baboo: ...which will be imposed by the Economic Development Board, the Government cannot make the population forget the Sobrinho saga. With the Economic Development Board being filled by political nominees and cronies, how can we expect such an institution to function in full independency and transparency?

The Leader of the Opposition talked on social issues that inhabitants in Tamarin were having, because of the number of South Africans in the Western Coast. We can have the confirmation that there will be no upper hand controlling the grant of the passports and citizenships. Like we had with Alvaro Sobrinho where he was scanned by the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and declared as clean or red carpet treatment offered to millionaires and escorted by hon. Ministers of our Republic.

With this measure and the very bright idea of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development of putting our island on sale, it will not be far-off for our people to be foreigners in our Motherland. I would here like to quote from Hansard, when the then Leader of the Opposition, my good friend, hon. Bodha said on the 3-year Occupation and Residence Permit, in the Budget 2006/2007, and I quote –

“Are we going to have a sale by levy of our country? (...) Migration is a very complex issue. They are opening for a free movement of people. The free movement of people is migration and it is a very complex issue. They can open a floodgate that they will never be able to shut and they will have all the problems as far as the social fabric is concerned. (...) And the way it is going to be done, the red-tapism which is no longer going to be there, “to screen who is coming”. These proposals are both too wild and too irresponsible and it would open the floodgate to migration that cannot be sustained in a small country like Mauritius. (...) In this age of the Internet (...) HIV/AIDS (...) money laundering - drug trafficking - and international prostitution, how can you screen people coming? (...) If it is not a sale by levy of beautiful Mauritius, what is it? Much more - “I love this country” - we all love this country - “we are making Mauritius a safe haven for drug traffickers, for criminals and for money launderers.”

Madam Speaker, how can we trust this Government? On the other side, the Government eliminates the GLB2 companies, the only solution found to restore confidence in our global business sector. A measure being taken with such a short transition period being offered to management companies. It is a fact that above one thousand GLB2 companies are licensed on a yearly basis by the FSC nearly the same number as GLB1. Instead of scrapping off the GBL2, we have expected a more business mindset measure like more stringent regulatory framework by the FSC and consolidating the FSC’s role as the watchdog of the global business sector, encouraging whistleblowers to come forward putting the right people to head this regulatory body, and independent and competent members to sit on its Board.

This measure of removing the GBL2 licence is being without any pre-consultation with the players of the sector, the management companies and without any provision of an alternate to the GBL2. This uncalculated decision will surely be forcing management companies to sell more domestic companies, meaning an important decrease in their income. This decision penalises on its way all those management companies which are abiding to the FSC rules and operating in full compliance.

Madam Speaker, for the last Budget of this Government, we were expecting at least measures with strong notions to stimulate the economy and to attract Foreign Direct Investment. During the mandate of *l'Alliance Lepep*, we have seen now four Budgets which have been, unfortunately, majority of *effet d'annonce*. If we look at the electoral manifesto of this Government and the Government Vision 2030, it is clear that this Government has been deluding the population year in, year out with its fallacies. The complete silence on the Freedom of Information Act. The complete silence on the Freedom of Information Act which was so loudly being promoted has been confined. It is known...

(Interruptions)

...that was...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt him, please!

Mr Baboo: It is known that wise infrastructure spending is likely to convey a shot to the economy. More essentially, if wisely spent, it could help kick productivity which is an essential ingredient for economic growth. But the Government cannot fool the population with the Metro Express while public debt is ballooning and being masked under the SPVs.

The population will not forget, during the electoral campaign, how the Prime Minister himself campaigned against the then *metro léger*. Some projects for which we had no clue of being rooted in full opacity, a way to milk out more from public funds and share among the cronies. Even the *débris*, the rubbles of the ENT hospital have not been spared by them as reported by the Press.

The Metro Expresss project for which Rs37 billion have been earmarked for the construction of the urban terminals. The Immigration Square Urban terminal which will be built in Buffer Zone 1 of Appravasi Ghat, one of our only two world heritage properties. The development is considered as an incompatible use of the buffer zone. The course of action of the planning policy guidance has not been observed. Work clearly states that any future development of the core and buffer zone would require a design statement, EIA licence to peserve the authenticity and integrity of the world heritage property.

We have been left in total opacity with respect to this. Whether the Technical Committee or the Planning Policy Guidance have met, the emergency rescue call for the two

experts from the International Council on Monuments and Sites and from UNESCO show the unplanned, amateurism and hastiness approach with regard to the Metro Express project.

Madam Speaker, the Planning Policy Guidance is the legal framework proposed to UNESCO for the management, preservation and conservation of the buffer zones. According to the UNESCO website, no assistance request has been made by the concerned Ministry. The last two requests lodged with UNESCO relate to the setting up of the Beekrumsing Ramlallah Interpretation Centre in 2012. The latest one was for the launch of the local economic development plan for Appravasi Ghat which was a request from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee for Mauritius to take necessary action to prevent the demolition of the historical building in its Core Zone as well as to put in place mechanisms that ensure integrated management of the area. It is a fact that the UNESCO has been put before a *fait accompli* and if recommendations are made for any changes to the plan, we shall have to bear the cost overrun of Larsen and Toubro.

I would conclude by saying that with the 50th Anniversary of our Independence, we are at a stage where the population has seen all its scandals within the Government has mushroomed in every sphere in such a short span of time. Nothing has been spared! From the transfer of Prime Ministerhip, nepotism, corruption, allegations, involvement with drug dealers, racist comments to scandals at the highest of the State....

(Interruptions)

... strike of Air Mauritius pilots, the airlines worse ranking and to the latest abuse of power with the Rs15 m. deal, just to name a few. If we look at the number of infrastructural projects being announced in this Budget, instead of giving a feel-good factor to the population, it is instead confirming the type of *gouvernement poseur première pierre*.

In India and China, long distance flyovers have been built over the sea. Tunnels have been built through mountains, and here the 200 metres of Terre Rouge-Verdun Road is still under repairs for the past four years now.

(Interruptions)

Now that it is embarking on its final year, Madam Speaker, I will end by saying we are at least expecting some sincere, feasible, and stimulating measures from the Government to stir up our economy, but it is unfortunately only playing mind games with the population with a few populist measures, with a PR promotion paving the way as its pre-electoral campaign.

With this, I thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gungah!

(4.06 p.m.)

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr A. Gungah):

Madam Speaker, I listened very attentively to my good friend, hon. Baboo. I must say that he started very well, on a very good note mentioning the good measures that were announced by the hon. Prime Minister during the Budget. At least, he recognises that. But then, I think, quite suddenly he remembered that he is in the Opposition now just like my good friend hon. Nando Bodha was in 2006 and he did his job.

We respect the job of the Opposition. It is their duty to come and criticise. But we like criticisms that are constructive. We like that if ever somebody has got alternatives to propose, they are welcome. Hon. Baboo said something about the Budget in the beginning. He mentioned the word ‘fiasco’. I think, Madam Speaker, ‘fiasco’ will be a better word for the PMSD to what they faced during the last partial by-elections.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Gungah: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

And finally, their candidate left the Party.

Madam Speaker, let me salute the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for crafting a modern and constructive vision in the 2018-2019 Budget - “Pursuing our Transformative Journey”. This is the third consecutive Budget that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has presented, and once again, he has been successful in striking the right balance between economic imperatives and social requirements.

Madame la présidente, rarement un ministre des Finances a su joindre les actes à la parole. Tout comme les deux autres budgets qu'il a présentés pendant ce mandat, ce budget-ci confirme que notre Premier ministre est avant tout animé d'un profond sens d'humanisme. Les mesures annoncées répondent aux aspirations de plusieurs secteurs de notre économie,

aussi bien que les différentes couches sociales de notre population. C'est un budget qui a été très bien accueilli par l'ensemble de la population, les syndicalistes et les ONG. Je pense que mon ami, l'honorable Mahen Seeruttun, avait bien dit hier dans son discours. Allez demander aux pensionnés de ce qu'ils pensent aujourd'hui. Allez demander aux autrement capables de ce qu'ils pensent aujourd'hui. Allez demander aux femmes *cleaners* de ce qu'elles pensent aujourd'hui. Allez demander aux travailleurs avec le salaire minimum, le *Negative Income Tax*, de ce qu'ils pensent aujourd'hui. Allez demander aux ménagers de ce qu'ils pensent aujourd'hui avec la réduction dans le prix de la bonbonne de gaz.

(Interruptions)

I hope they come back to give us feedback!

Madam Speaker, one of the subjects which have been largely commented by the Leader of the Opposition over the past month is the price of Mogas and gasoil. Unfortunately, he is not here now, but I hope he is watching the live transmission, because today we have freedom of information; he can watch it live on the TV.

I must say, Madam Speaker, that our views differ on this issue. In fact, the price of Mogas has always been a matter of utmost importance worldwide, given that the population has to have recourse to this commodity on a daily basis. In many countries, the retail price of petroleum products at service stations is highly affected by taxes levied and by the pricing mechanism. All Governments have experienced a hike in petrol price. We all have to deal with it cautiously, as we do not want to jeopardise our economy, and sometimes this brings criticism along with political demagogery.

Members of the Opposition, particular the Leader of the Opposition who has been Minister of Finance, are aware of the importance of taxes and levies on petroleum products, which allow Government to bring more social justice and to invest in projects of national importance.

Madam Speaker, let us see what are the factors which caused this surge in the price of petroleum products on the international market, and affecting most countries in the world. International factors and geopolitical issues dictate petroleum prices. Mauritius has no control on these elements. Decisions taken by the world leading powers or oil producing countries or even a Press statement by one of them can create a sudden rise or fall in these prices.

In mid-2014, the price of petroleum products began to decrease due to an increase in supply on the world market. Consequently, in Mauritius, consumers benefited from a

decrease in retail price of Mogas and gasoil from November 2015 to February 2017, a total reduction of Rs7.10 per litre of Mogas and Rs6 per litre for gasoil. The price of petroleum products remained unchanged in Mauritius for one year, from February 2016 to February 2017, and it was the lowest price of petroleum products in Mauritius since 2011. However, Madam Speaker, the decrease in petroleum prices in the world at that moment affected economically some producing countries like Saudi Arabia and Venezuela, which are two major producers.

Hence, at the end of 2016, OPEC took the decision to reduce its production, leading to a decrease in the supply of petroleum products on the world market. Since then, the price of petroleum products began to increase, impacting especially countries importing such products, and at its meeting in November 2017, OPEC decided to maintain its reduced level of production. These decisions, together with major geopolitical conflicts between some countries, have triggered an acceleration effect in petroleum prices over the last six months, and the decision of the President of the USA to pull out of the nuclear agreement with Iran is keeping the price on an increasing trend.

All these resulted in the increase of the price of Mogas on the world market, from 600.39 US dollars per metric ton in December 2017 to 717.56 US dollars per metric ton last week. And for the same period, the price of gasoil on the world market has increased from 72.22 US dollars per barrel to 86.86 US dollars per barrel.

Madame la présidente, il y a une certaine ou un semblant d'incompréhension du leader de l'opposition sur la méthodologie du calcul du prix de l'essence et du diesel à Maurice. Le *Petroleum Pricing Committee* utilise le prix de référence Platts et non la référence Brent.

Nous avons revu le système de calculs pour le prix de référence en novembre 2015, dont j'ai déjà longuement parlé ici, et nous l'avons fait afin que le prix à Maurice soit plus proche de celui pratiqué sur le coût mondial. Auparavant, c'était une moyenne de 12 mois du prix de référence Platts, soit de six mois antérieurs au prix actuel ajouté aux prévisions pour les six prochains mois. Depuis novembre 2015, on l'a revu pour ramener la moyenne sur six mois, soit trois mois antérieurs au prix actuel et les prévisions pour les trois prochains mois.

Hier matin lors de son intervention le *leader* de l'Opposition s'est référé au coût du Brent fluctuant entre 80 et 72 dollars le baril d'essence pendant le dernier mois et au prix de

référence Platts de 693 et 730 dollars utilisés par le PPC le 15 mai et le 14 juin respectivement.

Bien sûr, Madame la présidente, le PPC est arrivé à ces chiffres en utilisant la structure de prix telle qu'elle est, la structure qui est en vigueur. Je dois dire que nous avons un mécanisme de calcul de prix qui nous permet d'avoir un degré de stabilité dans le prix au détail pour l'essence et le diesel. Comme je disais, le *leader* de l'Opposition avait cité le prix de 72 dollars le baril du Brent hier et je voudrais souligner qu'à l'ouverture des coûts du baril de pétrole ce matin, le prix est à 74 dollars. Donc, si on suit la logique du *leader* de l'Opposition on aurait dû baisser le prix hier et l'augmenter ce matin.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, il y a aussi la rencontre des Pays Exportateurs de Pétrole c'est-à-dire l'OPEP prévu pour ce vendredi et cette rencontre va être déterminante sur l'évolution des prix pour les prochaines semaines. Nous vivons dans une période d'incertitude et déjà il y a un désaccord entre les membres de cette organisation pour augmenter leur production.

So, Madam Speaker, the international context together with the deficit in the price stabilisation account resulted in an increase in the retail price of Mogas and Gasoil on 15 May 2018, and I explained the reasons of the increase during the PNQ that the hon. Leader of the Opposition addressed to me and also during my last Press conference.

Et vous serez d'accord, Madame la présidente, que ce n'est pas de gaieté de cœur que cette hausse sur le prix du carburant avait été appliquée. Et malgré toutes les contraintes internationales, le gouvernement a, en guise de solidarité, comme l'a affirmé l'honorable Premier ministre dans son discours sur le budget, revu à la baisse le prix du carburant. Une décision qui a été saluée par la population. Une baisse qui est non seulement bénéfique aux automobilistes mais aussi aux opérateurs économiques. Pour appliquer cette baisse, le *Petroleum Pricing Committee* a revu le montant collecté sous l'item *Contribution to Subsidy of LPG, Rice and Flour*, qui passe de R2.70 à R1.75 pour l'essence et de R2.70 à R1.20 pour le diesel. Et l'item Maurice Ile Durable de 30 sous a été enlevé de la structure du prix.

Madame la présidente, beaucoup a été dit sur le montant prélevé pour subventionner le prix du riz, de la farine et du gaz ménager. C'est bon de savoir que pendant plusieurs années le montant collecté par la STC pour subventionner le riz, la farine et le gaz ménager était insuffisant. À cet effet, pour la période de juin 2006 à décembre 2015 la STC a dû puiser 4,4 milliards de roupies de ses réserves accumulant ainsi des déficits annuellement sur cet

item. Et c'est pour cela que nous avons dû augmenter le montant de cette contribution en novembre 2015 de R1.50 à R2.70.

Et ce n'est que pour la période financière de 18 mois s'étalant de janvier 2016 à juin 2017 qu'il y a eu un excédent de 1,2 milliards de roupies dans le montant collecté par rapport aux coûts encourus par la STC pour l'achat du riz, de la farine et du gaz ménager. Et ceci a permis, Madame la présidente, de maintenir le prix du riz et de baisser le prix de la farine en 2017 et le prix du gaz ménager en 2016.

Les membres de l'Opposition qui étaient au gouvernement en mars 2013 semblent avoir oublié que les prix de l'essence et du diesel étaient arrivés au niveau record de R52.25 et R43.95 respectivement en mars 2013.

But, Madam Speaker, what did they do for the people at that time? Did they remove or reduce any tax or contribution in the price structure as we did, as the hon. Prime Minister announced in the Budget? No, Madam Speaker, nothing was done! They did not care whether the population is paying an excessive price for Mogas...

(Interruptions)

...and Gasoil. But we, as a sign of solidarity with the population, because we all know we cannot control the price on the international market, but, on the national part, we have a price structure and if some items can be reduced or removed like what we did, we did it and we did it for the population. And we should not forget the hedging, Madam Speaker, which was done by the Labour Party and PMSD Government. Some Rs5 billion were collected from the population through the price of Mogas and Gasoil to refund this debt. And who paid for it, Madam Speaker? The population, it came from our pockets.

Madam Speaker, let me come now to the decrease in the price of LPG. We all know that petroleum prices are related to the subsidy on rice, flour and LPG and for the second time in our mandate, this Government has decreased the price of domestic gas bringing it from Rs330 in 2016 to Rs240 last week; a reduction of Rs90. No other Government has undertaken such action in the past! Let me remind some hon. Members of the Opposition that from November 2005 to March 2012, the price of domestic gas of 12 kg cylinder was increased by Rs80. Rs80, Madam Speaker, from Rs250 to Rs330! *Ki sanela ti pe roule pays sa lepok la?*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, we reversed the situation in less than two years.

Madame la présidente, le public doit savoir que pour arriver jusque-là, la STC subventionne une bonbonne de 12 kg à hauteur de R180 soit 43% du prix actuel. Sans cette subvention, le prix d'une bonbonne de gaz ménager de 12 kg aurait été de R420. Nous prenons les décisions réfléchies afin que le consommateur puisse avoir accès aux produits de base tels que le riz, la farine et le gaz ménager à des prix abordables.

Madame la présidente, le *leader* de l'Opposition, dans son intervention hier, a questionné notre source d'approvisionnement de produits pétroliers de la compagnie indienne MRPL (Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited). C'est un accord de gouvernement à gouvernement qui assure la continuité dans l'approvisionnement de nos produits pétroliers. Donc, si jamais il y a un manque de produits pétroliers dans le monde, l'île Maurice aura la priorité dans la livraison. Mais comme je l'ai déjà affirmé à plusieurs reprises, le contenu de ce contrat ne peut être rendu public par la clause de confidentialité qui s'y trouve.

Madame la présidente, le *leader* de l'Opposition a été un *Senior Member* de gouvernements successifs de 2005 à 2016. Je pense qu'il aurait pu exprimer son point de vue lors de la signature du contrat initial en 2006, ainsi qu'à ses renouvellements en 2010, 2013, 2016, mais rien. Soudain, hier, il décide de réfléchir à MRPL.

(Interruptions)

Je laisse le Leader de l'Opposition réfléchir à ce qu'il dit.

Madame la présidente, quant aux remarques du *leader* de l'Opposition sur l'affaire Betamax, je dirai qu'aucune bataille n'est perdue d'avance. Je sais que le souhait des membres de l'Opposition est que Betamax gagne le cas. Mais nous attendons un jugement. Tant que le jugement ne tombe pas, on ne peut pas tirer des conclusions.

(Interruptions)

On est en train de regarder des matches de foot, *match pas encore fini, nous inn jouer 45 minutes. Si Betamax pe amener 1-0, kapave vine 1-1, kapav vine 2-1, STC gagner.*

Madam Speaker: English is the Official language!

Mr Gungah: Enn ti publicité ça !

(Interruptions)

Nous konn jouer a koz ça qui nou la la.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gungah!

Mr Gungah: Madame la présidente, sur ce même sujet, je voudrais faire ressortir qu'en décembre dernier, à la suite de l'ordre intérimaire de la Haute Cour de Karnataka sur l'approvisionnement de notre carburant de MRPL, le gouvernement mauricien avait approché des pays amis afin d'éviter une rupture dans l'approvisionnement des produits pétroliers. La STC s'était approvisionné des compagnies d'Etat, Saoudienne Aramco, et seychelloise Seypec. Les propos du *leader* de l'Opposition pourraient faire croire qu'il y aurait pu avoir maldonne. C'est inapproprié de sa part de remettre en question l'intégrité des discussions qui avaient été engagées au plus haut niveau des Etats concernés. Et je peux rassurer la Chambre et la population que tout a été fait dans la droiture et dans l'intérêt du pays.

Madame la présidente, cette situation aurait pu provoquer une rupture dans l'approvisionnement du carburant sur le marché local avec les conséquences sérieuses sur notre économie et notre quotidien. Ce genre de situation peut se répéter si on n'a pas un stock confortable. Par exemple, en février dernier, la livraison des produits pétroliers a été retardée dû au mauvais temps ; il y avait des intempéries. Au fait, en février on a frôlé une situation de rupture. C'est parce que l'île Maurice n'est pas un producteur de pétrole, et vu notre position géographique, nous sommes vulnérables. Donc, nous devons être préparés pour répondre à une demande croissante de carburant. Et là, j'ai le plaisir d'annoncer à la Chambre et à la population, que le projet de MOST (Mer Rouge Oil Storage Terminal), qui consiste d'une capacité de stockage de 25,000 MT de produits pétroliers, est complété. Ce projet avait été mis en chantier en décembre 2016.

(Interruptions)

Voilà ! Exactement ! Quand nous sommes venus en 2014, à partir de janvier quand j'ai étudié la situation des produits pétroliers à Maurice, c'est à partir de là que les choses ont commencé à bouger. Et le projet a été mis en chantier en décembre 2013 ; c'était le ministre Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, qui avait posé la première pierre, et très bientôt, c'est notre Premier ministre qui va faire l'inauguration.

Madame la présidente, le processus de *commissioning* est en cours et les opérations débuteront dans un très proche avenir. Ainsi avec un stockage additionnel de 15,000 MT d'essence et 10,000 MT de diesel, nous aurons un stock confortable de 27 jours pour l'essence et de 17 jours pour le diesel. Alors qu'actuellement nous n'avons que quelques jours de réserve à l'arrivée de chaque *tanker*. Et comme je vous ai dit tout à l'heure, en

février nous avons frôlé une rupture parce qu'on avait à ce moment-là, pour l'essence, quelques heures de stock avant l'arrivée d'un prochain *tanker*.

Madame la présidente, nous ne devons pas arrêter ici. Et c'est dans ce contexte que le Oil Terminal Jetty at Albion, qui est un projet majeur, aims at strategic storage for petroleum products for Mauritius, for the export of petroleum products in the region, and for bunkering. And I can say that the petroleum hub in Mauritius has reached another step with the feasibility studies being carried out presently and the report is expected by the end of this year.

Madam Speaker, coming to the bunkering sector, I must say that the growth in the bunkering sector is very promising. Since the liberalisation in the importation of bunker fuel and other incentives given by the Mauritius Ports Authority and the State Trading Corporation, the volume of bunker fuel supplied to vessels is on an increasing trend. And for the annual period ending 30 June 2017, a volume of 407,826 MT tonnes was achieved compared to 291,142 MT for the year ending 30 June 2016. And for the period 2017-2018, we are expecting a growth of 25% with an estimated volume of around 510,000 MT of bunker fuel.

Madam Speaker, I will now comment on some other measures related to consumer protection. Diabetes is a major cause of ill-health in Mauritius. For the year 2017, the percentage of diabetics cumulates to 22.02% for a population aged between 20 to 79 years. Following a request from consumers, a study was carried out on the price of blood glucose strips used by patients to test the level of sugar in their blood. Even those who are not diabetes patients usually monitor their sugar level with this strip. It has been observed, after the study, that the overall mark-up practised by some traders is very high for this item. Indeed, the mark-up ranges from 48% to 102%, Madam Speaker.

As a caring Government, it has been decided to place this item under price control as is the case for pharmaceutical products with a mark-up of 35%, that is, 11% for the wholesalers and 24% for retailers and a special allowance of 2% to cover landed cost. Madam Speaker, this will bring a reduction in the range of Rs40 to Rs174 on a packet of 50 strips.

The next measure, Madam Speaker, concerns relief to the consumer on hire purchase. Our People have experienced a major paradigm shift during the past few years. Consumption patterns have changed and so has lifestyle. Consumers are very often unknowingly being fleeced either by stores or by financing institutions which provide the related funding. *Le taux*

d'intérêt sur l'achat was last revised to 12% in April 2015 when the repo rate was fixed at 4.65%. In this Budget, Madam Speaker, Government is going further in removing the surcharge on late payments because we know this often happens. In fact, it happens very frequently with those who have to make their payments.

(Interruptions)

From 19% to 12 %, of course!

Madam Speaker, allow me now to comment on the manufacturing sector, which is a strategic pillar on which we wish to capitalise for enhanced economic growth. Lately, there have been apprehensions on the capacity of the industry to maintain the momentum in its growth trajectory. Government is doing everything to support the industry against the backdrop of continued challengers in the global economy. Statistical figures demonstrate that the sector has witnessed positive growth despite the uncertain and fragile global environment. The sector grew by 0.1% in 2015, 0.3% in 2016 and 1.4% in 2017. Manufacturing output increased from Rs126.4 billion in 2016 to reach Rs127.4 billion in 2017.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, the declining trend in export of manufactured goods has been reversed with a 3% increase during the first quarter of 2018 as compared to the same period in 2017. To date, the manufacturing sector contributes 13% to GDP, provides employment to 95,000 persons and accounts for 85% of domestic exports. Indeed, we firmly believe in the potential of the sector to further generate wealth and create gainful employment and no one can deny our commitment for its sustained development.

Madam Speaker, since this Government came to power, a wide range of support measures has been put in place to redynamise the manufacturing sector. Many enterprises have been able to navigate through the rough seas by leveraging on these measures. I will briefly comment on a few of them to demonstrate the effectiveness -

- (i) to support export promotion, we have spent more than Rs300 m. over the past three years by helping some 480 enterprises in their export drive, and
- (ii) we also actively engaged in trade negotiations such as the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) with India, the Mauritius China Free Trade Area, the Tripartite and Continental Free trade Area at regional level in order to rebalance our exports and penetrate new and emerging markets.

On the competitive side, Madam Speaker, 87 enterprises were assisted through their speed to market and Freight Rebate Schemes, which partially subsidise freight costs on export, and for the period July 2017 to May 2018, a total amount of Rs63.8 m. were dispersed to them. Government has maintained these schemes to help our enterprises improve the competitive edge on the export market.

Another measure which has been widely welcome was the Exchange Rate Support Scheme, which compensates revenues forgone by exporters due to depreciation of the US dollars. This scheme became effective in September 2017 and is managed by my Ministry. As at May 2018, some 1,595 claims were received for a total value of Rs108 m. out of which Rs45 m. have already been disbursed. On the investment front, Madam Speaker, we have made the ease and cost of doing business more attractive through promulgation of the new Business Facilitation Act in 2017.

The setting up of the EDB has been a catalyst in improving the business environment with the introduction of an E-licencing platform. Our new strategic focus and resolve has started to yield dividends. Madam Speaker, figures available indicate that an amount of more than Rs1 billion was invested in manufacturing activities during the past years. Some textiles and clothing companies have invested massively for upgrading and modernising their production and marketing set up, and more interestingly, new entrance has also started production in the field of optical fibre and flexible packaging.

Madam Speaker, this Government has always adopted an industry friendly approach. We are fully aware of the new challenges that are reshaping the global economic environment. As I just stated, a plethora of measures is already in place to help our enterprises leverage against the adverse situation. Here, I will mention the fiscal incentives in form of accelerated depreciation and double deduction for expenditure on research and development, reduce corporate tax for export and tax holiday for investment in high-tech activities. In this Budget, we have shown our determination to continue nurturing our manufacturing sector. We have introduced additional support measures to further enhance our competitive advantage and generate sustainable industrial growth. Let me briefly comment on these measures, Madam Speaker –

- (i) the setting up of new industrial parks for high-tech, pharmaceutical and life sciences activities at Côte d'Or and Rose Belle – not only Côte d'Or, Rose Belle as well - will attract a new breed of investors in

sectors with high growth potential. In this context, Madam Speaker, my Ministry will work in full collaboration with the EDB and other business operators to conduct an aggressive campaign to showcase our business environment locally and internationally and facilitate the setting up of new enterprises in these parks, and

- (ii) the establishment of a logistic park at Riche Terre which will be another milestone in our quest to become a regional distribution centre.

Madam Speaker, other measures like -

- the review of mechanism for employment of expatriate workers,
- the increase in refund of training cost from 60% to 70% for employees contributing to the National Training Fund,
- the setting up of a new Africa Infrastructure and Industrialisation Fund to assist Mauritian investors execute projects in their special economic zones in Africa, along with a 5- year tax holiday on investment will definitely boost the business sentiments, triggering a new vigour in the feel-good factor.

Madam Speaker, let me now briefly speak on the support institutions servicing the manufacturing sector. Let me emphasize that their operational mode is constantly being reviewed and realigned to meet the emerging needs of the industry and consumers.

To this end, the quality infrastructure of the Mauritius Standards Bureau is being strengthened with a Polymerase Chain Reactor (PCR) for DNA testing of basmati rice. This testing facility is of utmost importance to differentiate genuine basmati rice for the benefit of the consumers, and very soon, it is going to come to a reality, Madam Speaker. New testing equipment will also be acquired to gauge the energy efficiency of household electrical appliances.

Mauritas, which is responsible for accreditation of laboratories, is in the final stage of obtaining international recognition. This will facilitate the task of our operators who can avail of accreditation services at lower cost for easy market access abroad.

The Assay Office, which regulates the precious jewellery business, has reinforced its testing capabilities to offer a wider range of testing services for gold, diamond and silver jewellery. Consumers and jewellers can now verify the authenticity of diamonds and gemstones with an online facility provided by the Assay Office.

The merging of the Fashion and Design Institute and the School of Jewellery is progressing. Madam Speaker, this fusion will bring a new orientation in the courses offered by the Institute.

Madam Speaker, my intervention would not be complete without my remarks on the introduction of the negative income tax together with the national minimum wage.

Indeed, our present as well as future generations will always remember these innovative and historical measures. This Government has dared to implement what it had promised in 2014, and what others have not been able to do. We have achieved the impossible task of combining both the socio and economic obligations.

Madam Speaker, making progress and improving the lives of people is the prime concern of this Government. Nothing else matters to us. I have the conviction that we are on the right track.

Budget after Budget, we have centred our thoughts and actions on the economic and social transformation of the country. Massive investment is being made in the development of physical infrastructure to fulfil our aspiration of a modern State.

On the social front, vulnerable groups of the society are being supported through an expanded safety net. Considerable progress has been achieved in women empowerment and gender equality. The young generation is also being nurtured for a better future.

Madam Speaker, this Government is cruising at full speed and the Budget provides the necessary steam to disperse any clouds in the horizon. At the end of the day, what matters is that we are in total command to complete our journey safely. I will conclude on a quote of Steve Jobs, who said –

“If you are working on something exciting that you really care about, you don't have to be pushed, the vision pulls you.”

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(4.53 p.m)

The Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Allow me at the very outset to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the bold measures he has announced to improve the standards of living and enhance the quality of life of the people.

Madam Speaker, when we have a cosmetic and divided Opposition, it is normal that they will see only cosmetic measures. Ce budget est un budget de continuité qui consolidera l’unité nationale et propulsera le pays pour les prochains 50 ans. C’est cela la vision du Premier ministre et du gouvernement. C’est un budget « *lamé dan lamé* » avec le peuple.

Madame la présidente, ce matin, un éditorialiste renommé d’une radio privée a salué les mesures fort louables de ce budget. Il a fait bien ressortir que c’est un budget qui touche toutes les couches sociales.

In fact, Madam Speaker, according to the same editorialist, there is a feel-good factor everywhere in the country. La satisfaction de ses auditeurs, il a bien dit, est un bon baromètre, lequel traduit leur acceptation et leur soulagement face à des mesures qui les touchent personnellement. Selon ce monsieur, c’est un budget qui permet aux Mauriciens de pousser un ‘ouf’ de soulagement, à tel point que les membres de l’opposition ont peur de se relever, parce que ce budget les a mis *knockout*.

The economic and social measures enunciated in this Budget clearly demonstrate that le *Premier ministre a à cœur le bien du peuple*. He has addressed the concerns of the youth, the women, the artists, the elderly, people with disabilities, the poor and the vulnerable, the victims of flood and other calamities, pig breeders as well as the middle-income households. Furthermore, fiscal incentives and other allocations have been provided to different segments of the population: an increase in the tax deduction in respect of children studying at tertiary level both locally and overseas; a reduction in the income tax rate from 15% to only 10% for those earning between Rs305,000 and Rs650,000 annually; enhanced income exemption threshold for retired persons; tax deduction equal to the amount invested in rain harvesting; allowance to carers; reduction in the price of domestic LPG of 12 kg, as mentioned by my friend, hon. Minister Gungah, bringing the retail price of a cylinder at Rs240 compared to Rs330 when the previous regime was in power; reduction in the price of mogas by Rs2.35 per litre, and the price of gasoil by Rs1.90 per litre.

He has further consolidated the existing schemes, incentives and facilities to the population at large. He has introduced new bold measures to combat social evils such as drug trafficking, reckless driving and domestic violence.

Allow me now, Madam Speaker, to come directly to my Ministry. My Ministry has embarked on a vast housing programme for the construction of houses of medium size of 50

m^2 to accommodate at least two bedrooms, living and dining room, and all associated infrastructure such as roads, drains, water and electricity supply.

Yesterday, I listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition with regard to the housing project. Let me remind him that when he was in Government as the Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, he was encouraging the construction of houses up to 34 m^2 , which was criticised and described as '*boîte zalimet*' by Père Labour.

Necessary social and recreational amenities are being provided within the housing estates where required so as to better integrate the residents with these housing estates. The future residents of the NHDC Smart housing units shall, henceforth, be provided with *arbres fruitiers* with a view to creating a culture of green space and environmental awareness resilient to climate change, in line with the vision of the hon. Prime Minister. From period 2015 to end of June 2018, it is expected that the construction of a total of 2,171 housing units will be completed with all necessary infrastructure and amenities.

For the financial year 2017-2018, the construction of 1,288 housing units with all necessary infrastructure and amenities will be completed. The construction of another 3,041 housing units is in progress. Out of which, 956 will be constructed at Dagotière and Mare Tabac by the NBCC India Ltd. under the grant obtained from the Indian Government and the loan from the line of credit. Works are expected to start in July 2018.

As announced by the hon. Prime Minister, the construction of some 6,008 housing units will start in 2018-2019. The hon. Leader of the Opposition and other hon. Members of National Assembly may refer to the Appendices I and II to the Budget Speech regarding localities where these housing projects are to be implemented.

Madam Speaker, due to scarcity of suitable State land, consideration is being given to maximise land use by varying the types of housing units and by constructing high-rise housing units of ground plus three configuration, including amenities such as *crèches*, commercial and recreational facilities. This will increase the number of housing units and enable us to reach our target of constructing 10,000 housing units by 2020.

Moreover, the Budget provides for the construction of 50 housing units by the NHDC in Agalega. Thank you very much, hon. Prime Minister!

Madam Speaker, let me remind the House that the previous Government constructed only 2,496 housing units over the past 10 years. This is indeed not comparable to what this

Government has achieved over only three years. The previous regime which pretended to be a caring Government did not cater much *pour ceux qui sont au bas de l'echelle*.

Madam Speaker, with respect to the vulnerable families living in poor conditions at Longère Tôle, Baie du Tombeau, this Government is providing them with a decent shelter. Thanks to the intervention of my friends MPs from Constituency No. 5, hon. Callichurn, hon. Ramkaun and the hon. Deputy Speaker, and thanks to our former Vice-Prime Minister, - our Sheikh - hon. Showkutally Soodhun! Nothing has been done for these vulnerable families during the Labour regime where the former Prime Minister, Dr Navinchandra Ramgoolam was himself an elected Member of this Constituency with his two colleagues - I think it was the former Minister Faugoo and former Minister Ritoo. For the past 10 years nothing had been done! It is this Government which is doing something for these people at Cité Longère.

Some 150 housing units will be constructed on the same plot of land where the Longère is presently located. The works comprise the relocation of the existing residents from the site of works at Baie du Tombeau to temporary shelters on an adjacent site in the first instance before the actual housing units can be constructed. An amount of Rs40 m. is earmarked in the Budget 2017-2018 for this project. Construction works for temporary shelters for 96 families are in progress and are expected to be ready by mid-June 2018, from which works for the first batch of housing units may start. The works started in January 2018 and are expected to be completed in January 2020.

A further amount of Rs120 m. has been earmarked for the financial year 2018-2019 for this project.

Madam Speaker, there are many families who can afford to build their own houses, improving them as time goes by in accordance with the needs and financial capacities but, many among them, due to financial constraints, are unable to complete the construction. To partly address this issue, my Ministry was providing a one-off grant to eligible families to enable them to cast their roof slab.

In fact, some 1,090 families earning up to Rs15,000 have benefited from the Roof Slab Grant Scheme, totalling to some Rs66.1 m., which has been disbursed this financial year.

The scheme has been further improved such that families earning up to Rs10,000 monthly can now benefit from a Roof Slab Grant of Rs100,000.

Families earning from Rs10,001 to Rs15,000 monthly can benefit from a maximum grant of Rs70,000.

And, for the first time, thanks to the hon. Prime Minister, families earning from Rs15,001 to Rs20,000 monthly will benefit from a maximum grant of Rs50,000. Funds to the tune of Rs100 m. have been earmarked in this respect for the forthcoming financial year.

I shall now elaborate on the rehabilitation works for the NHDC housing estates. Government is proceeding with its rehabilitation programme with a view to improving the living conditions of the residents of the NHDC housing units and to maintain the buildings and the infrastructure in good conditions.

In financial year 2017-2018 the construction of new stormwater networks within NHDC housing estates comprising 336 housing units at Vallée des Prêtres and 120 housing units at Cité La Cure have already been completed. Waterproofing, painting and associated works on three NHDC housing estates, namely Poste de Flacq, Camp Levieux and Dagotière for some 782 apartments have been completed. The connection of existing sewage reticulation of NHDC housing estates at Riche Terre to the network of the Wastewater Management Authority is expected to be completed by end of this month.

Roof waterproofing works, structural remedial works, rehabilitation of sewage networks and other associated works for some 13 NHDC housing estates will be carried out during this financial year.

An amount of Rs101.9 m. has been spent for 2017-2018 and a further amount of Rs176.3 m. has been provided for the Budget 2018-2019.

Madam Speaker, most residents of ex-CHA houses have already purchased their housing units. Government is encouraging these ex-CHA house owners to purchase the slots of State lands on which stand the concrete houses. During the past financial year, 245 families have purchased their lands.

Madam Speaker, following representations made to my Ministry, regarding the deplorable conditions of the roof of the ex-CHA houses, I effected a site visit on Monday 11 June 2018 at Camp Betel, Petite Rivière. The families have been advised that they can benefit from their Roof Slab Grant Scheme available at the NHDC for the purchase of building material to start the construction of the housing units or for the casting of their roof slab provided that they satisfy the eligibility criteria.

Madam Speaker, for an effective management of any NHDC housing complex, there is a need to have an efficient syndic. Currently, there are 41 NHDC housing estates where a syndic is functional. Financial assistance to the tune of Rs15.1 m. has been disbursed to these syndics to help them to improve the living environment and maintain the common areas to the benefit of the community living in these housing estates.

Furthermore, the NHDC is continuously conducting sensitisation campaigns with the residents to foster responsibility towards the up-keeping of these housing estates and contributing effectively to the Syndic Fund. Provision of Rs16 m. has been made in the Budget 2018-2019 to this end.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry has finalised a Master Plan for 325 *Arpents* of land at Riche Terre. An Expression of Interest was launched by the EDB inviting both local and foreign investors to submit their business proposals for development on the land. Landscape Mauritius Ltd has been entrusted the responsibility of managing the business and industrial park. Accordingly, my Ministry has signed a lease agreement with Landscape Mauritius Ltd. The latter organisation will sublease the land to the promoters.

It is expected that the projects will attract an investment of around Rs4.4 billion.

My Ministry is also preparing a Master Plan for the development of some 300 *Arpents* of State land in the region of Palmar for hotel and tourist related projects. The promoters for both Riche Terre and Palmar will be called upon to contribute towards a cost sharing for the off-site infrastructure.

The Hotel Reconstruction and Renovation Scheme has been extended for up to 2020. Under this scheme, a hotel on State lands that closes to undergo renovation or reconstruction is granted a reduction of 50% in its rental payable in respect of its lease for a maximum of one year subject to prescribed conditions.

I am pleased to note that the Prime Minister has given due consideration to my proposal to the EDB for the regeneration of Mahebourg. My Ministry, in collaboration with the EDB, is proposing to launch an Expression of Interest for the development of projects in the Mahebourg Waterfront through a PPP.

The development projects in the above-mentioned regions, Madam Speaker, as well as across the whole island, can be implemented only if there is a proper planning to ensure that development is carried out in the right place and at the right time.

With a view to embracing a proactive approach to land development and responding in a more effective manner to new land use concerns, my Ministry will introduce a new Land Use and Development Planning legislation in the National Assembly. This legislation will replace the Town and Country Planning Act 1954 and the Planning Development Act of 2004.

Madam Speaker, the population is witnessing major development projects that this Government is implementing island-wide. Allow me, Madam Speaker, to name a few major projects which will change the landscape and the destiny of Mauritius.

For the very first time, a modern mass transport system is being introduced.

“Une nouvelle ère se dessine au niveau de notre paysage routier. »

Let us reflect on how the Metro Express will positively impact on the quality of our life. The project will not only reduce travel time, but will also allow better accessibility and will regenerate the town centres with the setting up of urban terminals with all facilities and amenities. The Metro Express Project is gaining so much popularity that even people of my constituency are keen to see the Metro Express project being extended to the south.

Another major project is the Road Decongestion Programme, the A1-M1 road will be another relief for road users.

This Government is working towards the alleviation of traffic jams. The main arteries will become more fluid. The Port Louis/Curepipe route will take less than 30 minutes even during peak hours.

Let me remind the House that it is this Government which came up with the solution of the three grade separated junctions instead of the roundabout of Dowlut, Pont-Fer and Jumbo at Phoenix.

The second leg of the Decongestion Programme will relieve mainly road used travelling from Coromandel, Beau Bassin or Rose Hill going towards Port Louis. It comprises the construction of a bridge crossing over Grande Rivière Nord Ouest. It will be an innovative concept since the bridge will be 350 meters long and 90 meters high.

Madam Speaker, in line with the vision of this Government towards business facilitation, the *Morcellement* Act will be amended to further streamline procedures.

Applicants will, in the very near future, be able to submit their application for a *Morcellement* permit online via an e-platform.

Madam Speaker, now I move to land administration and management. Presently, there is in place at the level of my Ministry, a Land Administration, Valuation and Information Management System, LAVIMS which has been set up since year 2009.

As with any system, the LAVIMS which is now over 9 years old, needs to be replaced. In fact, the yearly maintenance cost for both hardware and software amounts to Rs40 m.

For the Financial Year 2017/2018, funds were provided for the replacement of the hardware.

However, after consultations with the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, my Ministry is now proceeding with the complete overhauling of the system for which the services of a Consultant will be enlisted during the next financial year.

With the use of new technology, the system will not require any hardware as it will be hosted on the Government Cloud. Hence, the cost of maintenance will substantially be reduced as there will be no hardware.

Madam Speaker, the LAVIMS basically caters for transactions of private lands. There is also need to set up a digital system for State land. To that effect, my Ministry has initiated procedures for the implementation of a Digital State Land Register.

This register, as you are aware, will set up a digital State land database which will be linked with the LAVIMS. It will also be integrated with a document management software, which will replace the actual physical files. This will improve State land application and lease processing and will enable a more efficient and modern State Land Management.

Madam Speaker, Land Management is important. But equally important is management of our resources in the sea. As we are all aware, one of our largest asset base is the vast expanse of our EEZ.

The EEZ which is 2.3 million km² of exploitable marine resource does not only provide Mauritius with a huge maritime zone to manage, but also holds a massive potential for development that can change significantly the shape of the economy.

I would like to point out that the Hydrographic Unit of my Ministry, which was established in the year 2013, has been carrying out surveys for a number of stakeholder organisations in our waters for projects of national importance.

Over a period of time, the Unit has developed the capacity to survey areas critical for shipping and surface navigation. It carries out underwater search operations for detection of wrecks and obstructions. It also surveys extremely shallow lagoons surrounding the mainland and the outer islands for supporting economic and tourism related activities.

The Hydrographic Unit in Mauritius is also collaborating with the Department for Continental Shelf, Maritime Zones Administration and Exploration for implementing the GIS platform for Marine Spatial Planning.

Madam Speaker, besides these development projects which will allow economic growth of the country there is also a need to look at the plight of the common men. One subject which was very close to the heart of the ex-VPM is the issue of squatters. I must say that he has been able to address this sensitive and thorny issue in a very effective and humane manner. I am following closely in his footsteps. One particular region where this exercise needs to be completed pertains to the region of La Ferme, Aubonne.

Due to the rehabilitation of the La Ferme Dam some 160 squatters living in the vicinity need to be relocated. The former VPM started preliminary discussions on the eventual relocation of these families. Now I am pleased to announce that a solution has been found and these squatters will be relocated on some 50 *arpents* of land at La Valette. The housing units will be constructed by the NHDC Ltd. I must point out that these families will be paying a rent for the housing units. In case they have the financial means they can even purchase same.

This Government is regularising only pre-July 2015 squatters. I would like to point out, Madam Speaker, that no squatter will be given undue favour. Efforts should be on both sides. Government will construct more than 10,000 houses during this mandate. On the other hand, we expect the beneficiaries of the SRM Scheme to go towards the NEF. Those who are eligible under the schemes available at the NHDC will be granted the benefits of the specific scheme under which they may apply; after all, as the saying goes: “*Aide-toi, le ciel t'aidera.*”

Madam Speaker, I cannot end my intervention without mentioning the recent controversies surrounding the allocation of State land, more specifically allocation of State land on the coastal part of the island for hotel projects. I must point out that members of the public have all the rights to enjoy our beaches. However, we should also be mindful that major projects bring in FDI and creation of jobs. Since my assumption of office, I have made it a point to ensure that any development project is not done *au détriment des habitants*

avoisinants. I have made it clear that I will not accept any type of encroachment caused by lessees on State land and public beaches meant for the members of the public. Following my two site visits in the south and the north of the island, action has already been initiated by my Ministry to have the encroachments removed by the lessees.

Madam Speaker, avant de terminer je voudrai faire ressortir que les prétendus grands partis n'ont pas eu l'audace de tenir le grand meeting du 1^{er} mai.

(*Interruptions*)

Le Parti travailliste existe depuis 1936, le MMM depuis 1969, le MSM depuis 1983, malgré sa relative jeune existence le MSM ne s'est jamais dérobé à la règle du 1^{er} mai. Le Parti travailliste ne décoléra pas tant que 'tonton cigare' y sera à la tête. Trop de casseroles qui y traînent. Le boulet de son coffre-fort est de surcroit trop lourd à porter. Pourquoi n'explique-t-il pas ce qu'il faisait à Albion lors de son premier mandat? On se demande pourquoi a-t-il loué son bungalow de Roches Noires quand son coffre était si bien rempli ?

Madam Speaker, let me also reply to my friends from the Opposition side who on various occasions have wrongly criticised the hon. Prime Minister because of the adjournment of the Parliament for the preparation of this Budget. It is not the first time that the Parliament has to be adjourned in this particular context, being given that MMM is sitting on the Opposition side for nearly 13 years they are suffering from a *profond trouble de mémoire*. People of this country still remember that the Labour Party and the MMM had locked the House of Parliament for nearly nine months *pour cose coser*. My very good friend - unfortunately he is not here - hon. Alan Ganoo is well aware of this syndrome of on and off because he was the main *agwa*. The result was well-known to everyone, closing the Parliament for nine months was a *viol de la démocratie*. *Nous n'avons de ce fait pas de leçon à recevoir de l'opposition.*

Madam Speaker, let me conclude by saying that this Government has not been wasting time but has continuously been working and implementing social and economic measures so that all our citizens can have a better quality of life. We intend to do much more. *Pour cela, le Premier ministre et son gouvernement ont la confiance et la bénédiction du peuple pour continuer le bon travail. Il ne fait aucun doute qu'il sera à la tête du pays pour plusieurs autres mandats.* Together *lame dan lame* with our smart Prime Minister we are driving our country towards a high income country.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank you.

(*Interruptions*)

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

At 5.25 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.03 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon!

Hon. Boissézon, I have been informed of your predicament and, most exceptionally, you can address the House from a sitting position.

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon):

Thank you, but I think I will start in a standing position and if I feel the need, I will sit down. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

First of all, I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development pour ce budget ambitieux préparé dans un environnement imprévisible et très volatile, car nous savons que l'environnement économique est perturbé par la flambée des prix, une guerre commerciale qui est à l'horizon, le Brexit, et même à Maurice, nous avons les affres du changement climatique.

Les mesures audacieuses de ce présent budget montrent la détermination du Premier ministre à créer des fondations d'une île Maurice moderne et prospère. Et c'est un projet ; autant il fait la part belle au développement et il pense aussi aux démunis. C'est un budget inclusif, très généreux. D'un côté, montrant le besoin du Premier ministre d'écouter la population et de subvenir à leurs besoins.

Ce budget a créé un facteur de bien-être dans le pays. Dans ma circonscription, la circonscription numéro 15, j'ai eu l'occasion de rencontrer certaines personnes, et tous accueillent ce budget. Tout un chacun trouve sa part dans ce budget. Tout à l'heure, le précédent orateur faisait mention de l'échangeur de Phœnix. Figurez-vous que c'est un projet qui date de plus de 15 ans, qui n'a jamais pu être mis en œuvre. Et aujourd'hui, c'est quelque chose de fait. Nous parlerons aussi du trafic routier. Nous savons tous quel est le souci de chaque Mauricien, des habitants de ma circonscription qui travaillent à Port-Louis, qui prennent des heures. Quand je parle des heures, ce matin-même, j'ai vu une lettre de quelqu'un qui travaille dans le secteur public qui faisait référence que tous les matins il prenait le bus à Henrietta, et ce bus prenait 2 heures pour rentrer à Port-Louis, sans compter les actions disciplinaires qui sont prises contre lui.

A Highlands, les habitants se sont plaints pendant plusieurs années. Je me rappelle que c'était un thème de notre campagne électorale du système de tout-à-l'égout, et aujourd'hui c'est quelque chose de fait, sans compter le pont d'Hollyrood qui est branlant, qui peut s'effondrer à n'importe quel instant, mais heureusement qu'aujourd'hui, grâce au travail du PPS, l'honorable Toolsyraj Benydin, ce pont devient une réalité.

Ce budget est tellement bien ficelé que je crois que c'est très rarement - je pense que l'année dernière nous avons eu la même appréciation, mais c'est très rare de voir un budget être apprécié par les syndicats et par le secteur privé. Cela démontre la capacité d'écoute du Premier ministre et de ses officiers de mettre en pratique leurs demandes.

M. le président, en 2014, nous avions présenté un budget, « La croisée des chemins ».

Nous étions en face d'une situation chaotique, un constat affligeant, le pays était au bord de la faillite, un pays désespéré, une économie en lambeaux, le chômage faisait rage et la drogue faisait des ravages. Je me rappelle du gaspillage qu'on voyait partout. En 2014, le Président de la République nous a nommé *PPS*. Fraîchement émous de notre nomination, nous avions plein d'idées en tête. Mais quel a été notre désarroi quand on nous a dit que la *NDU* devait plus d'un milliard de roupies pour des projets et que l'on se demande si ces projets avaient été faits. Je me souviens qu'étant *PPS* des Circonscriptions Nos. 19 et 20, en parcourant ces deux circonscriptions, je n'ai pas pu voir aucun projet fait pendant les deux dernières années. Zéro! Et pire, à certains endroits il y avait des panneaux indicateurs de projets. Je me rappelle qu'il y avait le député, l'honorable Lepoigneur, *PPS* aujourd'hui, l'honorable Alain Aliphon et moi, nous étions à Coromandel et les gens venaient nous voir pour nous dire: 'Mais il y a déjà une plaque où il est dit que les travaux seront faits à Hermitage ; pourquoi le travail ne démarre pas ? Ces plaques avaient été mises à la rue Berthaud à Rose Hill juste pour faire de la publicité mensongère pendant la campagne électorale.

Nous avons eu un autre budget du Premier ministre d'aujourd'hui et une fois que nous avions mis de l'ordre dans ce marasme que nous avions hérité, le gouvernement a décidé, et le ministre des Finances d'alors a préconisé une nouvelle ère de développement et une des phrases qui m'avait frappée c'était –

“The challenge of tomorrow cannot be met with our mindset policies and action locked in the paradigm of tomorrow”.

Oui, nous ne pouvons plus dans cette ère moderne, 50 ans après notre indépendance, penser comme nous pensions avant, et là, je fais référence à l'intervention de l'honorable Baboo, qui

ne croit pas que le *Work at Home* puisse devenir une réalité à l'île Maurice. Je citerai the *Office of the National Statistics* de Londres. En Angleterre, en 2016, la population des travailleurs était de 26.5 millions, et 3.8 millions étaient des *Home Workers* ; ce pourcentage ne cesse de croître. Pourquoi? Parce qu'aujourd'hui les gens sont pressés. Ils n'ont pas de temps à perdre dans les congestions routières. Le transport coûte de plus en plus cher et ils veulent faire des économies sur les frais de transport.

Une étude a été faite au Canada par le *Canada Life Survey* où il est prouvé que le taux de productivité des *home workers* est de 7.7 sur 10, comparé à 6.5 sur 10 pour les employés de bureau. Concernant le *sick leave*, le taux de *sick leave* au Canada a été de 3.1 pour les employés de bureau alors qu'il était de 1.8 pour les *Home Workers*. C'est un fait. C'est simple, M. le président. Aujourd'hui quand quelqu'un a un petit rhume, un petit mal de tête, il ne va pas travailler, mais s'il est chez lui, c'est beaucoup plus facile pour lui de se mettre à la tâche. Voilà une façon pour nous de revoir aujourd'hui, de ne pas rester dans nos *paradigm* de l'an 1900.

M. le président, des décisions ambitieuses furent prises, le *nine-year schooling*, la mise en place du métro express, le pont de Coromandel à Sorèze, les échangeurs, sans compter le salaire minimum. Je ne m'attarderais pas dessus parce que certains des orateurs en ont parlé, mais je crois qu'aujourd'hui nous devons penser à l'ambition que nous avons émis, notre vision 2030 où nous avions parlé de donner une promotion à notre pays pour sortir du *middle income trap* pour devenir un pays à haut revenu. Aujourd'hui, les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes. Les indicateurs macro-économiques parlent. Le taux de croissance est en hausse. Le taux de chômage est en baisse. L'inflation est en baisse. Je ne parle que de ces chiffres. Aussi, nous sommes appelés aujourd'hui, M. le président, à poursuivre notre voyage transformatif.

Je ne m'attarderais pas sur les mesures préconisées par le Premier ministre, mais je dirais que c'est un projet de développement durable, soutenu, où nul n'est exclu. Je mettrai pourtant l'accent sur le pôle de croissance de l'intelligence artificielle, Blockchain and Fintech, qui a un lien direct sur mon ministère. L'*artificial intelligence* est une découverte merveilleuse qui aura un impact sur la façon de travailler, les changements drastiques dans la nature des emplois. Je ferai référence à un article que j'ai lu samedi dernier, le 09 septembre, 'The Economist,' où il faisait référence que les radiologues allaient avoir beaucoup de soucis parce que la machine est enclin à trouver des failles que l'humain n'arrive pas à trouver.

M. le président, la puissance des machines demeure un grand défi. Aussi, j'accueille favorablement the *Mauritius Artificial Council* qui sera la cheville ouvrière de l'émancipation de l'intelligence artificielle et du Fintech à Maurice. J'accueille aussi le *Steering Committee* qui sera mis en place pour s'assurer qu'il y ait une cohérence dans la digitalisation des nouvelles technologies dans le secteur gouvernemental. Je note avec plaisir que le gouvernement mettra en place les recommandations du *High Level Committee on Fintech*, présidé par Lord Desai.

M. le président, la nouvelle technologie fait peur. On parle même aujourd'hui de robopocalypse. Mais je crois que *the Mauritius Artificial Council* doit s'assurer que les mauriciens soient préparés à la nouvelle technologie, la technologie de demain.

J'accueille aussi avec plaisir le fait de donner 50 bourses aux étudiants qui veulent faire du Fintech et des innovations, et le fait que nous demandions à l'université de Maurice d'augmenter le nombre de sièges pour les technologies nouvelles. Mais nous devons être conscients, nous devons être optimistes et là je citerai l'Économiste, je cite -

« (...) machines will make workers more productive, more often than they will replace them. »

C'est-à-dire que nous devons nous préparer à être plus productifs mais de ne pas croire que la machine pourrait nous remplacer et je citerai encore de cet article –

« ... but in the end, too is limited, a sort of electronic (...) which excels at one particular mental task but is baffled by others... »

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now come to an important announcement made by the hon. Prime Minister in his speech that relates to innovation. In my last Budget Speech, I have been bold to say that my Ministry may lay down a solid base for achieving the objectives we have outlined in Vision 2030. Indeed, my Ministry has, during the last 12 months, undertaken a series of initiatives that fit in the overall modernisation agenda of Government to better reach out the population and to enhance the quality of services delivered by them.

These initiatives are no doubt challenging, the more so as they are meant to spearhead mindset changes at every level of public sector organisation, improve efficiency and productivity in Government based on fast and modern technological tools and innovative working methods.

The main objectives of the transformation process are to create a paradigm shift in the manner in which we do business in Government. Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we sincerely believe that pursuing our transformative journey necessarily implies a fundamental change in strategy, operating model, organisation, people and processes, as has been stated by the Boston Consulting Group in one of their recent publications – Mastering Transformation in the Public Sector.

In the same paper, BCG rightly persists that –

“For public sector organisation, to have a successful transformation journey, they must climb 3 distinct peaks: vision, design and delivery. Government officials and top Civil Servants need to invest sufficient time and energy in mastering all three phases.”

Our public sector is at major crossroads, particularly against a backdrop of rising public expectations for better, as well as expediency in solving critical problems and, more importantly, at less cost. Efficiency and reduced cost in public service delivery is not particular to Mauritius only, it is a worldwide phenomenon. Nobody wants to pay more taxes, but everybody wants better services quickly and at less cost.

It has now become more than imperative for public organisation to stand up and gear themselves up to face the challenges unleashed by the 20th century. This makes the ongoing public sector transformation initiative relevant and crucial. For transformation to succeed, we have to improve our strategy and processes. If we manage our human resources effectively, we will be able to make a quantum leap in our transformation strategy. In this regard, we shall have to enhance the capacity and capability of public employees by developing their talent, behaviour, culture and attitude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is where digital technologies and innovation will play a crucial role as an enabler of this major shift. There is no denying that much progress has been made over the years to digitalised processes and procedures in Government. But it is also a crude reality that the full potential of digital technologies has not been sufficiently tapped and exploited. We shall have to perform, transcend the existing work methods and harness the power of digital technologies to re-engineer, re-invent and transform the business models of Government while lowering cost and improving service delivery.

I am glad to inform the House that my Ministry is currently implementing a project known as Human Resource Management Information System which is the digitalisation of

Human Resource and Financial Management Operations in the public sector. The HRMIS project will become fully functional by December 2019. The project is meant to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the public service. It is an important component of the Agenda of Government to modernise and transform the service.

Similarly, my Ministry has embarked on a project for the upgrading of the Electronic Attendance Monitoring System which is yet another initiative to modernise management processes and operations in Government.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all these measures are meant to improve policy, development programmes, services and actions. The bottom-line of the transformation strategy is the public and customer satisfaction. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the transformation strategy would fail if we do not take into consideration our most valuable resource, that is, our human capital.

For capacity building and capability development, as a crucial and undeniable pillar, my Ministry is ensuring that public officers are continuously adapting and developing new skills, capabilities and competencies. And that they apply these new learning tools and methods in their workplace. The Vision 2030 provides that a modern Mauritius needs a socially inclusive model of development, geared by intellectual capital knowledge and skill. And we do not intend to leave anyone behind in this wind of change.

My Ministry has implemented a new list of training modules which have been customised around five clusters, namely –

- (i) workmen's group;
- (ii) support staff;
- (iii) frontline supervisory;
- (iv) technical grades;
- (v) medical management and professionals, and
- (vi) top management senior leaders.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the first time, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms has implemented a training strategy for employees of the workmen's group. From October 2017 to April 2018, 350 employees in these groups have been trained and by the end of June, we plan to train some additional 400. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was a pleasure to meet these employees. Some of them who have joined the service for some 20 years ago and who had never attended a training programme, they were so proud to be

considered as important in the value chain of Government. We envisage to train some 800 employers in the Workmen's Group during the next financial year.

The Civil Service College has up to now provided training to a total of 14,000 officers under various programmes locally. 196 Rodriguez public officers have also been trained during the financial year. To upskill the Civil Service, my Ministry will ensure that based on the provision made in this Budget, not less 10,000 public officers are trained during the Financial Year 2018-2019. So, there is a need for a building for that college. On top of it, we shall ensure the training of 250 Government officials across all Ministries to deal with gender issues. I am glad that in this context, the Budget makes provision for an investment of Rs160 billion in the construction of the Civil Service College. The new facilities would give an added dimension to our effort to continually enhance the capacity and compatibility of public officers so as to enable them to discharge their duties and responsibilities with utmost efficiency and high standard of professionalism.

During this year, discussions were held with representatives of Atal Bihari Vajpayee Civil Service College, Bhopal, for the preparation of a comprehensive training and project plan. The new college is forecast to become a training centre of excellence in this part of the world and will be equipped with state-of-the-art classroom. We are thinking that in a second phase we will receive foreign inmates for the purpose of training people of the region in the college, and the college will auto finance the construction of lodging for foreign inmates. There is a famous adage which says –

“What gets measured gets done.”

In this regard, I would wish to inform the House that the implementation of the Performance Management System is increasingly becoming a reality in the Public Service. Though it was introduced and formalised in 2013, it is only during this Financial Year 2017-2018, that we have been able to achieve a compliance rate of 85%. It has been herculean, but we intend to reach 100% bar in the course of the next financial year.

The Performance Management System is not only an instrument to assess performance of public officers, but more important it is a very effective instrument to identify performance gaps and specific training needs to enhance performance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to all the women officers in the Public Service. The Civil Service has more than 20,000 women employees, and I shall no doubt give my assistance and support to the budgetary

measures announced by the hon. Prime Minister in his Budget Speech. The remunerated maternity leave of 14 weeks across the board was long overdue. This has become a reality now. I will ensure that the gender cells announced by the hon. Prime Minister are fully functional so that we can promote gender balance in decision-making, and that it serves as a platform for constant dialogue. The Gender Policy Statement in the Annual Report of all Ministries will definitely enhance policy-making process in the Civil Service geared towards gender mainstreaming.

My Ministry is and will be gearing up to the Government's vision and will adhere to the strategic direction which outlines the main thrust of the strategic plan. Here, I wish to quote what Charles Darwin said –

“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is most adaptable to change”

This Budget focuses a lot on our adaptability to change and gives up the appropriate tools to move forward. We are resolutely determined to stand by our pledge for healthier citizens, happier communities and a stronger nation.

I thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

(6.34 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, permettez-moi au tout début de vous remercier pour m'avoir donné l'occasion d'intervenir sur le budget 2018-2019, présenté à la nation jeudi dernier par l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances. C'est le quatrième budget de ce gouvernement et le troisième de l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances.

C'est un budget qui a été présenté dans un contexte très spécial. Cette année-ci nous célébrons nos 50 années d'indépendance. Et c'est aussi, M. le président, un budget qui a été très bien accueilli, premièrement par la population dans son ensemble, par les acteurs de notre société, les syndicalistes, les organisations non-gouvernementales, mais aussi la classe politique indépendante de ce pays et les observateurs politiques. Et pour cela, je tiens à féliciter chaleureusement l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour ce budget, mais pas seulement pour ce budget, M. le président, mais aussi pour avoir démontré à la population qu'aujourd'hui l'honorable Premier ministre a les qualités nécessaires pour être

un excellent Premier ministre: discipliné et rigoureux au travail, disponible et à l'écoute, de la compassion pour la population dans les moments difficiles et il confirme qu'il est un homme de cœur.

Il a dit lui-même, ce budget s'inscrit dans la continuité. Un budget qui brasse large et qui touche la majorité de notre population. Dans ce budget l'honorable Premier ministre nous impressionne par sa vision moderne pour notre pays. Ce budget prend en compte les éléments clés pour un développement soutenu. Il rend notre économie encore plus résiliente. Il accélère le développement durable, consolide notre État-providence, fait de notre île une île intelligente et à la pointe de la technologie, dote le pays des infrastructures modernes et tout cela dans un contexte d'une vraie justice sociale.

M. le président, la plupart de nos indicateurs économiques sont au vert. La croissance sera de l'ordre de 4,1% pour l'année financière 2018-2019. Le chômage est en baisse ; le taux a baissé de 0,2%, c'est-à-dire c'est passé de 7,3% à 7,1%, et ce taux va encore baisser pour atteindre 6,9%. Le taux d'inflation baissera de 4,3% à 3,5% en 2018-2019, et nos réserves en devises étrangères sont au plus haut niveau et couvrent 10,7 mois d'importation pour le pays. Et il faut le reconnaître, deux institutions internationales, Moody's et le FMI nous ont félicités pour notre performance économique. Il faut le reconnaître, autant de points positifs concernant notre économie, et tout cela, je l'ai dit un peu plus tôt, dans un contexte d'une vraie justice sociale.

L'introduction de l'impôt négatif sur le revenu, le salaire minimum, les deux démontrent la volonté persistante de notre Premier ministre d'emmener le pays vers une économie inclusive. Il y a une chose que le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a comprise ; c'est que notre pays a besoin d'une croissance inclusive, et cela va nous permettre de réduire la pauvreté, d'améliorer l'égalité, de créer des emplois. Et ce développement, c'est-à-dire le développement de notre pays, ne peut être inclusif qu'à certaines conditions. Et ces conditions sont que si toutes les catégories de notre population, quels que soient leur sexe, leur origine ethnique, leur âge ou leur statut social, contribuent à créer des emplois, partagent les bénéfices du développement et participent à la prise de décision.

Aujourd'hui, plus que jamais, M. le président, il faut conjuguer la croissance avec la lutte contre les inégalités et le changement climatique, et c'est ce que ce budget fait. Je constate aussi que le Premier ministre veut d'une génération d'hommes et de femmes qui construisent l'île Maurice de demain en ayant en tête les enjeux de durabilité et de solidarité.

Beaucoup de nos experts en économie, de même que certains de nos politiciens sont restés figés sur cette croissance économique liée uniquement à l'évolution du PIB. Aujourd'hui, une véritable prospérité est tout à la fois économique, sociale, environnementale et culturelle. Il ne suffit plus de mettre en place des politiques de croissance. Il faut aussi veiller, M. le président, à ce que les effets positifs de la croissance soient partagés par tout un chacun.

Dans ce budget, le ministre des Finances consolide les éléments nécessaires afin de mettre le pays vers une croissance inclusive, pas seulement inclusive, mais intelligente. En d'autres mots, un *inclusive smart growth*. Il investit dans le capital humain et fait confiance à notre population comme son père l'a fait dans le passé, M. le président, et pour ce faire, il élabore sept voies et des nouveaux pôles de développement, à commencer par l'innovation, la jeunesse, l'intelligence artificielle, l'exportation, des infrastructures modernes, le développement durable, la qualité de la vie, et la construction d'une société inclusive avec la jeunesse mauricienne. Et c'est là que je viens sur des mesures importantes qui ont été préconisées dans ce budget.

Pour la jeunesse, M. le président, le ministre des Finances annonce un budget d'un milliard de roupies afin d'aider, pas mille, pas deux mille, 14,000 jeunes sans emploi. Parmi ces 14,000 jeunes, 3,000 rejoindront le *National Skills Development Programme* pour une formation technique. 3,000 autres pourront s'inscrire au programme d'apprentissage du MITD. 1,000 autres seront concernés par une mesure sans précédent sous le *SME Employment*. Cette mesure concerne nos gradués afin de les former pour devenir des entrepreneurs. 1,000 autres sous le nouveau *Youth Service Programme*, et eux ils seront âgés entre 17 et 25 ans. 3,500 autres jeunes sous le *Youth Employment Programme*. Voilà, M. le président, en termes de création d'emplois.

J'ai évoqué un peu plus tôt toute cette notion de croissance inclusive, et voilà une mesure dans ce budget qui va dans ce sens, c'est-à-dire le *Work@Home*. Ce nouveau concept permettra à beaucoup plus de femmes de travailler à domicile. Autre pôle de développement, l'intelligence artificielle. Il en a fait mention dans son discours, et il fait aussi mention de la technique financière et le *blockchain*. Il est important qu'on puisse comprendre et cerner ce nouveau pôle de développement. L'orateur avant moi en a fait mention.

L'histoire du monde, M. le président, est pleine de ces révolutions technologiques qui ont et qui continuent à bouleverser notre mode de vie. Mais l'homme a toujours pu s'adapter

à ces changements. Ce processus fait partie intégrante de notre vie. Sous l'effet de l'innovation, c'est vrai que certains secteurs disparaissent, mais d'autres nouvelles activités apparaissent. S'il est vrai aussi que le numérique et la robotisation détruisent les emplois, ils sont aussi source d'opportunités pour ceux qui savent s'adapter.

Dans ce budget, M. le président, le gouvernement va créer un *Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council*, comprenant des membres du gouvernement, mais aussi des membres du secteur privé, et cette entité va s'assurer de la cohésion concernant la numérisation du secteur public. Le gouvernement va mettre aussi sur pied un *Steering Committee*, et un élément-clé de cet écosystème numérique est l'hébergement des données. Une des mesures annoncées dans ce budget est que le CEB offrira un tarif spécial aux opérateurs des centres de données. Il a aussi annoncé l'octroi d'une cinquantaine de bourses aux étudiants dans le domaine de la technologie numérique, et là il fait référence à des études dans le domaine de l'intelligence artificielle et le *blockchain*.

M. le président, avec toutes ces mesures énoncées, le Premier ministre fait de l'intelligence artificielle un projet national. Il vient d'établir une stratégie étatique afin de développer ce secteur. Aujourd'hui, l'île Maurice rejoint les pays comme les États-Unis, la Chine, le Japon, l'Allemagne, l'Angleterre, le Singapour, et tout récemment la France. Dans le secteur financier plusieurs mesures sont annoncées. La création d'un régulateur pour les activités de la technologie financière et la cessation de licence de catégorie 2 pour les compagnies opérant dans le *global business* et aussi l'introduction d'un régime fiscal harmonisé pour ce secteur.

Autre nouveau secteur, M. le président, le Premier ministre veut favoriser une nouvelle vague de développement, une industrie basée sur une substitution de nos importations et le constat est là. Quel constat ? C'est-à-dire que nous importons 77 % de ce que nous consommons. Il veut dans ce sens créer une nouvelle race d'entrepreneurs, les agripreneurs. Il veut mettre sur pied 100 fermes pour ces agripreneurs sur une période de deux ans, leur donner des facilités afin qu'ils puissent vendre leurs produits sur le marché local mais aussi sur le marché international. Ils recevront aussi le soutien technique de la FAREI. Ils auront en plus de ça accès à un financement de la DBM et leurs revenus seront exemptés de la taxe pour les huit premières années.

Dans ce même contexte le gouvernement permettra aux compagnies étrangères de pêcher dans nos eaux afin d'augmenter la quantité de poissons au niveau local. Et une des

conditions - ça c'est important - pour que ces bateaux puissent pêcher dans nos eaux, ils auront à vendre les poissons pêchés sur le marché local exclusivement.

J'ai eu l'occasion, M. le président, de lire sur ce sujet certains commentaires concernant les pêcheurs de notre île. C'est vrai qu'au fil des années c'est un secteur qui est passé par des moments extrêmement difficiles. Les gouvernements ont voulu aider mais le résultat est qu'effectivement il n'y a pas assez de poissons ou de produits de la mer sur le marché. Premièrement, il n'y a pas assez de bateaux et c'est pourquoi on n'arrive pas à trouver ces produits. Je suis allé en chercher. Je vais vous étonner, M. le président, en vous disant que le poisson que nous consommons, parmi il y a du poisson que nous importons du Pérou. Imaginez-vous quelle distance se trouve le Pérou mais nous importons du poisson du Pérou !

En ce qui concerne les produits de mer tels que crevettes et autres, soyons francs - je pense qu'un membre de l'Opposition en a parlé un peu plus tôt - ce sont des produits qui viennent principalement des pays asiatiques et ce sont des crevettes 'botoxés', c'est-à-dire qu'ils injectent de l'eau dans ces crevettes et quand on les cuisine c'est un peu une peau de chagrin qu'on trouve à la fin dans nos casseroles. C'est triste, mais c'est vrai, M. le président. Mais que faut-il faire ? Moi, je pense que les conditions pour l'octroi des permissions pour que ces bateaux puissent aller pêcher dans nos eaux doivent être des conditions strictes et aussi voir s'ils peuvent employer les pêcheurs d'ici, et cela, je pense, va commencer à résoudre un peu le problème que nous avons à faire face.

Maintenant dans ce même ordre d'idée, le ministre des Finances parle de la promotion de l'agriculture urbaine, des micros jardins, des jardins sur les toitures. Il évoque aussi la création de deux types de projets qui me passionnent personnellement, les fermes aquaponiques et l'agrivoltaïque. Deux termes qui sont nouveaux mais qui demandent peut-être à être définis, M. le président.

M. le président, l'aquaponie est un système qui uni la culture de plantes et l'élevage des poissons. C'est principalement une fusion entre l'aquaculture et l'hydroponie et c'est un concept qui est très en vogue aux États-Unis et ailleurs. Ici, on parle d'autonomie et d'indépendance alimentaire. C'est une technique qui est accessible à tout le monde. On peut faire pousser plein de légumes, les salades, les épinards, le basilic et autres légumes et en même temps faire l'élevage de poissons.

L'agrivoltaïque, ce deuxième concept, associe une production agricole et une production d'électricité photovoltaïque. Plusieurs pays ont adopté ce concept, les États-Unis, le Japon, la Chine, la Corée du Sud, l'Inde, la Malaisie, l'Italie, la France, l'Allemagne. Cela va bénéficier à nos agriculteurs qui, en même temps, produisent des légumes mais aussi de l'électricité, M. le président.

Ce sont les fermes de demain mais dans un contexte de développement durable et c'est cela le type de développement qu'il nous faut pour faire les jeunes retourner à la terre. C'est uniquement par des techniques modernes de l'agriculture que la jeune génération retournera à l'agriculture et pas autrement.

Concernant les mesures tombant sous le programme de sécurité alimentaire, nous notons avec joie les mesures en faveur des planteurs et des éleveurs. Le ministre des Finances reconnaît que les petits planteurs de légumes et les éleveurs de porcs sont passés par des moments bien difficiles. Ces mesures vont les soulager grandement. Encore une fois, M. le président, le ministre des Finances montre sa grandeur d'âme envers les éleveurs de porcs. La *DBM* va annuler la totalité de leur emprunt. C'est une demande qui remonte à plusieurs années. Ces éleveurs sont passés par des moments extrêmement difficiles mais maintenant ils y voient la lumière au bout du tunnel, M. le président.

Pour booster le programme de sécurité alimentaire, le gouvernement accordera une enveloppe de R 30 millions aux petits planteurs. Il augmente en même temps la subvention sur les graines d'oignons et de pommes de terre.

L'industrie du thé n'a pas été oubliée. L'hiver a été néfaste pour cette industrie. Pour faire face à cette situation le gouvernement a décidé d'accorder un soutien de 50 sous pour chaque kilo de feuilles de thé cueillies.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne le secteur sucre, le gouvernement a décidé de mettre sur pied un comité ministériel afin d'évaluer la situation pour pouvoir prendre les actions nécessaires. Et le Premier ministre a tenu à rassurer toutes les parties concernées sur la démarche du gouvernement. Toutes décisions - et il l'a dit - seront prises en consultation avec tous les acteurs du secteur sucre.

Concernant le secteur manufacturier, afin de dynamiser ce secteur, le Premier ministre parle de la construction des *Business Parks*. Un *park* de haute technologie à Côte d'Or, un *park* logistique à Riche Terre, et un *park* pharmaceutique à Rose Belle.

Concernant le *dumping* des produits venant de l'extérieur, le gouvernement a fait savoir qu'il prendra les dispositions nécessaires afin de protéger les producteurs locaux et les consommateurs. Et le gouvernement compte aussi revoir les procédures de recrutement des étrangers dans ce secteur.

Permettez-moi maintenant, M. le président, d'aborder deux mesures qui ont été discutées longuement par les Membres de l'Opposition. Deux mesures jugées controversables, c'est-à-dire la possibilité pour les étrangers d'avoir la nationalité mauricienne ou le passeport mauricien. Dans le premier cas, M. le président, pour être éligible pour une demande de la nationalité mauricienne, l'étranger doit impérativement contribuer 1 million de dollars au *Mauritius Sovereign Fund* comme c'est dit dans le discours pour que son épouse et ses enfants puissent être éligibles à leur tour. Ils doivent eux faire une contribution de 100,000 dollars chacun.

Dans le deuxième cas, pour que l'étranger soit éligible pour l'obtention d'un passeport mauricien, il doit impérativement faire une contribution de 500,000 dollars et, par la suite, une contribution de 50,000 dollars pour que chaque membre de sa famille puisse avoir ce même passeport. En plus de ces deux conditions, il y aura d'autres critères de sélection à respecter et un exercice de *due diligence*. Ces mesures ciblent des particuliers très sélects qui évoluent dans un monde global, une centaine, on nous a fait comprendre.

Le Premier ministre a tenu à rassurer la population que ces étrangers seront sujets à un contrôle très strict avant l'obtention soit de la nationalité ou d'un passeport mauricien. La polémique est que nous sommes en train de brader notre nationalité et notre passeport. Je vous rassure, M. le président, que tel n'est pas le cas. Primo, nous sommes parmi quelques 35 pays au monde qui ont introduit un régime plus au moins similaire ou similaire. Parmi ces pays, il y a des pays de l'Europe, du Continent Européen et d'autres pays. Secondo, les critères d'éligibilité seront rendus publics en toute transparence. Le gouvernement va s'assurer que seulement les étrangers qui vont emmener de la valeur ajoutée seront éligibles. Il y a eu aussi le *Leader* de l'Opposition, en plus de ce que j'ai dit, il a exprimé ses inquiétudes par rapport à des possibilités. Je cite ce qu'il a dit –

«Les implications sont énormes dans toute la société mauricienne, plus particulièrement en ce qui concerne les prix des biens immobiliers, les terrains et les maisons. »

Et il vient ajouter –

«En ouvrant la porte à des centaines d'étrangers extrêmement riches, capables d'acheter de nombreuses propriétés, des grandes portions de terre sont menacées »

M. le président, le *Leader* de l'Opposition s'inquiète pour ce qui n'est pas encore arrivé et qui peut-être n'arrivera jamais, M. le président. Par contre, M. le président, il est resté insensible. Il n'a jamais levé son petit doigt pour les nombreuses familles dont leurs terres ont été spoliées dans le passé. Il a été le président d'un comité qui devait venir en aide à ces nombreuses familles pour qu'elles puissent retrouver leurs terres et il n'a jamais rien fait. Maintenant, pourquoi s'inquiéter pour quelque chose qui n'est pas encore arrivé, qui peut-être ne va jamais arriver dans ce pays, M. le président ? Voilà ce que je voulais dénoncer dans les déclarations du *Leader* de l'Opposition....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Order ! Hon. Armance !

Mr Lesjongard: ... qui, quand il a eu l'occasion, M. le président, d'aider des familles mauriciennes en difficulté, qui avaient perdu leurs terrains, il n'a pas levé le petit doigt, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Faire du mal ! Gagne du mal !

(Interruptions)

Ar le doigt ?

Encore une fois, M. le Premier ministre et ministre des finances apporte tout le support nécessaire aux petites et moyennes entreprises.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Les dotations budgétaires sont considérables. Cela va grandement...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud

Mr Lesjongard: Cela va grandement aider nos entrepreneurs. Trop souvent, M. le président,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Lesjongard: ... on entend le découragement...

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que je peux parler, M. le président, s'il vous plaît ?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mr Lesjongard: Voilà !

Trop souvent, on entend le découragement des entrepreneurs quand ils ont besoin d'accéder à des fonds. Primo, la lourdeur administrative au niveau des banques, mais aussi le manque de considération très souvent des banquiers envers ces entrepreneurs. Et là, je fais un pressant appel au Premier ministre afin d'améliorer cette situation, qui est très souvent décrié par la communauté des entrepreneurs.

En termes de projets d'infrastructures, M. le président, le pays se modernise à la vitesse grand V. Le projet Metro Express est déjà en chantier. Les projets liés au programme de décongestion routière ont aussi démarré et au total, une dizaine de projets de grande envergure. Je suis sûr que le Premier ministre et ministre des finances va s'assurer que les dates d'achèvement des travaux soient respectées. Ce budget parle aussi de la régénération des espaces urbaines. Et la régénération des espaces urbaines s'insèrent logiquement dans ce concept de développement inclusif.

Les dotations pour la NDU seront cette année de l'ordre de R 1,2 milliards. Et là, je dois, M. le président, remercier le *PPS*, l'honorable Alain Aliphon, le ministre de l'Environnement, l'honorable Sinatambou, pour la réalisation de plusieurs projets dont ma circonscription. Mais aussi, je remercie le Conseil du District de Rivière Noire, de Savanne avec qui nous travaillons en étroite collaboration. Je remercie principalement le ministre des Finances qui est à l'écoute et qui nous donne son support total concernant les problèmes de la circonscription. Plusieurs projets sont en chantier et pour cette année, le Premier ministre a fait mention de la foire de Chemin Grenier qui est une nécessité pour la région. Les habitants de la circonscription ont attendu pendant longtemps et aujourd'hui les projets ont démarré et d'ici dans quelques temps, nous allons voir les résultats.

M. le président, tout é l'heure j'avais parlé du développement durable et pour la première fois - et ça c'est très intéressant et important - le changement climatique et son impact sur notre environnement seront considérés dans les projets de Morcellement. Nous

avons vu les dégâts très souvent après des grosses pluies dans le pays et cette fois ci, les autorités vont s'assurer que tout projet de Morcellement doit avoir un *Drain Impact Assessment*. On va aussi amender la loi pour raser toute les constructions illégales sur nos drains et aussi l'introduction de la résilience climatique dans nos projets de développement.

Dans le secteur du logement, de par l'inaction de l'ancien régime, aujourd'hui le gouvernement doit mettre les bouchées doubles pour régler ce problème. L'investissement est colossal, R 12.7 milliards pour la construction de 6,800 maisons. L'augmentation de la subvention pour le *casting of slab* qui passe de R 75,000 à R 100,000 pour les familles touchant R 10,000 mensuellement. Et parmi les mesures énoncées dans ce budget, il y a aussi l'augmentation de R 40,000 à R 70,000 pour ceux touchant entre R 10,000 et R 15,000 et R 50,000 pour ceux touchant entre R 15,000 à R 20,000. R 170 millions seront utilisées pour la réhabilitation de 41 résidence de la *NHDC* est R 1. 3 milliards pour compléter la construction de 3,041 maisons afin d'atteindre le chiffre de 10,000 maisons pendant ce mandat. Le ministre de tutelle, M. le président, aura la lourde responsabilité d'implémenter les mesures énoncées par le ministre des Finances.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de dire quelques mots sur la sécurité routière, l'ordre et la paix dans le pays. En ce qui concerne la sécurité routière, M. le président, la situation est alarmante. Nous avons eu jusqu'à maintenant presque 85 morts sur nos routes. Il fallait prendre le taureau par des cornes. Les mesures énoncées sont dures, mais je pense que la population dans son ensemble accepte ces mesures. On ne peut consommer de l'alcool et conduire. Zéro tolérance, M. le président ! L'augmentation des pénalités était nécessaire afin de rendre les chauffeurs plus responsables, mais en plus de ça, j'espère que tout cela va aider à diminuer les accidents sur nos routes. Mais il y a autre chose. Il y a aussi l'incivilité des chauffeurs sur nos routes, M. le président et là le gouvernement ne peut rien faire, mais j'ose espérer et je souhaite voir plus de politesse de la part des chauffeurs sur nos routes.

Autre projet qui prend son envol est le *Safe City Project* annoncé comme un projet pilote, aujourd'hui, il est entré dans une phase permanente. Au niveau de la lutte contre le trafic de la drogue, le ministre des Finances annonce une série de mesures: l'acquisition des équipements sophistiqués pour détecter les personnes sous l'influence de la drogue, des provisions de l'ordre de R 10 millions afin de sensibiliser les jeunes contre l'utilisation des drogues synthétiques, R 30 millions pour un programme de réhabilitation pour les alcooliques et les drogués, et R 25 millions pour que l'*ADSU* fait l'achat des équipements sophistiqués et un bateau pour la *National Coast Guard*.

Concernant l'égalité du genre, en tant que Membre du *Gender Caucus*, M. le président, je suis très content de voir que ce budget prend en considération la participation de la femme mauricienne dans le développement du pays et ce sont des mesures encore une fois qui vont nous mener vers une croissance inclusive et elles sont sans précédent. Primo, une étude sera faite pour l'introduction du concept de l'égalité du genre dans les budgets à venir, des amendements à la loi afin que les femmes enceintes puissent être payées même si elles ont moins de 12 mois de service, l'introduction d'un *Gender Equality Bill* et la formation des officiers des ministères sur l'égalité du genre, l'augmentation de subsides pour les crèches passe de R 200,000 à R 500,000 et une série de mesures pour combattre la violence.

Avant que j'arrive à ce sujet, je voulais, M. le président, évoquer quelque chose qui avait été soulevée hier par le ministre du Tourisme sur cet aspect de l'hôtellerie inclusive, mais je vais aller beaucoup plus loin. Il était un fait aujourd'hui, M. le président, que le secteur touristique prospère et cette prospérité doit être partagée avec tous les acteurs de ce secteur. Or, je tiens à signaler quelque chose que je pense ne va pas dans ce sens. C'est vrai que le ministre a fait comprendre qu'il voulait revoir certaines choses, faire des touristes avoir accès à beaucoup d'autres activités dans le pays et faire un développement dans le domaine de loisirs pour les touristes et venir de l'avant avec une forme de démocratisation dans ce secteur. Moi, ce que je voulais attirer l'attention du ministre en question, c'est que ce qui se passe dans ce secteur aujourd'hui va faire du tort à ceux qui travaillent avec le secteur.

Déjà, M. le président, on sait que ceux qui travaillent avec ce secteur, travaillent à crédit et travaillent sur un crédit de trois mois et ce n'est pas évident. En plus de ça, dans le pays aujourd'hui, il y a des groupes d'hôtels qui ont leur propre centrale d'achat, c'est-à-dire ils font venir aujourd'hui tous les produits qu'on consomme dans les hôtels.

Et en ce faisant, M. le président, on va tuer ces entrepreneurs qui travaillent avec les hôtels. Si on parle d'une vraie démocratisation de notre économie, alors il faut laisser ces gens-là continuer à faire leur travail. Allons dire que la création de ces centrales d'achat - je ne sais pas quel est le ministère qui est responsable de voir que tout se passe bien. Moi je pense qu'il faudrait porter attention à cela, parce que c'est beaucoup plus facile pour ces groupes hôteliers d'avoir des permissions au niveau des ministères pour faire venir leurs produits, et c'est très souvent au détriment des petits entrepreneurs, M. le président.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'aborder un sujet qui a été traité un peu plus tôt par le ministre du Commerce. C'est l'augmentation des produits pétroliers sur le marché

international. M. le président, les consommateurs ont été frappés de plein fouet par cette augmentation. Ils ont manifesté leur mécontentement. Ils ont le droit de le faire et l'ont fait. Ils ont demandé au Premier ministre de faire un effort afin de les soulager, et le Premier ministre a été à l'écoute, M. le président. Et ce budget prend en compte leurs demandes. Le prix de l'essence baisse de R 52 à R 49.65, le prix de diesel baisse de R 41.90 à R 40. Et il y a plus que ça. Le prix de la bonbonne de gaz ménager baisse de R 270 à R 240. Allons dire 'bravo' au Premier ministre, parce qu'il a compris les difficultés auxquelles font face la population. Et s'il faut soulager leurs difficultés, il faut le faire. Il ne faut pas hésiter. C'est ce qu'il a fait, et je pense que c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles la population dans son ensemble - et je l'ai dit au tout début de mon discours - apprécie ce budget, M. le président.

En même temps, dans ce budget, on a pris d'autres mesures importantes, afin de consolider l'État providence. La lutte contre la pauvreté est une réalité, et le logement reste l'élément moteur dans cette lutte contre la pauvreté. 200 familles se verront offrir une maison, et il est prévu que le gouvernement va dépenser presque R 760 millions dans cette lutte.

Le budget de Rodrigues, M. le président, passe à R 5 milliards et l'aéroport de Plaine Corail sera rénové au coût de R 3.2 millions et sera opérationnel en 2019.

Que de belles mesures pour Agalega. Et une mesure historique pour Agalega, c'est qu'à partir du mois de septembre ils auront l'Internet. Le gouvernement va revoir tout ce qui touche au secteur de la pêche à Agalega. Il y aura aussi la construction d'une cinquantaine de maisons, la construction d'un dispensaire et aussi - ça passe sous Agalega et Rodrigues - l'achat d'un bateau pouvant transporter 700 conteneurs et relier nos îles, mais aussi la région.

Je vais terminer, M. le président - parce que c'est l'heure - avec la classe moyenne. Cette catégorie - et j'ai lu les commentaires des syndicalistes ce matin - de travailleurs a beaucoup souffert dans le passé. Nous reconnaissons tous leur contribution au développement de notre pays. Ils font beaucoup de sacrifices pour l'avenir de leurs enfants. Selon *Statistics Mauritius*, 77 % des contribuables font partie de cette classe moyenne. Cette classe de travailleurs était surtaxée. On sait que ceux au bas de l'échelle bénéficient très souvent des mesures pour alléger leur fardeau, mais tel n'est pas le cas pour la classe moyenne. Afin de rétablir la situation en faveur de cette classe moyenne, ce budget propose une série de mesures, à commencer par la révision à la hausse du seuil d'exemption des travailleurs par R 5,000. Avec cette mesure, ceux touchants R 305,000 annuellement ne paieront pas la taxe ;

pour ceux touchant entre R 305,000 à R 650,000 annuellement, le taux de la taxation passe de 15% à 10 %, et ceux qui touchent un salaire de moins de R 50,000 mensuellement paieront R 18,000 de moins sur la taxe annuellement. Ces mesures vont définitivement soulager cette classe moyenne. C'est pourquoi, au tout début de mon intervention, j'ai parlé d'une économie inclusive où chaque citoyen de ce pays partage les bénéfices du développement.

Cette croissance que connaît notre pays se conjugue avec la lutte contre les inégalités. Nous faisons tous partie, M. le président, de cette nation mauricienne, dans un esprit de solidarité et d'unité, et je fais un appel à la population de donner tout son soutien à notre Premier ministre pour bâtir une île Maurice prospère. Permettez-moi de dire cette phrase, M. le président -

“As one people, as one nation, in peace, justice and liberty.”

Dieu nous bénisse, M. le président. Vive notre Premier ministre ! Vive la République de Maurice !

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

(7.26 p.m)

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Since this Government took office in December 2014, the House will recall that this is its 6th *Grand oral*, all of them with great titles. We have had “Achieving Meaningful Change”, “Mauritius at the Crossroad”, “Achieving the Second Economic Miracle”, “Vision 2030”, “A New Era of Development”, “Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions” and this year’s Budget is titled “Pursuing our Transformative Journey”.

Now, from a bird’s eye view, when you look at all the above titles, *avec du recul*, already you find a total disconnect between them, as if the population is being perpetually made to dream anew each time with all these mesmerizing titles. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to remind the House and the population that this Government, the *Lepep* Government, was elected on the basis of a dream it has sold to the population: that it will bring about a second economic miracle.

I have listened to the discourse of the Minister of Finance last Thursday, and not a single time have I heard the words ‘economic miracle’. Not even the word ‘miracle’ either

was to be heard from his speech. But dreams there are! Many of them! And adding to this, if I may quote what the hon. Minister Mentor, on whose shoulders rested, as first Prime Minister of the Lepep Government, the delivery of the promise of the so-called ‘second economic miracle’. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when he was asked about his impression on the Budget last Thursday night, he said the following: “*ki commentaire mo pou ale fer lor sa budget là*”. Meaning, what do you want me to say about this Budget. I think the message is clear. Now, the promised economic miracle did not happen. In fact, it is the exact contrary that is happening. Debt has reached record level height. We know the figures now, they came today, like after I had asked three consecutive questions on 08 May 2018 to the hon. Prime Minister. Declining Foreign Direct Investment is the order of the day. High unemployment rates with only Civil Service recruiting is also a reality; the ever increasing cost of living; increasing number of deaths on our roads and our roads which are getting jammed with each passing day. Jammed further! Crime is on the rise and so is drug addiction of the worst kind, that is, synthetic drug, the proliferation of which has been rampant with this Government. The physical environment has deteriorated.

Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, please allow me to make a *parenthèse*. Much has been said during the debates on the Supplementary Appropriation Bill this morning about the National Energy Commission, more specifically about the former Prime Minister, Dr Navin Ramgoolam not chairing the Commission. I wish to remind the House that in reply to hon. Soodhun, in PQ B/168 of 2008, Dr. Ramgoolam had already explained that he had put in place *Maurice Ile Durable* with the vision of making Mauritius a sustainable island. I chaired the Maurice Ile Durable Commission, the *bilan* for which I have already tabled here in Parliament.

Now, it is this Government that has destroyed *cet élan de développement durable* - much has been said earlier – that was created simply because the appellation ‘*Maurice Ile Durable*’ is associated with Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and myself meanwhile having become a politician. Where is the commission for sustainable development for Mauritius? Every country has got one. Where is the one for Mauritius? We don’t have one now and we are talking about sustainable development! Who is championing environmental stewardship? Hon. Etienne Sinatambou? I invite the House to read an article of Alexandre Laridon, who, on Environment Day wrote the following in ‘*Le Mauricien*’: “*De « Maurice île Durable » à Maurice île poubelle*”. And if hon. Members were to read, they will have an idea how the physical environment of our country has deteriorated since the General Elections of 2014.

What has the Government done for the Sustainable Development Agenda? What it has destroyed can never be forgotten nor forgiven!

On 24 April this year, hon. Bhagwan asked a question to the hon. Prime Minister about when did the National Environment Commission last met since the General Elections of 2014. No answer has been tabled yet at the Hansard; I went to check. I hope that we will get an answer to this question otherwise I shall be compelled to believe that the hon. Prime Minister has chaired the National Energy Commission only once, and that also after hon. Bhagwan has asked that question. I hope he comes clean on this one; otherwise, I will have no other choice than to say that what has been said this morning is pure *enfumage*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been reported in the Press that: “*41.5% des mesures annoncées l’année dernière attendent leur implémentation*”. Now, there are Ministries that have implemented only one measure. Would you believe! They are considered the worst performers, and many of them, hon. Jahangeer was so highly praising last night! We have in the first position the Ministry of Financial Services and Good Governance; the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development; the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment; Attorney General’s Office – I was quite surprised about this one. I think the Press has forgotten about the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping.

(Interruptions)

I think the name of that Ministry does not appear on that article. But we all know that it is there as well among the worst performers. Even hon. Jahangeer mentioned about that yesterday.

(Interruptions)

So, if the population wants to know what has become of the dream that was sold to it, if the population needs an update on the prospect of the second economic miracle, can there be, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a more compelling *aveu d’échec* than what I have just said.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now swiftly move to some specific measures that have baffled me, and many others I supposed. The first one is the section that deals with further opening up of our economy and country; paragraphs 107 and 108 of the Budget Speech, wherein foreigners can now buy Mauritian citizenship or Mauritian passport at a cost of 1

million US dollars and 500 million US dollars respectively. Now, why would Mauritius need to sell its nationality? I wonder if the Government has looked into the implications of this very controversial measure.

A simple search on the Internet revealed that countries that have tried this, have also opened up the gate to *optimisation fiscal*. This is the worrisome part, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Are we prepared for this transition, and above all, is this transition all good for us when we know that Mauritius international reputation took a serious knocking with the country having been named and shamed in various tax dodging scandals and links, including the Paradise Papers which explain how black money comes to Mauritius? Does the Government want to encourage this at a time in this hollowing out of our institutions? What *garde-fous*? For example, if I may cite one: “will there be a period of probation of either one year or two years in order to provide our institutions, sometimes quite sloppy these days, to discover international crooks of the Alvaro type?” Are we going to have a probation period? Already there is uproar in the expatriates’ community. Those who have been here for years and who have had a clean track record and who have gone through the real *parcours de combatant* to either obtain, or are still waiting for a passport, are worried that those who may not be as credible as them, will come forward with their, perhaps, illicit money, millions of dollars and will become Mauritian citizens before them.

There is history out there for expatriates who have come here and work honestly and contributing to the economic. But the fundamental question is: was this controversial measure ever part of the Government manifesto or the Government Programme to sell Mauritian nationality to the highest bidders whatever the source of their cash? Was that part of the Programme? Cash for passport that is what I call it! Another great scandal in the making! It is bad enough selling jobs to your family or buying back redundant medical facilities at enhanced prices from your family members, now we have the country being sold down the drain to any Tom, Dick or Harry from abroad.

The price this Government will pay for this will be registered soon enough in the next election. The sooner the better for us all. Does this scheme send a positive message out there to the international community? Are we not saying just like the Caribbean Islands, that our country is in recession and now we are left with this in order to remain afloat meaning cash for passport?

In December 2017, we found ourselves on the grey list of the European Union as a fiscal paradise, and that we have been given two years to redress the situation, if not we will be in the black list. I fear that we will end up on the black list, which will yet be another nail in this Government's coffin, or to adapt to the current football jargon, yet another own goal. Has this Government no shame?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I now move to the energy - since you are waiting for it - and the utilities sector where there are some issues to be addressed. First thing, and this is the volte-face the Government has given itself at paragraph 232 on the decision to reduce the price of Mogas by Rs2.35 per litre by half the amount of Rs4.70 it was subjected to about a month ago, with half the increase. And in the same breath, to reduce the price of diesel by Rs1.90 per litre, again exactly half the amount of Rs3.80, it was subject to about a month ago.

Now, it appears that the Minister of Finance has played King Salman between the Ministry of Commerce and the population, in the sense that he has exactly halved the increase in price of both these commodities. Again, in the face of the backlash the Government has received from the population. When they learnt that the Mauritian population was paying one of the highest prices of fuel in the world, notwithstanding declining price of the barrel, even after King Salman has halved the increase, I believe that the population would want to know, why is it that the revised price is still very high when compared to countries like Madagascar our neighbour, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, China and Malaysia where there the population is paying Rs17 per litre of Mogas as opposed to nearly Rs50 in Mauritius.

So, the amateurism we have witnessed last Thursday is but one example of how the affairs of the country are being mismanaged. The haphazard way! Never seen before in Mauritius, which has become like a country that is being run from hand to mouth! And when Foreign Direct Investment is on the decline, there is no need to go very far to understand why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Which foreign investor is going to invest in a country which is incapable of seeing beyond its nose?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with this volte-face on the petroleum price and with what has happened in the Betamax case which some months only after last year's budget obtained a provisional ruling which looks like it's going to cost the taxpayers and consumers more than Rs5 billion, that means about Rs4000 for every man, woman and child of this country, and for which we have not heard a single word in the Budget Speech. I wonder what the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor would say. We all recall that when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was Prime

Minister in the past, he used to say: *Si nek moi longtemps li nepli minis.* Heads must roll, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me come to the second perfidy, and this one is the slightly concealed paragraph 32 of the Budget Speech, that deals with the cane industry, or more specifically, about a Ministerial Committee that has as task to assess the situation and to come up with appropriate rescue plan for the industry.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the recommendations have been made in the Joint Technical Committee Report, that was leaked in the Press at the beginning of this month. The Joint Technical Committee which met for more than 25 times, I am given to understand, was supposed to guide this Budget and now its report has been buried and the Government will have to start all over again with a new Ministerial Committee. This whole mess-up reveals again the sheer incompetence of this Government.

First, the Ministry of Agro-Industry did not ensure that it was appropriately represented on this Committee which begs the question: 'Is there a reason for this?' Second, the Joint Technical Committee Report, through its recommendations, wants to go after the poor workers. Third, no one has realised that no progress can be made without joint action agreed by planters and workers. It seems that the lone voice of the Mauritius Labour Party, through the voice of its leader, Dr. Ramgoolam, has brought this to light in his Press conference.

So, as the sugar industry goes down the drain with this Government, precious time is being lost and now the planters and the cane industry workers have become totally disillusioned and will have to wait longer. If you have seen the paper of this morning 'L'Express' this is the title –

« Ils attendaient des mesures de relance dans leur secteur dans le Budget 2018-2019, mais les planteurs de cannes qui sont aussi propriétaires terriens sont restés sur leur faim. Il prédisait un avenir sombre pour la production cannier à Maurice. »

'L'Express' of this morning.

Well, I hope no doubt their voice will be heard loud and clear at the next election.

The third act of perfidy by this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to address is found at paragraph 160 and has to do with the decision not to increase the water

tariff, a discontinued advice from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Utilities.

Now, in this litany of broken policies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I turn to the proposed installation? I have talked enough in the Press about water tariff, perhaps go over it. I will go to the proposed installation of a Combined-cycle gas-turbine of 120 megawatts at Fort George. Not a single word in the Budget Speech on this project save for a few lines in the Three-Year Strategic Plan for this project that is estimated to cost Rs8.2 billion and for which the CEB is expected to disburse Rs2.3 billion in this financial year. This project is supposed to change the energy landscape of Mauritius. To simplify a complex technical programme, if I may, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CEB will start with an Open-cycle gas-turbine. The heat that is generated from the exhaust gases, which is a form of energy, and which can be used to produce more electricity in a steam turbine through the Combined-cycle gas-turbine. This logically increases the overall thermal efficiency of the plant, because the heat that would have otherwise been wasted away, can now be used and the gain is obviously a lower unit cost of electricity production.

Not a single word in the Budget about the strategic orientation of the energy sector at a time three of the existing power purchase agreements of the independent power producers are on the verge of expiry. I have in mind here Fuel, Consolidated Energy Limited and Theragen.

At a time when we are forecasting the critical year for shortage of electricity supply to be 2021, three years away from now, this Government will hopefully - I hope not be here anymore. So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I request the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities to provide some clarity on this project in his speech, please? More specifically on the following questions, first, will there be power purchase agreement extensions or are we to believe what hon. Jahangeer has said yesterday? He was full of praise for you yesterday, hon. Deputy Prime Minister, for the first time!

(Interruptions)

But he was full of praise for everybody in the House! Well, he said that there is an excess of supply of electricity in the country now. So, this is what you said last night?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed, please address the Chair!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, okay, thank you. Secondly, will we have a combined-cycle gas turbine at Fort George or is CEB going to stay on the open gas cycle turbine mode

with the probable unit cost exceeding Rs10 per kw/hour? Third, if we are going for a combined-cycle gas production, what will be the certainty of supply, of constant, reliable and affordable Liquefied Natural Gas in Mauritius? Fourth, will the Government provide the critical mass to attract lessors for the FSRU, meaning Floating Storage and Regasification Unit For Liquefied Natural Gas or will CEB endeavour to build its own LNG terminal which will undeniably cost the economy another few billions of rupees?

The WorleyParsons Report of 2014 - we have had the chance to discuss about this in the House - stated that this is not feasible because of the unavailability of critical mass, but with a caveat, that it might become feasible someday if everybody in the country starts using their cars and public transportation, that will provide a critical mass for this to become visible here in Mauritius. But, at this moment, we are going for mass transportation with the Metro Project of the Mauritius Labour Party. You said so yesterday hon. Jahangeer! Hon. Jahangeer said the following last night for the Metro Express Project: "I agree he" - meaning hon. Minister Bodha - "took the project of the previous Government."

But the Metro will work if we have the adequate policy to entice people to use it, that means to leave their cars at home and to travel by the Metro. So this is a real Catch-22. There is no such measure in this Budget to move the country to sustainable transportation mode, I fear. May I suggest that the Government just comes forward and tells us how is it that tomorrow when the Metro starts running people will be encouraged to use the Metro and not their cars as it is at the moment?

(Interruptions)

Still one question on the electricity sector, we need to have an answer to the simple question of what is the price we are going to pay for our electricity in the future? Profits are going down at the CEB. Only this morning we learnt that there is a reduction in profit of Rs1 billion. Now, with all the projects and the uncertainty about which mode the gas turbine is going to operate, can we know what is the price of electricity that we are going to pay going forward?

I will now very rapidly address some issues that have particularly struck me as being fishy during the Budget presentation. The first one is the Safe City Project. I must repeat, as I did in the Press, that in the Safe City Project things are being done on the sly, deliberately avoiding giving information. There are issues on this project insofar as the guarantee that the Government has provided to Mauritius Telecom for the loan it has contracted from the Exim

Bank of China. Mauritius Telecom is a private company. There are issues related to the procurement process followed, the choice of the contractor Huawei, the confidentiality and security of information and the sum of Rs15 billion - mind you, Rs15 billion - in the next 20 years that this project will cost the Mauritian taxpayers and for which not a single word has been mentioned in this Budget. Not a single word! Sir Anerood Jugnauth replied to hon. Ramano's question, Rs15 billion. I have taken the pain to calculate. So, not a single word!

Social housing, now it is good to build social houses...

(Interruptions)

social houses at paragraphs 189 and 190 for which the Government has committed Rs12.7 billion for the construction of 6,800 dwelling units on ground-plus-three configuration, on 19 sites across the island. This is where the issue is. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was former Managing Director of the NHDC. I would like to ask the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, whether he has been able to resolve the timeless problem of syndic which is perpetually a problem. Because if you don't have syndic no one maintains the flats, you need syndic.

(Interruptions)

No, I will come to that.

(Interruptions)

I have heard the figure you have mentioned - Rs15 m. But then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let this be clear because I have to say what I have to say. If we build flats and the syndic does not work, what will happen is the Government throughout the years will have to pay for the syndic fees for them. We have just heard Rs15 m. And, not only that, rehabilitation work and maintenance work of this building that has cost several Governments over the years hundreds of billions of rupees each time. So, are we making the right decision, hon. Minister, to go for flats again? Please think about this because maybe tomorrow your Government is not going to be here...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: For sure, we will have to handle this case. Please, think about this. This is going to be a big mistake!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Now...

(Interruptions)

Why?

(Interruptions)

Think about it!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes, think about it! Now, free trade agreement with China. Our import from China, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Our import from China by far exceeds our exports to this country.

(Interruptions)

If we were to compare the import from China...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: He wants to catch the attention of the media. That is what he is always...

(Interruptions)

It is like comparing an elephant to a mouse. How is it that the free trade agreement that is currently being negotiated with China as per paragraph 84 of the Budget Speech going to bring about the condition for the growth of our export sector? How is that going to happen? Are we not doing the exact contrary here? Can we beat China? If I may rest my case with the example of the shoe business, a local industry that has long been protected, does the Government want Chinese goods, shoes to flood the market with dumping of products? Because, if we go for free trade agreement, we will never be able to beat China on prices.

(Interruptions)

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: There is one...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Yes. The project of tablets has been mentioned again, a very fishy tale, indeed. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have had the chance to ask question on the tablets project and we have heard that millions of rupees have been paid. There was supposed to be Court cases to recover Rs20 m., but then we never received a single tablet. Am I right? We never received a single tablet. And, the Court case, we don't know whether it still stands good or not because the Director of DCL Mr Ramalingum has gone on the radio saying...

(Interruptions)

Listen to me, please! That the Ministry of Education has withdrawn the case!

(Interruptions)

So, it smells very fishy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Millions of rupees! Students have waited for their tablets, never to be obtained! Government paid Rs20 m., the Director of Audit vehemently criticising this project and then the Court case has been removed. And now we are going for tablets again!

(Interruptions)

The project for tablets...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Order please!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Now, we have white elephants in schools; we have Wi-Fi, which we paid through our noses, with no tablets. Now, we are going for primary schools. Do we have Wi-Fi in primary schools or will we need to invest for Wi-Fi again in primary schools now?

(Interruptions)

OK, but please be careful!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yet again...

(*Interruptions*)

Again looking at the Press!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yet again....

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the very fishy tale...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: With the very fishy tale of the tablets, I would now like to conclude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, yet again, in this Budget, the Minister of Finance has presented a highly decorated Christmas tree of goodies to catch the votes he fears he will be losing. But Government is based on trust, and this Government has lost all the trust it ever had since it began breaking every promise of cleaning the stables in its manifesto and filling so many well-paid posts with family members and members of *la cuisine*.

(*Interruptions*)

The Government is based on trust and this Government has lost all the trust it has ever had since it began breaking every promise of cleaning the stables in its manifesto and filling so many well-paid posts with family members and members of *la cuisine*. It has a dire record of failing to implement...

(*Interruptions*)

It has a dire record of failing to implement even half of its Budget promises. There it is since the election. Can we ever trust this Government again? The people are angry. They no longer will trust this Government offering so blatant electoral bribes. They can no longer trust a Government bearing such false gifts. This Government is way passed itself by date and should be sent packing. This Budget is an eyewash of the first order.

I thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon!

(8.01 p.m.)

Mr A. Aliphon (Third Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Riviere): Capter la télé, il aura réussi, le député Mahomed. Mais comme j'ai de bonnes nouvelles à partager, je ne vais pas répondre à ce député.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr Aliphon: Good one! Je laisserai le député Mohamed vivre son passé au présent. C'est du réchauffé ce qu'il vient de dire. Il n'a pas sûrement écouté, ce matin, la réponse du Premier ministre. Il a traité de tout cela. Je lui demande de faire référence au Hansard, il aura ses réponses, et du Premier ministre et les autres députés et ministres qui sont intervenus avant lui. *Ayo, irrésistibles gaulois !*

M. le président, je souris en regardant l'opposition. Ils sont comme l'expression mauricienne dit '*manque dix sous pour faire une roupie*'. Toute l'île Maurice...

(*Interruptions*)

Mo pe vine Albion la, pas per !

Toute l'île Maurice...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Aliphon: Ne partez pas Madame ! Restez là ! Voilà !

Toute l'île Maurice approuve...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Members! Order, please!

Hon. Aliphon!

Mr Aliphon: Merci ! Toute l'île Maurice apprécie ce budget ; les syndicalistes, les Mauriciens, sauf les irrésistibles gaulois, les dix sous qui nous manquent pour être parfaits.

Enfin, M. le président ! Quelque temps de cela, pratiquement à la même période, mais un an avant, j'avais eu le plaisir de parler sur le budget 2017-2018, que déjà le prochain budget, malgré l'éternelle lamentation de l'opposition, ‘*élections pe la, pe la*’, le gouvernement, ce gouvernement présente son quatrième budget. Un autre budget. Voyons voir.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance! Please!

Mr Aliphon: Ils ont peur d'écouter les vérités. Hier, j'ai entendu le leader de l'opposition dire que ce budget n'était qu'un *communication exercise*. Un peu bouleversé j'ai été. Qu'avons-nous fait depuis le dernier budget ? Que *we sit on our hands*, tout comme l'honorable Madame Perraud avait dit que ce budget *faire la bouche doux, donne un peu manger, boire aux Mauriciens* ? La réponse, ils l'auront s'ils vont à la rencontre des Mauriciens.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud! Please allow hon. Aliphon to make his speech.

Mr Aliphon: J'ai l'habitude de la faire avec des mal élevés. Il n'y a aucun problème. Alors, la réponse, que vous êtes mal élevée.

(*Interruptions*)

Que vous êtes mal élevée !

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon! Address the Chair!

(*Interruptions*)

Mrs Perraud: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like the hon. Member, if I may call him ‘honourable’, to withdraw this.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud, I take note of same. Hon. Aliphon, please withdraw!

Mr Aliphon: Okay, no problem. *Avec plaisir!*

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon! Please withdraw!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Aliphon: Je pense ce que je pense!

(*Interruptions*)

Alors, il faudrait qu'ils aillent à la rencontre des Mauriciens sur l'asphalte, à Port-Louis ou ailleurs dans l'île Maurice, et ceci dit, merci à l'honorable Seeruttun et les autres pour leur clairvoyance dans ce budget. Il serait bon de dire que dans ce contexte mondial très difficile, ce budget est simplement chevaleresque, impressionnant. Imaginez-vous, les Mauriciens, une heure encore avant la présentation du budget, en écoutant et en lisant, avaient cru qu'une catastrophe se présentait : augmentation de la cigarette, de l'alcool, fuite en avant du Premier ministre, haro sur la Coupe du Monde, etc. Il aura fallu deux heures, seulement deux heures au Premier ministre pour que les Mauriciens comprennent qu'ils avaient été bernés par l'opposition. Ils auront vu que nous, ce gouvernement, *mean business* et que les députés de la majorité et le Premier ministre, nous restons proches de la population pour devenir du coup, avec ce budget, un pays avec *un lowest income payable country* au monde, et peut être le premier pays.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud! Please!

Mr Aliphon: Certains ont parlé de la mise en route des mesures annoncées ; c'est pour quand ? Yes, oui, c'est vrai. Pour leur répondre, faisons référence au passé pas trop lointain, le budget de l'année dernière. Nous avions beaucoup de budgets à être réalisés par ce gouvernement. Qu'avons-nous réalisé ? Qu'a réalisé ce gouvernement ? Il serait bon de le rappeler rapidement à l'opposition et aux Mauriciens que ce gouvernement *means business*, et cela, contrairement à l'opposition, ce gouvernement en poste a l'avantage de dire ce qu'il fait et de faire ce qu'il dit.

M. le président, il faudrait que je remercie une personne, le Premier ministre. Même s'il n'est pas là, merci quand même M. le Premier ministre de votre confiance en me donnant la responsabilité de quatre circonscriptions comme PPS : les numéros 14, 17, 19 et le 20. Et c'est avec un réel plaisir que j'ai relevé le challenge et c'est avec un autre plaisir que je citerai

seulement quelques-unes des actions entreprises dans chaque circonscription, car elles sont nombreuses.

M. le président, je voudrais nous faire voyager, comme nous l'avons fait pour les sept orientations du budget, cela avant de revenir commenter le budget 2018-2019. Embarquons pour le numéro 14, l'ouest du pays, de Bambous à Souillac, en passant par Quatre Bornes et Chamarel. Il faudrait surtout que l'honorable Jhuboo écoute, lui qui hier disait que rien n'avait été fait. Ça c'est sa première réponse et la deuxième viendra tout à l'heure.

Voyons voir les régions ! Avant tout à Chamouny, des drains et routes sont déjà faits ; Chemin Grenier et Surinam, des projets déjà faits. Ceux qui sont amateurs de vérification comme certains députés de l'opposition, allez vérifier la route de Micouin ainsi que la route de Rochester Fall ! Pour ceux de l'opposition qui ne savent pas, c'est la route cascade de Rochester Fall. Cette route est en passe d'être refaite. A Riambel, avez-vous vu le terrain de pétanque, un coup d'œil s'impose. Ce terrain a été inauguré dimanche dernier, le 17 juin. A la Gaulette, les habitants ont maintenant leur terrain de foot, c'est *ongoing*.

(*Interruptions*)

Oui, on travaille !

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea !

Mr Aliphon: A Bel Ombre,

(*Interruptions*)

Vous ne voulez plus écouter? Je vais le dire quand même!

A Bel Ombre, il y a eu l'agrandissement de la rivière, un kiosque et un parking sur la plage. À Baie du Cap, le *fencing* ; l'éclairage sur le terrain de sports sera fait à court terme sans compter les travaux en cours, entre autres, à Contour Prune pour à peu près R 4 millions. Cela va finir incessamment. A petite Rivière Noire/Case Noyale, l'agrandissement de la rivière, déjà fait.

A Bambous, terrain de sport, jardin d'enfants et drains déjà faits. Vous avez le choix. Allez voir Dagri Road à Bambous ! A Flic en Flac, après une rencontre avec les habitants, les autorités concernées pour le nettoyage de la plage ont déjà réagi, sans compter l'asphaltage, les *new roads*, les drains ; la *NDU* a beaucoup dépensé. A Tamarin des drains ont été faits au

coût de R 7 à R 8 millions. Quatre Bornes, Palma, Beaux Songes et Cascavelle n'ont pas été oubliés ; entre routes, drains etc. une grosse somme a été déboursée par la *NDU* et si vous préférez par le gouvernement. Il me faut toutefois, ici, remercier mes amis, l'honorable ministre Sinatambou et l'honorable Lesjongard pour leur collaboration sur cette région, de même que les conseillers du *District Council* de Souillac et de Rivière Noire. Et je reviendrai avec mon ami, l'honorable Jhuboo tout à l'heure. Restez assis!

Nous changeons de destination, le No. 17, Curepipe, Midlands, 16^{eme} Mille, Dubreuil ! Allez voir le terrain de foot de la Cité Anouska, 16^{eme} Mille. La députée de Curepipe avait assisté à l'ouverture. Entre lumières, terrains et routes asphaltées, elle ne croyait pas ses yeux ! Routes et chemins sont déjà faits. A Midlands, le mur d'enceinte du centre communautaire est déjà en place avec son parcours de santé. Je ne vous parle pas des drains faits ou des projets à hauteur de millions. A Dubreuil, des projets sont en place, certains déjà faits ou seront faits. Le Shivala Road de Dubreuil sera fait incessamment.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, allow me to listen!

Mr Aliphon: Pour le Centre de Curepipe, avez-vous vu la route du cimetière de Bigara ? Elle a été enfin asphaltée. Une attente très longue pour ceux au pouvoir. En 2014, avec cette opposition en face de nous, de Travaillistes, de MMM, de même que le PMSD en 2016, n'avait rien fait sauf des promesses et du vent ! Enfin, la route est faite !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Adrien Duval, I am speaking to you! Allow me to listen to hon. Aliphon!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Adrien Duval, please! Hon. Aliphon, please, proceed!

Mr Aliphon: Enfin, la route est faite. Et il n'a pas tort - c'est pour dire que c'est un plaisir de mourir maintenant.

(Interruptions)

Vous voulez encore ? Pas assez pour Curepipe ? Nous avons tout plein, passant par Malherbe, Eau coulée, Cité Joachim, Floréal, Camp Carol, Abbé de la Caille, Leclézio Street,

la liste est longue ; *all finished* ou en passe d'être finis. Le Robinson Road sera fait incessamment - une route qu'on attend depuis longtemps. Je voudrais dire à ceux qui manient la langue de bois et qui propagent de fausses *news*, d'aller voir cette longue liste de routes et autres drains, où la NDU a donné *the financial clearance* à la Municipalité de Curepipe pour des projets à faire ou déjà finis. Et là, un remerciement spécial à mon ami le ministre des Sports, l'honorable Toussaint pour son aide, car notre duo fonctionne à merveille au niveau de cette ville de Curepipe. Merci l'ami!

Partons maintenant pour le No. 19, Rose Hill/Stanley. Ah, j'adore! Je ne vous parlerais pas de la Salle des fêtes du Plaza ou du Théâtre du Plaza car l'opposition devrait savoir - car ils savent toujours tout - que les travaux commencent incessamment pour le Théâtre du Plaza.

Je ne vous parlerais pas du Jardin Balfour, pour ne pas me répéter ou déranger ou faire rougir l'opposition devant leur incapacité de *deliver the goods* à leur époque à Rose Hill.

(*Interruptions*)

Ecoutez! Ecoutez !

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Aliphon: Je ne vous parlerais pas de ...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Aliphon: Je ne vous parlerais pas de drains, de routes etc ...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please!

Mr Aliphon: ... mais je vous citerai uniquement l'Avenue Berthaud. Ne baissez pas la tête, messieurs, écoutez! 30 ans d'attente des habitants de la région, attente réglée en trois ans par ce gouvernement. Qu'en pensez-vous? Comme le discours du budget du Premier ministre, il a pris deux heures pour convaincre, nous avons pris trois ans pour plaire aux habitants de la région et ils nous remercient pour cette œuvre.

M. le président, remercier ne coûte rien et c'est très bon à entendre. Permettez-moi de remercier, ici, ceux qui m'ont épaulé dans cette aventure, comme le PPS pour le No. 19, mon ami, l'honorable Showkutally Soodhun, – il est absent, ce n'est pas grave - le PPS Benydin,

maintenant ministre ; l'honorable Eddy Boissezon, le *VPM*, l'honorable Madame Daureeawoo, le *DPM*. Et l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo, que n'a-t-il pas fait pour ce projet ! Et, bien sûr, l'incontournable Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. Merci à vous les amis !

Chers amis, il faudrait aussi que je remercie, ici aussi, les maires, les conseillers de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Un clin d'œil à ceux de la Municipalité de Quatre Bornes ! Merci à vous de m'avoir soutenu ; je n'oserai surtout pas oublier l'équipe formidable de la *NDU*. Merci à tous ! Ensemble nous avons fait ce projet que l'opposition n'a jamais pu réaliser. J'espère simplement que l'opposition ne vienne pas dire, ou trouver à redire sur le sujet. Je souhaite qu'ils ne laissent surtout pas la peur décider à leur place, cette peur basée sur les critiques et qu'ils félicitent ce gouvernement pour une fois pour le bon travail qu'ils n'ont pu faire eux.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Aliphon: *Li pe gagn dimal, laisse li aboyer !*

Je m'arrête là. Je ne citerai pas les routes, les drains ou tout autre projet à Rose Hill. Il y en a trop. Cela a été dit ce matin, et tout au plus dans trois semaines ou avec un petit retard, un mois au plus, Plaisance aura son terrain de foot synthétique comme prévu.

M. le président, continuons notre voyage, passons à notre dernière destination, le No. 20. Le No. 20, plaisir d'organiser ! Vous pouvez penser par quel recoin de Beau Bassin ou de Petite Rivière, on y va par le commencement, le *Metro Express*. Un député de l'opposition avait laissé entendre - que pour se faire entendre - que si le gouvernement donne aux Rosehilliens un jardin à Ebène, où est-ce que les Beaubassinois iront faire leur jogging à Beau Bassin.

(Interruptions)

Il aura oublié son dossier et son endroit, car la *NDU* et le gouvernement sont passés par là depuis 2015. Ils sont les uns plus près que les autres ces terrains. Allez au Jardin Balfour ! C'est trop loin ? Allez donc à Vuillemin, au complexe sportif tout neuf de cette région. Encore trop loin pour jogger, aller au Parcours de Santé de Cavallo à Roches Brunes. Encore trop loin, allez au Jardin Freddy Appasamy au centre de Beau Bassin ! Trop court, trop petit, encore trop loin ! A la fin de juin, vous aurez le jardin Bam Cuttayen à Mont

Roches ou sinon vous aurez, dans quelques temps, le complexe sportif de Barkly. Vous me direz encore trop loin pour ceux résident à Belle Étoile ou à Coromandel, ils n'ont rien fait. Vous avez le tout nouveau Parcours de Santé de Chapman's view. Neuf ! Et en primeur ! Tous ces endroits auront l'avantage d'avoir un air totalement sain, pur, propre que vous ne retrouvez pas sur la promenade Roland Armand entre la fumée des bus, des camions, des voitures et autres. Enfin ! Passons ! Voyons autre développement, les drains à Lady Twinning Street au centre de Beau Bassin, 30 ans d'attente pour les habitants, leur attente finisse là, en phase de finition.

À Mont Roches, à Verger Bissambar, les drains vont commencer incessamment, 15 ans d'attente. Les bus vont entrer par Mont Roches à Barkly via Boule de Neige, une attente incalculable, sans compter les nouveaux stades qui vont suivre. Allons à Petite Rivière, à La Joliette, un parc de santé est en marche, ça prend naissance, c'est en construction. Les drains de Jury Lane et ailleurs, le *Health Centre* ou l'hôpital en construction, un bijou à en devenir pour la région de Petite Rivière en attente de celui de Coromandel qui arrivera l'année prochaine.

M. le président, cela fait 30 ans qu'ils attendent ce geste d'un gouvernement et c'est encore nous, ce gouvernement, qui l'avait fait. Dans Albion, *leker pou fermal*, en vitesse, allons voir les projets, le jardin du centre d'Albion en rénovation, le terrain de foot commence la rénovation, nous avons pris un retard, mais ça va commencer. Jardins d'enfants à Albion tout comme les terrains de pétanque et kiosque à la Croisette, menant à la plage d'Albion et surtout un hommage à notre champion cycliste, Gabriel Anazor. Notre champion cycliste enfin lui et ses alentours ont pu avoir leur *lane* asphalté. Beaucoup d'attente, encore 30 ans. Même si ça va déplaire, je me pose la question suivante : il y avait-il des députés pour ces endroits avant 2015 ? Je ne connais pas la réponse pour l'instant. De toutes les façons, les résidents de ces régions sauront apprécier et comme c'est le motto de la NDU qui nous dit : *amene développement divant to la porte*, M. le président, je ne fuirais pas devant ce manque d'élégance...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members! Allow me to listen to hon. Aliphon!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Quirin!

(Interruptions)

Mr Aliphon: Non, c'est la honte qui t'étouffe.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin! Do you think you have a better right than any hon. Member?

(*Interruptions*)

Do you think hon. Aliphon has a lesser right than any hon. Member?

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Quirin! Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Quirin! Please, allow me to listen to hon. Aliphon.

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Aliphon!

Mr Aliphon: Enfin *quand mo jaloux fernal, pas grave.* M. le président...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Ameer Meea, do you hold a brief for hon. Quirin? Come on! Hon. Aliphon!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Ameer Meea, this is your last warning!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Aliphon: M. le président, je ne fuirai pas devant ce manque d'élégance à la question - interrogation que le cinquième député correctif de la région de Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, I order you out!

(*Interruptions*)

I order you out, hon. Ameer Meea!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Ameer Meea! I order you out!

(*Interruptions*)

Sergeant-at-Arms!

(*Interruptions*)

Please, do not disrupt the proceedings of this House!

(*Interruptions*)

Sergeant at Arms, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Aliphon, please resume !

Mr Aliphon: Je ne fuirai pas devant ce manque d'élégance que le cinquième député correctif de la région de Beau Bassin/Petite Rivière avait fait concernant le *bus stop* et une route longue de 600 m asphaltée en 2016, mais tout ce qu'on fait finalement, au fait, je le remercie pour avoir prouvé que ni la NDU, ni le gouvernement ne sont des *mardayeurs* et il n'y a pas eu de maldonne.

N'empêche, par méconnaissance totale concernant cette route ou cet endroit ou cette région, hélas, il n'aura vu que 50 m de route. Les 50 m endommagés, oui par une douce rivière qui coule juste à côté. Mais surtout par des grosses pluies et aussi par les travaux de la CWA ou des tuyaux cassés. Mais, hélas, mauvaise foi quand tu le tiens, il n'aura pas vu les 550 m restant de route.

Cependant, concernant le *bus stop*, au lieu d'apprécier un *golden bus stop*, il dénonce qu'il y a eu *hold-up* dans ce projet. Je vais proposer à ce cinquième député de la circonscription de bien s'informer et de mieux observer, de savoir lire entre les lignes car il risque de se retrouver lui-même le dindon de sa farce et tel a été le cas, hélas. Si vous permettez, ce projet réalisé par le *District Council* de Rivière Noire sur la demande de la NDU, qui était un long drain, asphaltez plus ou moins 200 m de route et construction d'un *bus stop* sur un budget de R 860,000 aura coûté à la NDU et à l'île Maurice que R 700,000 et des poussières. L'informateur de notre député qui sûrement roule comme son député en voiture...

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Members, please allow me to listen to the speech of hon. Aliphon. Hon. Adrien Duval, you have something to say?

(*Interruptions*)

Please, stand up.

Mr A. Duval: I am saying, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that interruptions are happening on both sides of the House, you are only looking at the Opposition side. What I am asking is that you have to be fair and impartial.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval, I take note for how long you have been sitting in this House for today and please, do not disrupt the proceedings of this House. Hon. Aliphon!

Mr Aliphon: Thank you. L'informateur de notre député qui sûrement roule comme son député en voiture n'a pas réalisé la portée de ses dires en oubliant que les résidents de Belle Vue ont le droit d'avoir un *bus stop* bien humain. Je les laisse...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry! Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Duval, please !

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Aliphon: *Mais oui, gagne honter sa.* Je le laisse avec sa conscience à ce député.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Aliphon, please resume!

Mr Aliphon: Mais je lui propose de réaliser la pureté d'intention du gouvernement en place de vouloir aider les habitants de Belle Vue ou d'ailleurs à l'île Maurice. Je voudrais leur dire que les critiques sont faciles, que la perfection n'est pas dans l'homme mais se trouve dans les intentions. M. le président, j'ai gardé le meilleur pour la fin et là hélas l'opposition ne sera pas là. Merci à mon ami, l'honorable Anil Gayan, merci à mon ami l'honorable Nando Bodha et à ce gouvernement en place car encore une fois après 30 ans vous avez bien entendu, encore 30 ans comme PPS, j'ai le plaisir, l'avantage et l'honneur

d'annoncer aux résidents d'Albion qu'enfin le pont d'Albion sera rénové, début des travaux fin juin début juillet 2018. Et je précise bien l'année, cette année 2018 pour les mauvaises langues, hélas on en a.

Il y a aussi, M. le président - mais il n'est plus là – hier, l'honorable Jhuboo, en note de musique, chantait les zéros du gouvernement. Je serai la contrebasse en lui rappelant par la note 'fa' ce que nous avons fait en grands travaux, qu'il a sûrement dû oublier. Le pont le plus long, 350 mètres et le plus profond de l'île, 100 mètres, se trouvera dans Beau Bassin-Rose Hill, exactement à Belle Etoile.

(*Interruptions*)

The Belle Etoile Bridge, j'espère que ce sera le nom de ce pont.

(*Interruptions*)

L'échangeur de Phoenix, c'est du fait. Le pont de Grande Rivière, c'est du fait. Le Metro Express, c'est du fait. Baisse du chômage, c'est fait. Les éleveurs de porcs, on les a aidés, c'est du fait. Je crois que là, cela suffit, je m'arrête. Et c'est pour cela, M. le président, que je demande vivement aux résidents d'Albion et aux mauriciens que nous sommes, que comme nous avons affaire à une opposition qui suspecte et déforme nos propos, de ne porter aucune attention sérieuse à cette opposition et de marcher la main dans la main avec ce gouvernement sans aucune crainte.

Continuons à parler sur le budget 2018-2019. Je laisse le choix à l'opposition de ne pas oublier le salaire minimal qui est du fait. L'augmentation de la pension vieillesse, le *negative income tax*, les stations de *hotspots* Wi-Fi sont déjà en place et les 400 autres qui vont venir, le coup d'arrêt à la drogue, etc. Le *Nine-Year Schooling* est déjà fait. Et quid de ce que pense l'opposition des mesures de ce nouveau budget concernant les 60,000 *income taxpayers* qui payeront plus ou moins de taxe. Du coup, cette mesure fait le pays devenir très probablement un des premiers pays avec un *lower income taxpayer*.

L'intégration dans le monde du travail des chômeurs, 14,000 demandeurs sont visés pour un montant d'un milliard; baisse de l'essence, baisse du gaz. Qu'avons-nous pas entendu jusqu'à maintenant! Et le matin de la présentation de ce budget, il aurait fallu, comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure-là, juste deux heures pour que toutes ces personnes restent sans voix. Et n'en parlons pas de l'opposition! Ils ne sont même plus là. *Zot tann sourde!* Sans compter les mesures qui laissent l'opposition perplexe : droit de douane sur le fer, alignement

des tarifs sur l'huile mélangée, taxe de R 2 sur le plastique, exonération de la TVA sur le patch anti-tabac, allocations aux personnes souffrant d'incontinence.

Et avant de terminer, il est bon de savoir que chaque couche sociale de l'île Maurice aura eu pour son grade, et cela dans le bon sens du mot.

M. le président, il ne me reste qu'à vous remercier de m'avoir écouté et de féliciter le Premier ministre et ce gouvernement pour ce budget qui fait rentrer l'île dans le monde moderne.

Merci à tous.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Joomaye!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, please!

(8.33 p.m.)

Dr. Z. Joomaye (Second Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Today, the Opposition is absent, but the population is present because live broadcasting is today a reality due to the action of this Government.

Let me, first of all, thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of his Budget for the coming financial year. I must say, and everyone here will agree, that the Budget Speech delivered, has restored a good mood throughout the country across the population, in all communities and all layers of the society. Reviews in the Press are globally good and positive. Unions and syndicates' representatives have welcome this Budget and said it has met their expectations.

Even our political opponents, who are absent today, have had little to say. Some qualifying it as '*un budget électoraliste*'. Un '*budget électoraliste*', meaning to say that if there would be election soon, this Budget would have been an excellent tool to promote the team led by the hon. Prime Minister. That is what a '*budget électoraliste*' would mean. Even the hon. Leader of the Opposition yesterday admitted that the Budget contained good measures. Of course, he cannot say the contrary as he would not seem credible and serious. This Budget contains, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a blend of measures which have tackled all the prevailing issues in our country. It again brings the proof that our Prime Minister holds the interest of the nation at heart and confirms his social commitment towards redistribution of wealth and solidarity among different categories of citizens.

The main expectation of the people have been looked into. A lot has been said by my colleagues who have intervened before me, but as a nation, we would be nothing if we do not cater for the future of our youth. Not ensuring that they develop in a safe and sound social, familial and professional environment would mean that we would have failed in our mission towards improving the conditions of life in our country over the generations. Owing to our elders who by promoting a culture of work and sacrifice, we have evolved from a monocrop agricultural economy to a multisectoral or complex economy and almost a high income earning country.

Our hon. Prime Minister being fully aware of this, has made youth unemployment a major challenge for which a series of appropriate and innovative measures have been proposed. Some Rs1 billion earmarked to target youth unemployment. This will help some 14,000 youngsters join the professional world under different training programmes namely, the National Skills Development Programme, the Youth Service Programme and the National Apprenticeship Programme. The employability of those enrolled will be enhanced. The most interesting and daring measure which proves to what extent our commitment goes to the young unemployed graduates is the push and incentive given to SMEs to employ these graduates where, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government, through the HRDC, will be paying a stipend of Rs 4,000 to the SMEs. Only transport of the employee will have to be contributed. This is a major step. Even this is being criticised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. *C'est une mesure qui fait d'une pierre deux coups*, helping both unemployed graduates and the SMEs.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition found it not normal that employers will not pay part of their salary. He said they won't to be supervised. A waste of time, a waste of money! Hon. Xavier-Luc Duval has forgotten maybe in the past, in the Labour-PMSD Government, the stimulus package. Millions given to the private sector...

(Interruptions)

...without control, and not anyone in the private sector, chosen ones; Infinity - Jean Suzanne. Some Rs350 m. for him only, part of which has been used to buy a sports car. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Ram Mardemootoo, a sitting Labour MP, at that time, allocated for his company hundreds of millions. What had these millions spent, brought to the country?

In this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, money is being wisely spent. That is why objective economists and the public in general have welcome this Budget because the

measures contained can be obviously seen to be in the general public interest, because everyone knows that unemployment for the young graduates is a very touchy issue, not only economic, but also psychosocial.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must admit that I have been shocked by the level of demagogery that I have heard yesterday coming from the hon. Leader of the Opposition. But not only him, in some of sections of the Press and from leader of the Labour Party as well, and other Members of the Opposition, regarding the new measure to attract high network individuals. The opportunity given to foreigners to accede to Mauritian citizenship or permanent residency after a non-refundable contribution towards a new entity, the Mauritius Sovereign Fund; Mauritius Sovereign Fund, which will be managed by the Mauritius National Investment Authority.

Some seem very displeased as if the Prime Minister or other Members of this Government will be pocketing that money. No, this is a rupture of what was happening in the past, where there was no transparency in the allocation of citizenship. Rumours have sometimes been deliberately circulated on a possible business on passports, since long time ago, I must say.

So, now when Government brings a measure to counteract this, in line with good governance and transparency policies, some disagree. Why? Why do they really disagree? This is my question to this House and to the population. Why are they vehemently against? Should we prevent high-net-worth individuals from settling in Mauritius? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question of acquisition of citizenship or permanent residence is indeed a sensitive issue, but let us analyse and have a look on how things are right now.

There exist several schemes where a foreigner can come to settle in our country. The MSM-MMM Government introduced the IRS, Integrated Resort Scheme. Then, later, two new schemes came under different Governments, the RES and the PDS - Property Development Scheme. That means that this is nowhere something new. The common thing in those schemes is that the permanent residency and/or citizenship were attached to acquisition of land or property in specific developments; otherwise, it would not be possible. The foreigner had to acquire property from a private property developer to be able to benefit from residency schemes.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who are those property developers? All the developers have been made by the traditional large landowners. They have been the only one benefiting

from these schemes, and it was and still is a monopoly. These schemes allow them to develop remote, valueless, infertile land and make billions out of it, while Government was collecting only land conversion tax, registration duty and some VAT from the construction sector. Should this continue? Should we continue to attach the question of acquisition of permanent residency or citizenship to property acquisition benefiting only large landowners and South African Estate Agents? This is the bare truth. I am only drawing attention on the exact situation. I am not willing to seek political mileage by pointing figure on a specific class of citizens, but we cannot blind ourselves. *On doit crever l'abcès.*

Government is saying no. It should not be the only way. Property development should continue, but marketing strategy should not be solely based on residency. I suspect and I am even accusing all those who are against this new measure to be, in fact, defending the interest of these large landowners, property developers and estate agents. Those who are against are not only politicians, but in the Press as well. We know they pay large amounts for publicity. They fund some NGOs, which in appearance are fighting for environmental issues. I have always wondered why there was so much disagreement for hotel development in the south, but never in the west. Is it related to the developer?

The Leader of the Opposition has denounced the fact that now there would be inflation of the price of property and Mauritians will not be able to acquire property. He seems not be aware that right now, in the south, in an IRS project, Valriche, 40 perches of lands is being sold at Rs120 m., and he knows Royal Park very well - he talks about it very often - and what is the price in Royal Park. But this is the law of the market. Government is not against the law of the market. We should not play politics on that. Price of property has been increasing since years and will continue to increase, and Mauritians will continue to find a place to buy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We should be proud that more than 80% Mauritians are home owners. We have the best figures in Africa. Buying on the beach or in posh areas or other exclusive areas is a different debate. It has always been and will continue to be within the reach of only those who have the means to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Government is a responsible Government. We will not give Mauritian passports without thorough investigation and due diligence on the applicants. We will not make way for shady businessmen, tainted money, arm traffickers and terrorists. We do not want to have situations that England or the United Kingdom has known with Vijay Mallya, the owner of Kingfisher, who fled from India to England, and now with Nirav Modi, involved in a big financial scandal. The public in general should not worry about the

intentions of the Government. We are not the first country in the world offering citizenship against investment. Hon. Lesjongard stressed a lot about it, and I can see that lots of European countries do so to attract high-net-worth individuals. If United Kingdom, France, Portugal, Denmark and 30 other countries are doing so, why not us?

No doubt, we are proud of our citizenship, but let us open up to the world. After all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are all descendants of migrants. It is a question of time. In four generations, the children of those acquiring citizenship today will be the Mauritians of tomorrow. Nationalism is a battle of a different era. We should now move on. Some of the arguments today recall us of dark ages of our history about Adrien d'Epinay. I wonder how those in the Press, so much inclined to defend values of freedom are now condoning xenophobic statements and arguments.

For those who are afraid that existing, ongoing PDS projects might suffer from this new situation, I am sure that Government will come up with some accompanying measures. For those already having PR through property acquisition, one way forward could be a contribution of an additional amount to the Sovereign Fund and hold a Mauritian passport, hence ensuring the viability of the sector.

I am glad to see that hon. Shakeel Mohamed - who left this House - has already advertised this new measure on his LinkedIn account. Even if he will have to follow his Party line in public, I have no doubt that he will have a big professional gain out of it. We all just listened to hon. Osman Mahomed. Hon. Mahomed stressed and was very anxious.

L'honorable Mahomed était très inquiet parce qu'il a dit que par rapport au projet Safe City, l'accord est secret. L'accord est secret, parce que Mauritius Telecom est une compagnie privée. Mais l'honorable Mahomed semble avoir oublié les neuf années de règne du Parti travailliste et du PMSD. Combien d'accords sont restés secrets, et seront toujours secrets, jusqu'à maintenant ? L'accord Tianli. Qui ne se souvient pas de Tianli? Tianli avait fait un accord pour s'approprier de 500 arpents à Riche Terre et qui avaient été donnés à la compagnie qui s'appelle Jin Fei maintenant. 500 arpents – *accord secret*. Les planteurs étaient expropriés. On avait pris leur terre et on avait coupé l'eau pour que leur récolte pourrisse. Ils avaient fait une grève de la faim mais l'accord est toujours resté secret.

L'accord Neotown, où des dizaines d'arpents stratégiques autour de notre port ont été donnés sans qu'on sache pourquoi et pourquoi on les a offerts à un businessman, a *shady* businessman, M. Rupen Patel. L'accord Betamax, l'accord de transport de produits pétroliers

de Mangalore à Maurice. Le *leader* de l'opposition l'a dit aujourd'hui, l'accord avec Mangalore est toujours resté secret. Il a voulu le *disclose* aujourd'hui mais il n'a pas pu. L'accord avec *CT Power*, secret aussi ! Et les accords entre le gouvernement chinois et mauricien pour le Bagatelle Dam et le nouvel aéroport de Plaisance ! Donc, combien d'accords secrets il y a eu dans le passé ! L'honorable Mahomed semble être offusqué aujourd'hui beaucoup plus qu'il ne devrait être.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget contains a lot of positive measures for those at the lower rung of the society. I will not go through all of them extensively, but I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for one specific measure taken in favour of the tea sector which, as we all know, concerns my Constituency No. 13, the tea belt. This proves the kindheartedness and concern for those doing a hard job in extreme conditions but, nevertheless, not financially as they deserve. The winter allowance is, indeed, a great step ahead.

In the name of all the tea planters and their families, I thank the hon. Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. People of Constituency No. 13 are grateful as since 2015 a lot of long overdue works have been completed by the NDU. I must, here, thank the PPS of the constituency, hon. Mrs Boygah...

(Interruptions)

...for her commitment, her devotion to make things happen. From 2015 to date, 47 road projects have been completed, 25 drain projects and 9 amenities projects, a total of 81 projects completed by the NDU and a lot more to come. Many others have been completed by local authorities. I won't enumerate all of them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is being seen to deliver in Rivière des Anguilles and Souillac. That is why my mandates are satisfied.

With these words I will end here, I thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Tarolah!

(8.52 p.m.)

Mr K. Tarolah (Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is with a deep sense of pride and satisfaction that I rise in this august Assembly to speak on the Budget 2018-2019.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all eyes are focused on the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance. He is the people's only hope to bring back the glorious days of economic miracle. He is a man of vision; a man who has the courage to take decisions, a man with a strong sense of commitment and patriotism, a man who can unite multi-ethnic Mauritius and comfort the vulnerable. Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is that leader the country needs to renew progress, peace and happiness.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to congratulate hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth and the whole team of his Ministry as well as everyone who contributed in the preparation of this great job realised to the satisfaction of the nation. The electorate entrusted the leader of the MSM, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, a clear mandate to clean up the mess and give our country a fresh start. Obviously, no doubt this Budget bears out the determination, living up to the trust that has been put on him.

Congratulations hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for your sixth Budget in your political career which you presented on June 2004, April 2005, November 2010, June 2016, June 2017 respectively, and the recent one on 14 June 2018.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is the only Prime Minister among the nine Ministers of Finance that our country has known since independence to have presented two consecutive Budgets as Minister of Finance together with the heavy responsibilities as Prime Minister as well. Let me put it in bold characters that today the great majority of the population of our country do believe in the ability and capacity of our Prime Minister for his determination and devotion of bringing our country to its right destination. He is a man of conviction, a true patriot who deserves the right and respect of each and every one. The hon. Prime Minister never misses a single opportunity in bringing a smile on the face of the citizens of our country. Every time he got the chance to add values to the quality of life of those in need of his attention, he does respond to them passionately.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, starting from the Crossroad through a New Era of Development and Rising to the Challenges of our Ambition, thus Pursuing our Transformative Journey, this Government has reached *la main dans la main* the fourth national Budget of its mandate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, focusing on the youth and their future has always been the priority of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

For the development of a comprehensive approach to equip our young people with the right set of skills and values to integrate the labour market and broaden their career aspirations and pursue their personal dreams, Rs1 billion has been earmarked to target some 14,000 unemployed.

Other measures and approaches have been formulated to tackle youth unemployment. The National Skills Development Programme for technical training and the Youth Service Programme will be launched under the aegis of the Ministry of Youth and Sports for an initial batch of 1,000 young aged 17 to 25.

In addition to the above, thousands of additional Police Constables will be recruited, including 200 Women Police Constables; 38 additional Prison Officers will also be recruited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, building the strategic and modern infrastructure which is essential for an economy and the aim to create physical environment that measures up to the vision of the future of modernity, high income and smart living. Therefore, investing in transport infrastructure over historic programme for modernising our land transport system is moving forward as planned. The Metro Express Project linking Port Louis to Rose Hill is on track and an additional 13km linking Rose Hill to Curepipe will be operational by September 2021.

Investing to upgrade infrastructures across Mauritius is one of the key challenges. Therefore, Government has earmarked Rs12 billion for the next three years for the construction and upgrading of roads. Regarding my parliamentary question addressed to the hon. Minister, a survey has already been carried out and soon works will start for the upgrading of B28 Road from Deux Frères to Bel Air.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the whole population should realise the large amount of money, time and manpower which have been used, and are still being used to remove the extensive damages to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Motorway. The same money, time and manpower would have easily enabled to address road safety challenges.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having the vision to reduce the gap between and town and villages, provision has been made to support over thousands new NDU projects with a project value of Rs5.6 billion for the construction and upgrading of drains, secondary roads and small sports facilities across Mauritius.

Another Rs1.2 billion is provided for Local Government projects and Fire Services which include 40 new scavenging lorries for Municipal and District Councils, and

constructions of new Fire Stations and funeral incinerator at Montagne Blanche, and other places. Provisions have also been made for the construction of a market fair at Bel Air and the Head Office for the Flacq District Council.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 134 of the Budget Speech 2018-2019, the provision of Rs14 m. have been made for the upgrading of various Community Centres across Mauritius and for the construction of a new one at Tranquebar under the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will be more than happy if this amount can be revised. I have myself made a humble request to the hon. Prime Minister as well as the Minister concerned to look into the matter concerning our Community Centres across Mauritius and Social Welfare Centres which do have a sport amenity annexed, but due to lack of fund, are in an impracticable state. Thus, the public is deprived of making use of these facilities.

I will further pledge for the pulling down and reconstruction of the Social Welfare Centre of Bel Air which dates to late 1950s, and seriously needs to have a new modern complex as the village of Bel Air do have a population of about 18,000 inhabitants. And the Social Welfare is often used as refugee centre during cyclones and bad weather. In addition to that, the village of Bel Air do have a *poche de pauvreté* of about 380 houses. And these people have no other option than taking refuge at the Social Welfare Centre of Bel Air.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, securing sustainable development and making significant investment to protect and enhance our environment remains one of the most priorities of this Government. According to the World Risk Report 2017, Mauritius remains the country with the highest exposure to natural hazards and high risks of disaster. Therefore, in order for our citizens and residents, present as well as future, who deserves a country with a sustainable environment that enables a healthy, productive and meaningful life, lots of strategies are being implemented, such as the upgrading of physical environment to achieve a cleaner, greener and safer Mauritius; ensuring a sustainable Solid Waste Management System and the implementation of an effective Disaster Risk Reduction and Response Strategy. So, to address our environmental issues, for the first time, an amount of Rs2 billion is being transferred to the National Environment Fund. This Fund will be revamped to further mobilise funding from international sources such as the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility. In this respect, thanks to hon. Soodhun, a sum of Rs450 m. has been mobilised from the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre, and the Adaptation Fund Board of the United Nations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is walking towards lifting the standards and quality of life of the population by investing in health, sports, education and, most importantly, ensuring that all families have a decent dwelling. In Mauritius, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases related to affluence unhealthy lifestyles and dietary practice are major health concerns. Some of the causes contributing to these diseases include bad habits, lack of physical activities, tobacco use and alcohol abuse. Addressing the social determinants of health that may be fostering NCD is a challenge. Many measures have been taken to address the challenge; blood glucose strips will be placed on the list of controlled commodities under the maximum mark-up system. This should result in a decrease between Rs40 to Rs170 per pack of 50 strips.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, major projects have started and others are expected to start by the end of this year to be completed within 2-3 years. Various actions are in progress; the new ENT Hospital, the new Flacq Teaching Hospital, the new Cancer Centre, Bel Air Medical Clinic, Camp de Masque and Trou d'Eau Douce Community Health Centres are few examples. Our country has a very well developed health system and this Government is on the pathway to enhance the health care system to make it a medical centre of excellence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government continues to fully uphold its public responsibility to create an inclusive and caring society. Mauritius has achieved remarkable economic and social welfare since this Government came to power. The diversification process of this economy is supported by political will of our Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are a number of challenges which this Government is firmly addressing to enable the country to graduate to a high income status. As promised to have 24/7 water supply across the country, today, about 230,000 households have 24/7 access to water supply compared to about 160,000 in 2014.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child World Declaration on Education for all, the vision of our Prime Minister for the special education needs students is to ensure that no child is left outside the education system on the basis of his/her disabilities. This will require specifically designed learning environment and facilities with specialised teachers.

Provision for the setting up of the SEN Authority is warmly accepted. The annual *per capita* grant for teaching aids, utilities, furniture and equipment for SEN students have also

been increased from Rs1,300 to Rs5,200. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being myself a former Special Education Needs Educator, I salute this great initiative of our Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whilst by international standards, absolute poverty is insignificant, in Mauritius, poverty alleviation continues to remain high on our Government Reform Agenda. And pursuing the objective of the quality of life in our society for any family, is having decent dwelling that we can call home. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the main challenges remain the rising demand for social housing as well as the need for improving living conditions for inhabitants on existing housing estates. I, therefore, humbly request our hon. Minister of Housing and Lands to please give a particular attention to improve the quality of life for the inhabitants of Cité CHA at Bel Air and Olivia in respect of ensuring the safety of our citizens. Particularly on our roads, law will be amended to provide for tougher penalties for road traffic offences, including speedy driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs, and dangerous driving. Zero tolerance of alcohol in the blood while driving has been welcomed by everyone. With these strict controls conducted for the safety of all road users, every family may rely on the gradual decrease of unwanted loss of their dear members.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote some sentences from the Budget Speech 2018/2019 which were scored like goals of the FIFA World Cup, and surprised mainly the Members of the Opposite side, who remained speechless. I quote –

“Madam Speaker, let me reassure the population that this Government will not increase the water tariffs.”

Premier goal! Secondly –

“The price of Mogas will be reduced by Rs2.35 per litre, that is, from Rs52 to Rs49.65.”

Troisième –

“The price of Gas oil (Diesel) will be reduced by Rs1.90 per litre, that is, from Rs41.90 to Rs 40.”

And it is not all. In spite of an increase of the price of LPG on the world market, etc. –

“(...) a reduction in the price of a cylinder of LPG of 12 kg by Rs30, that is, from Rs270 to Rs240.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I will rather reassure the public in general that this Government has fully engaged in charting an appropriate strategy to lead the country to a

new development path, a new vision, a new journey which contains a series of underlying strategic trusts, mapping the sustainable development path of Mauritius. It will rest on every citizen to ensure that this collective transformative journey meets with plenty of success and irreversible gains.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Husnoo!

Dr. Husnoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 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: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Wednesday 20 June 2018 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Roopun rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 9.10 p.m, the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Wednesday 20 June 2018 at 11.30 a.m.