



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY 20 JUNE 2018

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

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 13 of 2018

Sitting of Wednesday 20 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)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

VACOAS DETENTION CENTRE - DETAINEE KUSRAJ LUTCHIGADOO - INQUIRY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to the case of detainee Kusraj Lutchigadoo, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to –
 - (i) where matters stand as to the inquiry initiated into the absence of the said detainee from the Vacoas Detention Centre, on 23 April 2018, indicating if same is indicative of any infiltration by the mafia of certain units of the Mauritius Police Force, and
 - (ii) if any link has been established with the death in Police cell of PC Hurreechurn, on 28 October 2016, and
- (b) state if Government proposes to set up a *Police des Polices*.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Madam Speaker, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 30 March 2018, during the course of an ADSU operation, Mr Kusraj Lutchigadoo was arrested at Triolet whilst in possession of 1.1 kg of synthetic cannabinoid suspected to be used in the manufacturing of synthetic drugs. Several other items comprising, among others, green tea, cernol acetone and test benzene, and a sum of about Rs300,000 as well as a car of make BMW, model M6, were secured.

On 02 April 2018, the suspect appeared before the District Court of Pamplemousses and 3 provisional charges were lodged against him, namely –

- (i) drug dealing with aggravating circumstances;
- (ii) holding materials for the purpose of using them for the unlawful production of dangerous drugs, and
- (iii) money laundering.

He was remanded to Police cell and detained at Vacoas Detention Centre.

As Mr Kusraj Lutchigadoo was involved in a high profile drug case, I am informed that ADSU gave strict instructions to the Police Officers posted thereat that no person, except his legal adviser, should be allowed to visit or communicate with the detainee.

Madam Speaker, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that as per CCTV footages of 23 April 2018, secured by the Central Criminal Investigation Department (CCID), there is indication that Mr Kusraj Lutchigadoo was wrongfully allowed to leave the Detention Centre by some Police Officers posted thereat. Consequently, an enquiry by the CCID was initiated in view of the seriousness of that incident.

As regards part (a) (i) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that the enquiry is still ongoing.

Madam Speaker, the Police Officers concerned with the incident have been interrogated by the CCID and an interim report was forwarded to the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) on 18 May 2018 for advice.

On 21 May 2018, the DPP had advised that the two detainees, namely Mr Kusraj Lutchigadoo and one S. D. as well as three Police Officers, be provisionally charged for the offence of ‘Conspiracy to do a wrongful act’ in breach of Section 109 (1) of the Criminal Code (Supplementary) Act. Consequently, on 22 May 2018, the three Police Officers were arrested. On the same day, they appeared before the District Court of Curepipe and bailed out. They have been interdicted from duty on the same day.

Furthermore, during the course of the enquiry, four other persons were arrested in connection with the case. Three of them have been bailed out and one remanded to jail.

I am also informed that ICAC is currently investigating into a case of money laundering and corruption related to drug trafficking. The case relates to an anonymous allegation of corruption against Police Officers posted at the Vacoas Detention Centre who had, on 23 April 2018, allegedly allowed detainee Kusraj Lutchigadoo to leave his cell.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that there is no indication of any infiltration in the Police as alleged by the hon. Member of the Opposition.

However, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that there have been cases where some Police Officers have been involved in drug related cases. These cases are being looked into.

I am further informed that whenever Police is apprised of any suspicious involvement of any person including Police Officers in drug related cases, ADSU immediately institutes an enquiry. Their movements and activities are closely monitored. Upon obtaining sufficient evidence of their involvement in drug-related activities, the suspects, irrespective of their status, are arrested and investigation is instituted.

Madam Speaker, furthermore, there are instances where it is suspected that Police Operations could have been jeopardised due to information leaked prior to intervention on the ground. However, these suspicions could not be ascertained so far.

As regards part (a) (ii) of the question, I am informed that no link has been established between the Lutchigadoo case and the death of PC Hurreechurn.

Madam Speaker, as regards part (b) of the question, I would like to inform the House that for quite some time, criticisms have been levelled against the Complaints Investigation Bureau (CIB) of the Police, which was a unit within the Police Force, being entrusted with investigating misconduct by Police Officers. It was felt that the CIB would be biased since Police Officers would be investigating misconduct by their peers. There were also criticisms against the functioning of the Police Complaints Division of the National Human Rights Commission. In that context, the Independent Police Complaints Commission was set up under Independent Police Complaints Commission Act 2016 and is in operation since 09 April 2018. One of the functions of the Commission is to investigate into any complaint made by any person or on his behalf against any act, conduct or omission of a Police Officer in the discharge of his functions, other than a complaint of an act of corruption or a money laundering offence.

In particular, the Commission has the power to investigate into the cause of death of a person who died whilst the person was in Police custody or as a result of Police action.

In these circumstances, I see no reason for the setting up of a *Police des Polices*.

Madam Speaker, I wish to conclude by forcefully affirming that this Government will not tolerate any black sheep in the Police Force, and, more particularly, I would not tolerate any such thing. In our resolve to fight the drug mafia, nobody connected to the drug barons and their criminal activities will be spared.

The Nation knows how I did not hesitate to put my life at stake to fight the drug mafia in the eighties and today the Prime Minister and this Government has taken the bull by its

horns and no threat or subversive action by the drug barons and their accomplices will stop us in our crusade.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor firstly, regarding the timeline for the discovery and reporting of the escapade in Vacoas Detention Centre, I understand that the escapade - that's the right word - happened on 23 April, the birthday party on 04 May, it was only on 10 May that the matter was reported by the Detention Centre to the CCID, why the two weeks' delay in reporting the matter to the CCID?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I suppose the Police can give me the answer as to why it took two weeks. I understand that this is also being investigated by the Police, why was this delay.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, that could be indicative of the fact that the CCTV system was not being regularly monitored and, what I understand, and perhaps his collaborators will say that, in fact, it was very rarely monitored and it was by chance that the Inspector looked at it two weeks later, found it, and to his credit on that bit, at least, reported it to the CCID.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I personally believe that it should have been monitored daily and instructions have been given through the Commissioner of Police that this should be done every day. I understand that the CCTV was viewed with a delay, it is true, and this also is being investigated.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, may I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor the question of going zone at the Vacoas Detention Centre, it is quite clear that these two alleged drug barons were being given VIP treatment, people coming, their parents coming, having a birthday party, they were regularly given telephones to call, etc. Has the video system been reviewed since the finding of this occurrence for the last so many days? Can he tell us how many days it was reviewed and whether any of what I am saying has, in fact, been identified by the Police, the CCID?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I understand all these lackings are being investigated by the Police. I don't know whether there was VIP treatment and whether people were allowed freely to communicate with the detainee, only the inquiry will tell us what was the real situation.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, from my inquiry, it looks more like a VIP guesthouse than a detention centre. Is the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor aware that both detainee Lutchigadoo and detainee Ashish Dayal did not actually every night sleep in their cell, but they were allowed to sleep in a common room because apparently they are claustrophobic or asthmatic or something? Has that been reported to him?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: This has not been reported - to him, the hon. Leader of the Opposition said, to me?

Mr X. L. Duval: To you?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: *Non.*

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, when the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor replied to Parliamentary Question B/466, I am sure he will give a different answer now. He stated that there was no requirement for a security audit of the VIP guesthouse, Detention Centre in Vacoas. Will he now change his mind and tell us that there is a requirement given that the monitoring is not sure, but given also, Madam Speaker, to a very important point, and we talk often about the kitchen, but here, it is a very serious matter. The cameras are not everywhere in the Detention Centre. There is no camera in certain very important parts of the Detention Centre like the kitchen. So, there is a need to review the security system in that guesthouse, in that Detention Centre and everywhere else.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I will request the Commissioner of Police to do the needful because I think it is important and the whole situation must be reviewed, but we are waiting for the result of the inquiry to see what are the loopholes which should be corrected.

Mr X. L. Duval: May I just suggest, therefore, that at least the video system should be everywhere in the whole Detention Centre including the famous kitchen? Can I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, we hear now there is another side to the saga, that the telephones of Mr Lutchigadoo, one of them actually has been erased whilst in Police custody, whether he has been informed of that? Can he tell the House how it can be possible that an exhibit under high security is erased by the owner presumably who is in some Detention Centre somewhere?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I have been informed of this, this morning and I asked the Commissioner of Police. He told me that inquiry is still on even on this matter. But I asked him why the thing was not secured immediately. But the problem is that the detainee

somehow got away and there was some time before he was caught again and he might have done that himself.

Mr X. L. Duval: I suppose that is also under inquiry. There is a lot of things that the Commissioner of Police does not know. Madam Speaker, I am going to come to Hureechurn case. I answered myself when the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor was not there on this question. Now, Mr Hureechurn, the link is Mr Ashish Dayal. But Mr Ashish Dayal has shown firstly how he can take control of the Vacoas Detention Centre, and secondly, how he can recruit Police Officers to become drug barons or whatever they become. I want to ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor this question: whether it is not now possible or even likely that in the Moka Detention Centre, which is a lower security detention centre than the Vacoas one, somehow there was infiltration of that centre and that PC Hureechurn who apparently hanged himself in a sitting position, whether, in fact, the inquiry should not be reopen and they should try to find the link between Mr Dayal, Police Officers, detention centres and the death of PC Hureechurn in his cell, I think, in 2016?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, the Commissioner of Police told me this morning that inquiry is going on to clarify even this matter.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I would like to ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether he was told that when they found the body of PC Hureechurn, they did not take him to the hospital straightaway, they left him there for quite some time. They were allegedly waiting for the SAMU to come. But everybody knows that the Detention Centre is right next door to Moka Eye Hospital. How long was PC Hureechurn left there when they found him before he was taken to the hospital? Which hospital he was taken to? And apparently he was already dead when he arrived at the hospital. The time lapse is very important in this case.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I don't have this information about what the time lapse was, maybe I can be informed...

(Interruptions)

I don't know. The inquiry is still on, on all this. But if there is anything clearer I would like to have it and I will tell the House.

Mr X. L. Duval: I would have thought that the Police would have inquired into that also, but I don't know if that has been done when the MCIT inquired. Madam Speaker, may I ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor whether the Police inquiry is still going on? Has there been a judicial inquiry? Is he aware?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: I don't know whether the judicial inquiry has taken place, but it should take place, I know. But maybe they are waiting for the conclusion of the inquiry on all these matters.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I remind the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor that it has been nearly two years since the death of PC Hureechurn and I think it is a good thing that the inquiry should be reopened, but at least we should have concluded on the previous inquiry.

Madam Speaker, coming now to the cases of infiltration by the Police, it seems quite clear that there has been infiltration, that Mr Ashish Dayal has been allowed or has been able to recruit at least three Policemen. PC Hureechurn himself died. Three Police Prosecutors were found recently with mobile phones, two officers of an elite Police Unit, VIPSU, one into drugs, the other one into horse doping or whatever. So, Madam Speaker, we have not found the main culprits in the Gro Derek case, the main witnesses. Navin Kistnah case...

Madam Speaker: What is your question?

Mr X. L. Duval: I need to show...

Madam Speaker: Yes, but a little bit too long.

Mr X. L. Duval: Navin Kistnah case, of course, and also, Madam Speaker, refusal of foreign authorities to collaborate with Mauritius Police, like Reunion and even Madagascar refusing to collaborate with our Police Force. Is not that indicative that there is something very wrong in the Police and that a major reform of the Police is now required so that we can ensure - despite all the equipment that apparently will come to the cost of billions of rupees, in fact, it is the Police Officers, their training, their integrity which is at stake now.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I understand that they have not refused to collaborate. Maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition has been wrongly informed. But that there are some corrupt people in the Police Force, I, myself, am convinced of that because there have been so many cases against the Police. But the problem in this country is that whenever, in the case of civil servants or Police Officers, they are caught doing something that is illegal, inquiry is held, prosecution takes place, and they are suspended immediately. Now, this suspension goes on for years, some 8, 10, 12 years, and during all this time, they are cashing their pay every month. And I know, personally, that some of them have been working outside. So, they are getting double pay. This is where one has to see to it, because cases drag on in Courts for years that in such cases, priority should be given because public money is being wasted. I agree that we should correct many things; we must look into the whole system of the

functioning of the Police and more particularly recruitment, that the right people should be recruited.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, coming back to the Reunion case - I will give way in a moment - the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor stated in a question here in Parliament that they had asked for collaboration with Reunion Police and that no reply or no agreement had been received. Has that been changed? In the Mike Brasse case, I think it was. Did the Reunion Police eventually collaborate with us to find the links in Mauritius?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, there has been no refusal of collaboration. It is true there has been a request and that there has been no answer at all.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr Ganoo: The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor has agreed himself that the footage was reviewed several days afterwards, and he has proposed that it should be done every day. The footage revealed everything on that day; at what time the 4x4 came in, how did the Police Officer give the keys to the prisoner, he went out, he released his colleague prisoner, both of them went out and a third party came inside the cell to replace Mr Lutchigadoo. All this was seen. Does not the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor think that, in fact, the monitoring should be done every minute, ongoing monitoring, so that the Police authorities can know what is going on in the detention centres, and this should be connected to a special unit at Line Barracks, in fact? This is my question.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, I have already answered this. I have said I personally agree that monitoring should be done every day and this must be enforced on the Police.

Madam Speaker: Is that your last question?

Mr X. L. Duval: I have two or three last questions.

Madam Speaker: Go on then, please.

Mr X. L. Duval: I wanted to ask the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor a very important question. Now, this person, Lutchigadoo, went to all this trouble to bribe the Police Officers, to get accomplices, to get a car to come and pick him up. Has the Police inquiry determined yet why he left the detention centre? Was it to meet someone? Was it to do something illegal, legal? Do we know? I do not believe at all that it was just *pour prendre l'air*. Why did this person go to all this trouble to leave the detention centre for an hour or two? What was he doing then?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, it is clear in this case that the Police Officers who were there, responsible, were accomplices of this fellow. They allowed him to go, and they must have been having some interest in it. Otherwise, they would not have allowed him to go.

Mr X. L. Duval: Have we found why he wanted to go? What did he do when he went?

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Police are still inquiring.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have one last question.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bhagwan: Madam Speaker, thank you. The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor has just stated that Government will leave no stone unturned with regard to discipline, fight against these drug barons. But there is a saying, *l'exemple doit venir d'en haut*. In this old issue of Brasse case, the Commissioner of Police has given a very bad example. So, has the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor been able to talk to the Commissioner of Police, take him to task? For once, I think that he should have been sacked as Commissioner of Police. He is not giving the proper example and *l'exemple doit venir d'en haut*.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Many people here deserve to be sacked. So often, they are irresponsible, make all sorts of allegations without foundation. The Commissioner of Police, it is true he is responsible, he is at the head. But he was not present there. Can he be present everywhere and monitoring everything? Well, I do not agree with this hon. Member. There has been nothing on the Commissioner of Police on which I can blame him personally. And I do not see any reason why he should be sacked.

Mr X. L. Duval: Last question. Madam Speaker, concerning the *Police des Polices* and the so-called Independent Police Complaints Commission, I think there is some mistaken purpose. It is not the same thing. The *Police des Polices* would look after discipline, would even carry out alcotests. God knows if there is a problem of drinking in our Police Stations! They would carry out narco tests, they would enforce discipline, they would perhaps report directly to the Minister of Interior. There are issues, serious issues about Police integrity, corruption, discipline in the Police Force, and the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor appears to be willing to change things. Would not it be the fantastic way of changing things: to put a supervisory body to look at discipline and code of conduct and everything, and how these are being enforced in the Police Force? And the best way internationally to do that is by a *Police des Polices*.

Sir Anerood Jugnauth: Well, as I have said, the inquiry is still on in this case. Let us wait we get the result and then we will decide. I do not see anything wrong with having a *Police des Polices*. So, we will consider that at the proper time.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

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

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded

Question put and agreed to.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

FERME MARINE DE MAHEBOURG LTD - FLOATING CAGES - INCIDENT

The Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr P. Koonjoo): Madam Speaker, with your permission, I wish to make the following statement.

At Adjournment time, at the sitting of the Assembly on 15 May 2018, the Fourth Member for Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, hon. Henry, raised the issue of an incident which occurred at an aquaculture farm in Mahebourg. The hon. Member has more specifically enquired whether there was any threat to the marine environment as a result of the incident.

Madam Speaker, I am informed that on Saturday, 26 May 2018 at 0630 hours, during the routine check by the workers of the *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg Ltd*, it was observed that the net of one of the floating cages of the company located at one of its sites at Pointe aux Feuilles had been cut at three distinct places. Each cut was one metre in length and was a straight one with no sign of tagging.

The *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg Ltd* has, *inter alia*, informed my Ministry that the case has been reported to the Vieux Grand Port Police Station as there is a suspicion of vandalism. A police enquiry is underway.

The National Coast Guard reported on site and took photographs of the site. I am also informed that similar incidents have been reported in the past by the *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg Ltd*.

Madam Speaker, with regard to any likely adverse impact on the marine environment, I wish to reassure the House that several physical preconditions are required for the spawning of the red drum in the wild, which include an extended photoperiod and appropriate temperature which is not the case in Mauritius for the species of this fish.

As to the fish which went missing from the floating cages would not be able to spawn, no adverse impact is likely to occur on the marine environment. Besides, I wish to point out that since the setting up of the cages, no spawning or red drum has been observed in the cages or in the vicinity or thereof.

I thank you, Madam Speaker.

PUBLIC BILLS

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded, the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill (No. VIII of 2018) was read the third time and passed.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Husnoo!

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, to start with, please allow me to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for the presentation of the Budget, which caters for the needs of the people from all walks of life. We are at a crucial transitional stage of our development, where we are aiming to move from the middle-income country to a high-income country. It is imperative to go through a creative and progressive transformation to achieve our objective. It has been rightly pointed out that there is need to explore new pathways and new poles of economic growth. It is important to be driven by creativity and innovation. In addition to development, this Budget, Madam Speaker, has also been given particular attention to alleviation of poverty to pave the way for a balanced and sustainable development of the country.

Madam Speaker, before I proceed with my speech, I would like to make a few comments about the remark made by the Leader of the Opposition a couple of days ago. The Leader of the Opposition made a few remarks, which, I think, leaves a lot to be desired, not to say, it was cheap. Firstly, he talks about disappearing babies. Just a cheap comment, without any substance, Madam Speaker. Cheap!

During my career, Madam Speaker, I have attended hundreds and hundreds of deliveries in the delivery room. As you are aware, when a baby is being delivered, all the attention are focused on the mother and the baby in the delivery room. In an operating theatre, where you have about 10 people (doctors, nurses, attendant and everybody), how could one person take a baby who is newly born, hide the baby in front of everybody in the room and disappear with the baby. I find that impossible. How can the Leader of the Opposition say something like that!

Secondly, the Leader of the Opposition talked about the high failure rate among those newly qualified doctors, about the pre-exam, that is, the exam taken before the pre-registration, the prerequisite exam. I would like to ask a question, Madam Speaker. Before taking the pre-registration exam, we all know you have to take about 5 to 6 years Undergraduate Medical Studies. So, those students who took the exam last year and the year before, when did they go to medical schools? They must have been there, five or six years ago. I would like to ask the Leader of the Opposition who was in power at that time: who allowed these students to go for this training? He is criticising us now, apparently because the students are not up to standard. But who allowed these students to go in the first place, five or six years ago? Was the Leader Opposition not a Senior Member of that Government? He was! He allowed these students to go and now he is blaming us when these students failed their exam, which I find again impossible to understand.

In fact, now, we are trying to take measures to try to solve the problem. We have restricted the number of universities where a student can go and train. We have set up the pre-exam and the post-exam as well. I am offering these students remedial teaching for full-time training two days per week at the MIH and three days is in the hospital for clinical training. We are trying to find a solution. He just criticised when he let them go in the first place, but we are trying to find a solution.

Madam Speaker, he mentioned about broken equipment. When I came, Madam Speaker, I asked in the Ministry when was the latest inventory of the sophisticated equipment done. The last one that was done was quite a few years ago, Madam Speaker.

Following that, I set up a Committee to make a proper inventory of all our medical equipment, not just to see the state of the equipment, but to see how old the equipment is. Because in this way, we can prepare, we can be proactive, we can decide, okay, this equipment has been there for a long time, it may break down at any time and we can try to prepare and buy the equipment before anything happens. So, we have done all this. The Leader of the Opposition was criticising us for that. But there was no inventory when he was there.

Just to give you a case in point, Madam Speaker. I take the linear apparatus that is used to treat cancer. This linear apparatus was brought a long time ago, as I mentioned in this House before. It should have been replaced 10 years ago, but it was not replaced 10 years ago. And the Leader of the Opposition was in Government at that time. He did not do anything about it. Now the patients are suffering and he dared to come and criticise us now for broken equipment, while he did not do anything about it, and he was in Government at that time.

One last thing he mentioned was about the death rate is increasing. I have checked the death rate, Madam Speaker. The death rate in Mauritius in 2016 was 8.1 per thousand population. And the death rate in 2017 was 8.1%, Madam Speaker, the same. But what I find surprising, if the death rate has been static for the last 2 years, if it has been increasing before, the Leader of the Opposition is he not aware that we have an ageing population and when you have an ageing population, you are going to get a lot of chronic diseases and that may increase the death rate. But, unfortunately, he kept quiet about it, he conveniently forgot about the ageing population and trying to blame this Government for increasing death rate in the population.

I have gone through the statistics as well. Just to give you an idea, Madam Speaker. I am going to give you the statistic from the World Health Organisation and from the World Bank. The crude death rate in Mauritius, as I said, is 8.1 and it is being rounded to 8 according to the WHO Report. That was for 2017. The crude death rate in UK, it is the same, 8 per thousand population. The crude death rate for USA is 8, Madam Speaker, per thousand population. So, we are not so bad. I have been trying to compare our death rate with UK, with

USA for 2017, it is 8, 8, 8. And now he is accusing us the death rate is going up. And by the way, this crude death rate is 8 and we have to take that into consideration. What is our *per capita* expenditure on health, Madam Speaker? Just to give you an idea, it is very important. The amount of money we spent on one person per year. In Mauritius, we spend about USD477; in UK USD3,900; in USA USD9,300. Despite the fact that we are spending USD477 compared to USD3,000 and USD9,000 in UK and USA, but our mortality rate is the same 8, 8, 8. So, we are not doing too badly.

So, that's why I was a bit upset. When I hear the Leader of the Opposition coming and criticising us, blaming us for increasing death rate which does not stand to scrutiny at all. I am talking about the crude death rate. I have looked at the infant mortality rate, Madam Speaker. The infant mortality rate in 2016 was 11.6; in 2017: 11.7 and this is the best result for the last 10 years, Madam Speaker, and he dared to criticise us.

Apart from this, I have looked at the neo-natal mortality rate. The neo-natal mortality rate is the rate of children who pass away in the first four weeks of life. I have looked at the under-five mortality, that is, children below five years who pass away. And I can assure you, Madam Speaker, our mortality rate in Mauritius, the neo-natal mortality rate and the under-five mortality rate has at present reached the target that the SDG Target which is set for 2030. But we have reached the target now. And then we are being blamed for increasing death rate. That is why I can't understand, when I say it is cheap remark, it is cheap remark from what he said.

Anyway, if you will allow me, Madam Speaker, to come back to my speech, let me reassure the House that the measure announced in the Budget 2018/2019 is one of sustainable development. It is not just "*enn bidze électoraliste*", as we have been hearing from the Opposition. It is not a simple accounting exercise, but a budget prepared with a commitment to improve the quality of life of all our citizens irrespective of social status, colour, creed or religion.

Since coming into office in December 2014, this Government has shown its commitment and determination to improve the lots of the Mauritian people and especially of those who are at the lower rung of the ladder. I am just going to mention a few examples, because so many measures have been mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister. I am going to mention just a few, Madam Speaker.

As an example, if we take the casting of roof slab for those people earning less than Rs10,000 per month, the grant has been increased from Rs75,000 to Rs100,000. For those earning Rs10,001 to Rs15,000, the maximum grant has been increased from Rs40,000 to Rs70,000 and for people earning between Rs15,000 and Rs20,000, who were not eligible for any grant before, this Government is giving them a maximum grant of Rs50,000, Madam Speaker.

As far as Housing is concerned, the Prime Minister has said it the Government aims to build 6,800 new social housing units over the next 2 years for a project value of Rs12.7 billion.

Coming to water supply, now, as we know, 227,400 households are having water supply on a 24-hour basis compared to 166,000 in 2014. In view of the climate change and water being a scarce resource, we are encouraging the population to invest in rain water harvesting. They will be allowed to deduct the total cost of installing such a system from their taxable income. Even under the Water Tank Scheme, the income eligibility threshold has been increased from 25,000 to 30,000, Madam Speaker.

As far as pipe laying is concerned, the Government will replace 300 kms of pipes and build five service reservoirs to cater for the increasing needs of our citizens and the hotels as well.

Madam Speaker, we cannot think of achieving economic growth without the participation and integration of women. This Government is giving a panoply of measures to help women who are the pillars of the society. To this end, the Government has increased the current one-off grant under the Crèche Scheme from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 to promote investment in crèches and double deduction under corporate tax, Madam Speaker. This measure will enable, women to take employment without having to worry about childcare.

Furthermore, 250 Government officials are being trained across Ministries to deal with gender issues as stated in our Government programme. And very importantly, Madam Speaker in addition, the Employment Rights Act will be amended so that women reckoning less than 12 months' service will be entitled to remuneration during their 14 weeks of maternity leave.

In the Government programme, we took the pledge to care for the most vulnerable ones and we have honoured our obligations. We are moving towards an ageing population, as I mentioned before and the Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, in his wisdom, has

provided for elderly care centres at Bambous and Chemin Grenier. There will be specialised training for carers and the monthly grant to employees of residential care homes and institutions who are caring for our elderly with disabilities have been increased from 6,071 to 8,500, that is, by 40%.

Madam Speaker, the road to economic development and raising our standard of living rests on providing world class education to our youngsters. In this context, Rs17.2 billion has been allocated to education sector to undertake the reforms and improve educational infrastructure. To encourage students to pursue tertiary education, the income tax deduction has been raised from Rs135,000 to Rs200,000 when the students are studying abroad and from Rs135,000 to Rs175,000 if the students are studying at the local university. And very importantly, as we know, the students with special needs benefit from taxi fares if they were attending tertiary institutions. The Government is now extending this facility to those students with special needs that are attending secondary schools as well as primary schools.

Also, the annual per capital grant for teaching aids, utilities, furniture and equipment for students with Special Education Needs has been increased fourfold, Madam Speaker,

Non-Communicable Disease, Madam Speaker, constitutes about 80% of the disease burden in Mauritius. Only 23% of the adult population undertake regular exercise. To improve the quality of life and well-being of our citizens, the Government is coming up with a number of measures to encourage the population to undertake regular physical exercise. The first National Sport and Physical Activity Policy for Mauritius will be established next month with the aim of building healthier citizens, happier communities and a stronger nation. In this context, Madam Speaker, a number of projects will be implemented in the next few months.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am going to say a few words about my Ministry. We all agree, we cannot have good economic development without a healthy population. To this end, the Government is investing massively in the health sector over the next few years.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we have already started the construction of the ENT Hospital. The construction of the New Cancer Hospital will start next month. At Côte d'Or, we are developing a Medical Hub consisting of a New Eyes Hospital, a National Health Laboratory Service Centre, a New Warehouse for medical products and the Ayush Hospital for Ayurvedic Treatment.

Madam Speaker, this massive investment in the health project is unprecedented. I need not emphasise that in the process of upgrading our primary health sector, four new mediclinics are going to be built. Additionally, construction of several health centers will be completed this year and will be fully operational by early next year.

Madam Speaker, the old colonial structure of ENT Hospital, which was subject to leakage during rainy weather, is being replaced by a new and modern specialised hospital with the assistance of the Government of India. During the official visit of the President of India, in the context of the 50th Independence Anniversary Celebration of our country, he proceeded with the laying of the first stone. The new ENT Hospital, which is going to take about 15 months, will be ready by March 2019.

As you may be aware, the number of cancer cases is increasing worldwide, Madam Speaker. In 2016, 2,607 new cases were diagnosed in Mauritius. Compared to 2015, total number of new cases has increased by 4.7%, with an increase of 10.1% among the female population. At the level of my Ministry, many different measures are being taken to prevent cancer.

Firstly, my Ministry has embarked on a wide range of breast cancer screening programme in Mauritius and Rodrigues -

1. The Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) vaccination for students from 9 to 10 years old for the prevention of cervical cancer is being implemented according to internal standards.
2. We are starting Hepatitis C Treatment which is going to prevent liver cancer, Madam Speaker.
3. We are also starting a pilot project for the detection of cancer of the Colon.
4. Last but not least, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has made provision in the Budget for the acquisition of a fully-fledged mobile caravan to promote early detection of breast and cervical cancer. Madam Speaker, the intent is to bring the service to the doorstep of the patient to reach the different communities rather than waiting for the patient to come to the hospital when it is too late. We are going to go to the community for preventive measure so that if they do have a cancer, we try to get it early, Madam Speaker. What could be a better example of a caring Government?

As you are aware, the facilities for cancer treatment at Victoria Hospital are limited. That is why, Madam Speaker, we are going for a New Cancer Project at an estimated of Rs1.5 billion. It will be endowed with the latest high technology equipment namely, 2 Linear Accelerators, PET CT Scan, Mammography and Brachytherapy. It will provide for Intensive Care Unit with proper isolation ward, Associated Radiology Unit, Onco-Gynaecology, Bone Marrow Transplant for Leukemia treatment as well as Stem Cells Transplant Unit. It is expected that the Cancer Centre will become a reference for cancer treatment at regional level.

Madam Speaker, it is no secret that there is no teaching hospital in Mauritius which is a major obstacle to enhancing the performance of our doctors. The present Flacq Regional Hospital is located in a congested area. With emerging development, it is high time to provide for a new Regional Hospital. In view of the need to provide for training, as announced in the Budget Speech, a new Teaching Hospital will be built in the Flacq region. It will be a state-of-the art Regional Hospital with, at least, 500 beds with facilities available for Undergraduate and Postgraduate teaching. Madam Speaker, it is the first teaching hospital that we are going to have and for me it is a ground-breaking event in the history of the medical profession here in Mauritius.

Necessary fund and support from Saudi Fund, Kuwait Fund and BADEA have been obtained to move ahead with the project. With the implementation of the project, our country will be well positioned to play a lead role at the regional level in respect of quality health care and medical training.

As regards to the Côte d'Or Medical Hub, Landscope has already agreed to provide the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life 50 acres of land for the different projects. The Ministry is finalising its procedures to start the New Eyes Hospital. The present Moka Eyes Hospital cannot cope with the increasing number of patients requiring eyes treatment. We have decentralised to Souillac Hospital and now, Madam Speaker, we are coming with a New Eyes Hospital with proper facilities at Côte d'Or. In line with our Blindness Prevention Programme, we are also decentralising the ophthalmological service to all the Regional Hospital including Rodrigues as well.

Madam Speaker, to provide good clinical care, we need to have good back-up facilities. What I mean by that is a good Laboratory and Pharmaceutical services. That is why, Madam Speaker, we are coming with a new National Health Laboratory Service Centre.

The concept of the National Health Laboratory Service Centre is the design of a 3 in 1 Lab Centre consisting of three distinct wings, namely a Public Health Lab Wing, National Clinical Reference Laboratory Wing and National Blood Service Wing.

The purpose of this National Health Laboratory Service Centre is to improve our infrastructural deficiencies which have been highlighted by expert mission and to provide a Biosafety level 3 Lab as recommended by the International Health Regulations.

Madam Speaker, almost every year, the Ministry of Health is criticised by the Audit Department for the poor conditions in which medicines are kept at the Central Store. I have to admit that the environment in which expensive drugs to the tune of Rs1 billion are kept are not necessarily as per international norms, that is, it's not in a properly controlled environment. With the new warehouse, medicine will be kept in the best condition, and we will have a modern drug management inventory to monitor our stocks so as to prevent stock-out and unnecessary waste due to expired drugs.

During my official mission to India in October 2017, I had discussion with Shri Shripad Naik, the Minister of State for Ayush, and it was agreed, Madam Speaker, that the Government of India will extend assistance for an Ayush Hospital in Mauritius to provide comprehensive Ayurvedic treatment as an alternative therapy. At present, we are providing Ayurvedic treatment on an outpatient basis at Victoria, SSRN, Plaine Verte and Belvedere Mediclinics.

Madam Speaker, all these four projects, that is, the new Eye Hospital, the new Lab, the National Warehouse and the Ayush Hospital will, as I mentioned, be situated at Côte d'Or. And in the same vein, if I may be allowed to add, my Ministry is in negotiation with the Chinese Embassy in Mauritius for the setting up of a centre for Chinese traditional medicines as well.

Madam Speaker, apart from these major projects, the Government has earmarked Rs100 m. for the launching of the E-Health project. We have been talking about it for a long time, and now we are going to start the project. We will be starting this project at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and its satellite primary health care centres. Eventually, we will roll the project to all the Regional Hospitals and also Rodrigues and Agalega.

I would also like to inform the House that the Government has earmarked Rs10 m. each for the Master Plan for SSRNH and Victoria Hospitals. The infrastructure of these hospitals is made up of old buildings scattered all over and does not have a good structural

design of a modern hospital. As we know, parking facilities for both patients and staffs is a daily hassle, Madam Speaker. The Master Plan will cater for a hospital with an infrastructure of an international standard. May I also add that we have done a similar Master Plan for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Rodrigues.

Apart from these major infrastructural projects, Madam Speaker, there are many additional projects in the different hospitals, namely a Neurosurgical project at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, a Stroke Unit at Victoria Hospital, a Gastroenterology Unit at Victoria Hospital - these are all new units coming up -, Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Victoria Hospital and a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit. So far, in Mauritius, we do not have one Paediatric Intensive Care Unit, Madam Speaker. We do not have one unit specialised for children, and we are going to set the first one. Money has been earmarked in the Budget for that, Madam Speaker. And we are going to set that at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, not to forget a Dialysis Unit at Montagne Longue Hospital.

Madam Speaker, since the detection of the first HIV/AIDS case in 1987 up to December 2016, there have been 6,671 HIV/AIDS cases. In 2017, there were 268 cases. Effective measures have been taken for rapid test of HIV/AIDS infection. Arrangements have been made for a mobile caravan to carry out tests in different parts of the country. Again, same philosophy, Madam Speaker. We are trying to reach out to the affected communities in their surroundings, in their milieu. That's the best way we can diagnose these patients early and start treating them. Significant progress has been made for reducing mother to child infection, as far as HIV is concerned. A comprehensive 2017-2021 National HIV Action Plan has been elaborated with the following objectives -

- i. diagnose 90% of persons living with HIV. At present, I think we have diagnosed maybe about 76%. Our aim is to diagnose 90% of persons living with HIV;
- ii. to start 90% of those diagnosed on anti-retroviral combination, and
- iii. to achieve 90% viral suppression on anti-retroviral treatment.

This is the aim of the international committee, Madam Speaker, ONUSIDA, as far as HIV management is concerned.

As regards Hepatitis C, because about 90% of our HIV positive patients are Hepatitis C positive as well, my Ministry is presently providing treatment for about 100 patients every year. In view of the considerable reduction in the cost of new generic drugs, consideration is

being given to extend the treatment for all Hepatitis C patients fulfilling the therapeutic criteria laid down by our specialists.

Madam Speaker, as you may be aware, a High-level Drug Control and HIV Advisory Council chaired by the Prime Minister has been set up. My Ministry is collaborating with the formulation of a Drug Control Master plan. The Harm Reduction Unit is currently implementing the overall programme of Methadone Substitution Therapy, counselling and sensitisation on the drug problem.

Recently, as you are aware, Madam Speaker, we had a major problem and still having with synthetic drugs. About a month ago, we had a high-level meeting to discuss the prevention and treatment of this problem. We are opening two wards. The first one is at Montage Longue Hospital to treat patients - I am talking about synthetic drugs - under 18 years of age, and the second one is at Mahebourg Hospital for those above 18 years old; again, both wards to treat patients suffering, who are taking synthetic drugs.

We are also developing outpatient treatment facilities in all our regional hospitals and some NGO facilities as well, because we have discussed with the NGOs, we have got their collaboration. We are going to open treatment facilities at the regional hospitals and with the NGOs, in their own facilities, to cater for these patients as well. And as mentioned in the Budget, a provision of Rs10 m. has been made for a new Synthetic Drugs Prevention Programme to sensitise the students workforce and the community at large on the harmful effects of synthetic drugs.

Madam Speaker, in recent decades, the world has been facing a pandemic of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD). NCD is the leading cause of death, disease and disability worldwide. Loss of productivity as a result of NCD is significant. It is estimated that for every 10% increase in NCD prevalence, the economic growth is reduced by 0.5%. A major programme comprising sensitisation coupled with screening and treatment at NCD Clinics is underway. An assessment exercise of our NCD programme with the assistance of WHO will soon be finalised to consolidate our approach to control NCD.

The increase in cardio vascular disease is a major cause for concern. In 2015, 872 cardiac surgeries were effected and the number has escalated to 1,445 in 2016. Cardiac interventions were undertaken at the Cardiac Centre of Pamplemousses. To cope with the increase in workload, arrangements have been made for the extension of the Cardiac Centre at Victoria Hospital.

As far as patients with renal problems are concerned, we have about 1,300 patients suffering from renal disease benefitting from dialysis session. According to statistics available, dialysis sessions have increased from 2012 to 2016 by about 5%. For this reason, the Human Tissue (Removal, Preservation and Transplant) Legislation was enacted on 01 June 2018. This will lay the foundation for organ transplant from unrelated persons and to have recourse to use of organ from cadaveric sources to save lives as well.

To improve the standard and to uplift quality of care, there is need for Continuing Professional Development (CDP). Emphasis is being laid on Continuous Professional Development. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been drawn with the University of Edinburgh in Scotland for Post graduate training of our Specialists. It is contemplated to enter into discussion with All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and with the Government of India to extend facilities for specialisation in priority fields.

Under the Convention Cadre of *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU)* of Reunion Island, arrangements have been made for medical personnel of SAMU and the Emergency Department to follow Postgraduate training in Emergency Medicine. Discussions are underway with Reunion Authorities and the French Government to convert Dr. Jeetoo Hospital into a *Centre Hospitalier Universitaire (CHU)* for upgrading medical training and enhancing medical care, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, as we are aware, our human resource is our only asset in Mauritius; thus, it is of paramount importance to provide quality health care to our people. Madam Speaker, it is the first time that we are going to have a proper Teaching Hospital in Mauritius. It is the first time we are going to have a dedicated Cancer Hospital. It is the first time, Madam Speaker, that we are going to have a proper warehouse to keep medical products in a controlled environment. It is the first time, Madam Speaker, that we are going to have an internationally recognised Health Laboratory.

Last but not least, it is the first time, Madam Speaker, that we are going to have a hospital dedicated to Alternative Medicine. Madam Speaker, funds have been provided by the Prime Minister for all these projects within this financial year.

Madam Speaker, this Budget shows the determination and political will of this Government and, in particular of the Prime Minister to improve the quality of care of the nation to sustain our economic development.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

At 12.48 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

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

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, we are debating on the fourth Budget of what is left of *l'Alliance Lepèp*, the MSM-ML Alliance. And it has been said on this side, on many occasions, and reminded of all the measures - *des mesures 'fisettes'* - that never saw the light of the day and that were mere *effets d'annonce*. And I am sure that it will be, said again and again, as the fourth Budget paves the way to nowhere.

In reply to some of the interveners before me, especially the Minister Husnoo, who has been going on about how cheap the comments and the critics from the Opposition were. I would like to tell the Minister Husnoo to get down *de sa tour d'ivoire*, as everybody in Mauritius *se moque de son intervention pour la simple et unique raison que les problèmes aujourd'hui, dans les services de santé, est pire que jamais*.

Cela a été dit avant, je le répète, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo nous fait regretter l'honorable Gayan. Le calvaire que les mauriciens passent dans les hôpitaux publics est inimaginable et indescriptible, Madame la présidente. Ma collègue, l'honorable Sewocksingh et moi-même, combien de mandants avons-nous discuté avec; qui ont essayé de nous raconter le calvaire d'être admis à l'hôpital, des histoires, on va dire, horribles, Madame la présidente, un service dénigrant, dégradant, parfois inhumain donné à certaines personnes dans les hôpitaux, surtout à Candos, qui a une mauvaise réputation. Des services pas dignes d'un État comme le nôtre où il faut supplier pour qu'on change nos couches ; où il faut supplier pour qu'on nous enlève de notre chaise roulante pour nous allonger sur le lit ; où il faut supplier pour que la nourriture, que nos enfants nous apportent, nous soit donnée. Ça, c'est la réalité des hôpitaux. Et l'honorable Dr. Husnoo aurait dû avoir honte aujourd'hui. Telle une autruche, il met sa tête et l'enfonce dans le sable.

L'honorable Seeruttun aussi, Madame la présidente, a trouvé bon de parler de tout et de rien pour près de 50 minutes - lui qui s'assied sur une bombe à retardement avec le secteur du sucre. Lui qui aurait dû plutôt trouver une solution, qui aurait dû plutôt rassurer les milliers de travailleurs qui se préoccupent aujourd'hui de leur avenir dans ce secteur, ne trouve rien de mieux à faire pour son intervention budgétaire que de parler de tout et de rien.

Pire, Madame la présidente, lui qui est là depuis quatre ans dans le même ministère, n'a plus le droit de dire : 'Pas moi ça, li ça !'. Lui, qui nous a fait faire un retour dans les années avant qu'il ne soit ministre et qui n'a pas jugé bon de venir encore une fois rassurer la classe travailleur du secteur du sucre, et je trouve cela décevant. Et que dire d'autre, Madame la présidente, de ce budget, encore une fois, avec des mesures '*fisettes*', futiles *is the word. The intention is good but it will have no effect and will be never implemented.*

Let's talk about the A. I., Artificial Intelligence; Artificial Intelligence, which is now being developed, pioneered in the greatest countries, Silicon Valley in America, in India, Artificial Intelligence, which only a fraction of the world's population can even pretend to understand. Artificial Intelligence, which is not a simple computer software; which is the ability of a computer software to learn exponentially, to grow. This is Artificial Intelligence. And we are providing today, in this Budget, and it is, I am afraid to say so, a bad joke; when we know that since 2015, we have been unable to appoint a CEO for the National Computer Board or the ICTA; when know that the Minister of ICT, himself, for the distribution of identity cards, as you remember, people had to lose days to go and book an appointment.

The Ministry of ICT could not even develop an online application for the identity card. When we look at the Director of Audit's report on spending and wastage of money and we see that the Ministry of Civil Service has been trying effortlessly to develop, since 2013, a simple Human Resource Management Software System. That has been overbudgeted, that is now costing Rs500 m. nearly and that is taking ages. A system that should have been implemented and running in 2015, and yet here, now in 2018, *on n'a pas vu le bout de son nez de ce système là*. A system which consists of different phases and the first phase even has not been completed. And you want to make us believe that you are going to pioneer artificial intelligence in Mauritius under this current Government, I see it, Madam Speaker, as a bad joke.

Madam Speaker, my intervention would be focusing solely on their citizenship issue. As I call it, it is the tales of two Mauritius, this issue. Government has announced that it will be now selling citizenship and passport for cash. It has not yet announced the conditions, but as I will try to explain ...

Madam Speaker: It has not been announced that it will be selling.

Mr A. Duval: It has been announced that it will be setting up a Citizen Investment Programme Scheme whereby you buy citizenship with money and you buy a passport with

money. It has since now not yet announced the conditions upon which the schemes will be set up, but I will try to show. It is clear that the communication exercise since the announcement, especially by the advisers, the super advisers of the Prime Minister, is, in fact, *nous mène en bateau*. It is clear, Madam Speaker, and I will try to show it that it intends to sell many more than 100 or 200 citizenships and it will do so on a non-residency requirement basis and on a fast basis as a commodity.

As you know, Madam Speaker, we already have in our legislation the possibility for investors through their investment, at a point in time, to acquire citizenship. Section 9 of the Citizenship Act already lays down the path for people who have permanent residence to obtain citizenship. We heard during the debates in the radios, something like 280 people have already received citizenship since 2015 on the Section 9 of the Citizenship Act. Therefore, this section provides that if you invest a sum of money, US\$500,000 and if you have resided in Mauritius for a continuous period of two years, then you become eligible to apply for its citizenship under that section. What it intends to do now with the citizenship for cash scheme, is, in fact - and I would substantiate on that - to sell citizenship with no requirements at all to have resided in Mauritius or to have even set foot in Mauritius as is done by a few countries, notorious for their bad reputation in the world.

Secondly, with the proposition to establish the Mauritius Sovereign Fund, it shows that the intention is to sell many more than the 100 or 200 passports and, in fact, is looking to sell into the thousands. As I said, Madam Speaker, the normal system since 2015, approximately 280 people have been able to obtain citizenship. The normal system, it works in the sense that when you have invested your money, when you have created employment, when you have bought your property, when you have shown that you are in no way a danger to the country, to its interests, to its people that you can adapt, that you are bringing an added value to it, then you are granted your citizenship. There is again the minimum requirement of two years and that minimum requirement, the basis for which is to be able to assess to, to be able to acquire on your reputation and that of your family before allowing you to obtain the full rights of the Mauritius citizen.

There is a distinction to be made in the budgetary proposition between obtaining your passport and obtaining your citizenship. Sale of passport is done in many countries and is one thing. Sale of citizenship is rarer. It is done only in six countries in the world. Sale of passport, Madam Speaker, the logic behind it, is that if you want to travel like Mauritius in 189 countries, visa free, then you can buy a Mauritian passport. If you are from, let us say

China or Russia or Iran, where there are restrictions for travelling, then it is appealing to those with money - the high network - to acquire a passport of a certain nationality and to be able to benefit from the visa free agreements that they have. This is the main reason. It also allows you to stay in the country, obviously, as long as you hold the passport.

It is important to note, Madam Speaker, that the passport sale, it is something that is reversible. You can revoke a passport. It doesn't grant you in no way the rights that a citizen has, but sale of citizenship is irrevocable. What we mean by sale of citizenship is to give someone the status of a full-fledged Mauritian, the status and the right that we have fought for decades, the right to vote, the right to buy a land, the right to invest in any business you want, the right to live your life in this country as a citizen.

Madam Speaker, I believe that the sale of citizenship is an issue in its own which has many downsides to it. It can be a menace to our social fabric. It can be a menace to our economy. It can be a menace more specifically to our sectors like the banking and offshore and the financial services sector. It can be a menace to the construction sector. It can be a menace to the political sphere and it can be also a menace to the quality and reputation of our country and that of our passport.

The menace to our social fabrics, Madam Speaker, as you know citizenship is a fundamental right, a democratic right and it is considered the kind of right that money cannot buy and should not be able to buy. It is not within the spirit of our Constitution in any case to sell the fundamental rights of citizenship. The social fabric in our country, where we are a multicultural country, where our stories from generations – five, six and seven, how many generations - are intertwined, where we are all descendants from our forefathers who fought to give us the right we enjoy today; who fought *contre vents et marées dans les situations économiques les plus difficiles pour arriver à faire ce que notre pays est arrivé aujourd'hui*. Is it right then, Madam Speaker, that someone from wherever in the world, with whatever intention in mind to come and buy that right for a mere \$1 m.? When I say a mere \$1 m., you will be surprised it is the price of a car - hire a car, of course - it is the price of an apartment in Paris and we are giving away this right, this Constitutional Right of citizenship for \$1 m.

The first problem it engenders in the social fabric is that it undermines the community, because people who buy citizenship have no sense of community, they do not value your cultural background, they do not value the history of your country; they do not

have to value all of this. They do not even know your language. What is important to them is to use whatever they can get from a financial standpoint, and that is about it.

It is about nothing but money. These people, Madam Speaker, who buy citizenship like it is done in many countries - and I will explain - have no link to the societies in which they buy the citizenship. They have no requirements to even care about their neighbours, to even stay in the damn place. All they have to do is to send the required sum. They do not even have to have set foot in the country in the first place. This is how it is done.

We must understand, Madam Speaker, that citizenship is a privilege and that the rights that we have acquired, *à la sueur de notre front*, is a privilege. And it cannot, absolutely not, be for sale. But handing out of citizenship, Madam Speaker, is nothing new. You will remember that in the 80s, when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was in Government and when the country was in dire economic situation and there was the need to open up the country, he had the right vision, he had the right method. What did he do? He gave away, on a selected and targeted basis, citizenship to people mainly from Hong Kong to come and to invest in the country and to bring innovative methods for the textile industry, and that has worked and that has greatly contributed to the economy.

Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo was part of that Government, Sir Gaëtan Duval was part of that Government, and SAJ was leading that Government, and that was the right way to have done this. But what we are doing today is completely different. Now we are making the exception become the rule. Now we are handing out left, right and centre citizenship to people who, in most cases, have intentions that are in no way in the interest of the country; who, for most cases, have a need to acquire other citizenship to be able to transfer their assets, their wealth, that have been acquired through questionable means. But we also remember, Madam Speaker, that while he opened up the country to people from Hong Kong, he also had a very severe approach, as you will remember; very severe, restrictive, *dégradant* to those descendants of Mauritian citizens that lived abroad.

We all remember - I was not even born, but I have read about it, but other than me, all of you remember here, *les vieux routiers - du cauchemar que c'était pour certains descendants mauriciens de se faire déporter dans leur propre pays natal*. Who doesn't remember the case of Joge, that poor lady from Sri Lanka who had a child in her belly, a Mauritian child with a Mauritian father, and who was deported from the country on the eve of

her case being heard in Court. Sir Gaëtan Duval was her lawyer and Sir Anerood Jugnauth, as Prime Minister, was being put into cause.

What followed? The resignation of a Judge followed this decision. And you know what is said in the judgment? Let me just read one paragraph of the judgment. It said -

“Thanks to the Mauritian Press and the MBC - for once the MBC - the whole Mauritian population and no doubt quite a number of persons abroad are already aware of the fate which the Executive has reserved for Miss Jogee who has applied to this Court to contest the decision to deport her and the child which she is carrying. A child who, let it be stressed, will in less than 20 days be born; simply deported, the born, a Mauritian citizen somewhere in the world. Miss Jogee has no doubt, with exquisite politeness, been simply deported from Mauritius only a few hours before the time fixed to hear her application.”

Her application was to set aside the decision of the Prime Minister’s Office to deport her.

“The Mauritian child she is carrying will be denied the medical facilities existing here; instead, he will probably be born in one of the poorest countries of the world, a country which has apparently one of the highest rates of infant mortality.”

Today, what are we proposing under the same Government where the population chose Sir Anerood Jugnauth to lead them? He has desisted from, passed power down to his son. But what are we being proposed today? We are being proposed to sell citizenship for money, when not so long ago we were refusing our own descendants to grant them nationality. What are we proposing? We are proposing to give someone the power to vote, the right to vote for some money, when the Mauritian Diaspora abroad does not hold that right, when hundreds of thousands of Mauritians living all around the world do not have the right to vote. This is what we are proposing, Madam Speaker.

It is money over blood, money over descent. This is the proposition of this Government today. And you know, Madam Speaker, it is not the first country to have attempted to do that. Malta has attempted to do the exact same thing we are doing, although from much pressure from the European Union, it had to backpedal, it had to take a step back. It was also proposing to give nationality, citizenship, naturalization, whichever you want to call it, with no prerequisite rights of residency or otherwise.

And you know what, Madam Speaker? It was said by the Commissioner of Justice for the European Union that that law could not come because it was against international law,

because citizenship, according to that Justice Commissioner, has to be linked with residency. There has to be a bond, a special bond between the applicant and the host country.

Madam Speaker, as to the countries that have tried or that have done what we are proposing to do, I say, again, there are only six countries in the world that hand out citizenships for money.

Four of these countries, Madam Speaker, are in the Caribbean; four countries, the ones in the Caribbean, are countries that have essentially a monoculture, and used to have the sugar industry like us and today has tourism, but have been struggling economically, struggling to make a living, struggling to balance the budget, struggling to find money to be able to keep the country running. And as a measure of last resort, it was done by a country called Saint Kitts and Nevis, a tiny country in the Caribbean in 1984, when the sugar industry was collapsing. This might be a sign for us as well.

When the sugar industry was collapsing in Saint Kitts and Nevis, they took the bold decision *de carrément vendre la nationalité* from that point on. And you know, the figures, when you look at them, it is all a matter of interpretation. Financially speaking, it has done wonders for Saint Kitts and Nevis. Up to 14% of the GDP in 2014 has been contributed through by selling of citizenship, but when you look at all the other aspects, - which I will talk about - about its reputation today, when you think about the quality of its passport today, with doors being closed all around the world by the biggest countries because of what they have done; when you look today at the price of property in that country, when you look today about the status and the way people who were brought up, born and bred in the country, today it is more than questionable, Madam Speaker.

The one problem that they have had in Saint Kitts and Nevis, in Dominica, in Grenada, and the other countries, is that they have tried to make the most out of the scheme. A country like Saint Kitts and Nevis, 500,000 inhabitants, it is estimated that 45,000 nationalities have been sold. 10% of the citizens of that country bought their way into the country. Why did they buy their way into the country? It is because of the small island, Saint Kitts and Nevis, like Mauritius, has free visa access to many countries in the world. We have access to 126 or 129 countries in the world. Italian Mafia people, fugitives, money launderers, people financing terrorism, when they were given that passport, and when the international community, especially the United States started opening their eyes to the kind of schemes and the kind of people it was attracting, and the kind of due diligence, and the kind

of KYC they were doing, then, they were in a bad situation. In deep trouble, Madam Speaker! And today, 20 years later, the country has regressed in terms of reputation, in terms of the value of the passport, in terms of the social fabric of the country and this is something that we must avoid at all costs, Madam Speaker.

Another drawback, Madam Speaker, as I said, is property prices shooting up through the roof. And what we risk with a country like Mauritius, with limited land, is we risk finding tomorrow Mauritians, as the Labour Party said, foreigners in their own country, unable to buy land, *se faire ghettoized* in urban spaces, while the rest, if they do finally intend to invest in the country, buy out all the lands. This would drive prices up, out of reach of most Mauritians, Madam Speaker.

The second risk is to our banking and financial sector. It is all about reputation, Madam Speaker. It is all about protecting that reputation. That reputation that has already taken a hit very recently, but I will come to that. Our reputation that is so damageable by these incentives that already three countries have ceased to sell citizenship and passport.

You will see that Belize, Grenada and Ireland have stopped it. Ireland did not sell citizenship. They sold the passport. But it was such a damage to their reputation that they stopped, because again, it attracts people for the wrong reasons. And it is a fact; it is quoted in so many articles. It attracts a row gallery of scandals, fugitives, tax cheats and possibly much worse. This is what it says. There is a programme called '60 minutes: Inside'. We all know that programme, it is very well-known. They made a very special programme on the sale of citizenship.

To show you exactly what we could expect in Mauritius if we do move ahead with this decision, Madam Speaker, you will see that in Saint Kitts, for example, what is left to the country is thousands of inhabitations that are left uninhabited. People come to comply with the requirements there: you have to buy property. So, they come, they buy the property, they have no interest in living in the country. They are only interested in the free access it gives them here and there, and they go. They leave the country as it is.

But you will also see, as I have said, one of the most wanted criminals on the Interpol, a mafia godfather, Italian Mafia, who has been caught, arrested with the diplomatic passport of Sainte Kitts, of Dominica. Once he has bought his citizenship, he then put some money under the table and bought the diplomatic passport. Because the amount of money, especially dirty money that is yielded through the schemes has such an adverse effect on corruption,

especially in small countries. And I was saying the Treasury Department of the United States gave severe warnings to these countries in the Caribbean after it was found that people of Iranian origin were financing illicit activities and illicit trades through that country.

There is a real risk, Madam Speaker. You will see the real risk! We have today the US Homeland Security, Mr Kelly, a General, who expressed his concern in 2013 about that incentive, cash for citizenship, saying that it was most likely most of the time exploited by criminals, terrorists and other nefarious actors. So, it is a real concern, Madam Speaker. It is a real concern for countries like the US, for countries in Europe, in Asia, in India, in China with whom we have trade agreements, and especially with whom we have free visa access and we have certain facilities to conduct our financial transactions.

Madam Speaker, again, this is nothing new. As hon. Osman Mahomed said yesterday, a simple Google research will lead you to *les méfaits de cette décision, de ce* scheme, and you will see also that the countries that have suffered as a result of this, have suffered dearly, like Grenada being blacklisted, Madam Speaker, by the international community because of money laundering that was attracted through the scheme, because of terrorism financing, and because of corruption to the political class of Grenada. There were allegations left, right and centre about money being given under the table for this and that, linked to the scheme for the sale of diplomatic passports. As you know, Madam Speaker, hon. Members of this House have diplomatic passports. And as we know, the policy for diplomatic passports is to be able to travel without the same security measures applying for you, without the same checks. Is that not true, Madam Speaker? Isn't that the whole point of a diplomatic passport? It is to facilitate movement of diplomats.

Again, Dominica is another country, a small Caribbean country selling citizenship. It saw its free visa access by many countries being removed by big countries like Canada, Germany etc. Saint Kitts and Nevis, which we were talking about, again, blacklisted by the US! And in general, these countries in the Caribbean have had since then a very bad reputation for their programme.

So, in terms of reputation, Madam Speaker, in terms that it can facilitate money laundering, in terms that it can facilitate financing of illicit activities, in terms that giving a citizenship in two years or three years is one thing to someone after he has lived here and he has proved his worth, and he has gone through the KYC. But giving the citizenship on a fast-track basis, like it is done in the Caribbean, within two weeks you become a citizen, then it is

a problem, Madam Speaker. Because not only a bank can do its KYC properly on a customer in two weeks.

Now, citizenship: an irrevocable right given in only two weeks. The problem is associated with the fast-track, with the no residency requirement, with the fact that you cannot properly check, assess and monitor these people. So, it gives your country, whether you like it or not, a bad reputation. Yesterday there was an article on the BBC, it said, two days ago – Mauritius selling citizenship for cash, opposition contesting it.

And it already gives us a bad name. It already puts us in the basket of the six countries in the world that are doing it, and it is therefore already hurting, before it is even implemented a reputation. So, the risk that it comes with therefore to the banking and financial service sector is the risk of tarnishing our reputation. Already in Mauritius, some banks are finding it difficult to find correspondence banks in other countries, because the way the reputation has been tarnished, especially lately, but also because, whether you like or not, we have always been associated as a country which is borderline a tax haven.

Already some banks are finding it difficult to get their counterpart in other countries. Already to get their correspondent banks, and now with a scheme to sell citizenship for cash to any Tom, Dick, and Harry who has the means, will completely destroy that reputation. Those who are struggling to get correspondence will not get it in the future. Those who have it, the big banks, risk losing them. And if they do lose it, Madam Speaker, it would be a catastrophe, ten-fold to the BAI Bramer Bank issue. It is the worst thing that can happen to a bank, and you need to be aware of it.

Madam Speaker, this is not just me saying it, it is in the IMF working paper. It says, they need to make sure when you have citizenship for sale about the KYC, the monitoring, the residency requirement, it says at paragraph 19 of the IMF working paper. It says -

“The governance challenges of ECPs, that is, selling passports, of selling citizenships for money schemes are critical. The countries who adopt these, is critical to the broader macroeconomic picture given the risk they create to the sustainability of the programme.”

It says –

“We need to make sure about the reputational risk.”

It says –

“Reputational risks are also magnified since governance in one country could easily spill over to others, as the economies are less likely to differentiate between ECPs of different countries.”

It says –

“Poor or non-transparent administrations, like the ones that refuse to answer questions systematically in a House of Parliament.”

It says –

“These programmes and their associated inflows within the individual programme countries, could lead to the emerging of strong, public, political and international resistance, and could complicate or even terminate the whole programme.”

And it says that if these challenges are not addressed, it can spill over to other sectors of the economy, like I said the banking sector. The risk that it damages and contaminates the reputation of the country in other sectors is very real.

There is also the risk to the economy, Madam Speaker, because when you are attracting billions of rupees for selling the citizenship, then you rely on the sale, integrate it into your Budget, for example, like this one, to reimburse the debts, or to finance capitals projects. So, you rely on these funds coming in, and then there are sudden stops and this is mentioned everywhere, even in the IMF. It is a real risk that has happened to all these countries, the sudden stop. Because when you start being blacklisted, when you start to have your reputation being tarnished and all of this, then people no longer see the value to come to Mauritius. Because if Mauritius reputation itself is being tarnished, why would I pay a million US dollar - I come from a country whose reputation is tarnished already, I am not going to go to another country whose reputation is now tarnished as well. I will look for another country. So, that is a real risk when where is that sudden stop, how do you plan ahead.

And you know what the IMF says to that, it says that when you are going to sell 10, 50, 100, and 200 citizenships, then it is marginal. There is no real risk if your economy is strong enough. That is, you will create a hole if it stops, there is not a lot, 100 or 200, like the Government is saying. But when you are intending to sell in the thousands, then you mitigate that risk through a Sovereign Welfare Fund, which is what the IMF says. It says when you are intending on selling so many and creating so much wealth through that, then you do it for a Sovereign Welfare Fund, because you don't do it if you are going to sell 100. Why?

Because it costs money to do a Sovereign Welfare Fund. It needs specialised technical training, it needs specialised technical people, it needs a specialised unit, it needs salaries, it costs a lot; it costs about the same as the FSC is costing us today, a lot of money. So, then how do you yield that return if you are spending so much to have that fund, and you are only getting a 100 citizenship, a hundred times one million dollars, a hundred million dollars. It is not enough.

So, what you do, Madam Speaker, when you do set up a fund like this, when you go the extra mile, then you need to have massive inflow of money through citizenship scheme? Madam Speaker, that is why I say that the intention here is not to sell 100 or 200. If they are going all the way up to set up the Sovereign Welfare Fund, *comme préconisé* in this working paper of the IMF, then the real intention is whether now or through time to sell much more to make that scheme worth it, and that is going to make all our problems, social fabric, the risk of becoming foreigners in your country become much more real, Madam Speaker. There is also, Madam Speaker, the problem it creates, the inconsistency it creates with all the property development skills that we have implemented since 2000; the Retirement Scheme in 2000 by the Labour-PMSD Government, and then, the IRS by the MSM-MMM Government. The IRS Scheme, Madam Speaker, has had enormous success. It has been introduced in 2001, and it has contributed enormously to our economy through the FDI. Over 1200 units, Madam Speaker, have been sold to date; again, an enormous success. Units are sold for a minimum of 500,000 dollars to give you the right to permanent residency of ten years.

But these IRS are rarely sold at 500,000 dollars, RESs are sold at that price, but IRS today, there are only 11 in Mauritius. You can't buy an IRS villa if you do not have 2.5 m. US dollars in your pocket. There is a new one being built in Mont Choisy, which is even more expensive.

So, this Scheme has attracted investors to Mauritius for a number of reasons, political stability, our low tax regime, and all of this, reputation of doing business, the law and order, and the social impact of these schemes, Madam Speaker, cannot be understated. For every unit that you construct, for every house that you construct in an IRS development, 200,000 goes to the National Empowerment Foundation, it goes to that social fund. 200,000 immediately from the moment you construct. This is one thing. It creates employment. Construction of an IRS employs more than 1,000 masons.

Consultants give work to everybody across the board. Food sellers provide a whole ecosystem in the area it has been. Who does not know about, for example, Anahita or Valriche? Places where there used to be factories that have closed down and that had no future and with the coming of these IRS have now provided for the well-being of the whole area. So, these schemes, Madam Speaker, have worked well. They have created thousands of employment. They have created so much wealth for the economy and, unfortunately, you will be surprised to hear that it is now in recession.

The property development high-end in Mauritius is in recession. Property development for non-citizens is in recession. Stagnation for a number of years under this Government and it is now going down harder and harder to sell and it will be made much harder through the selling of citizenship. It will be made much harder. But, just to give you an idea of the size of the *manque à gagner* that we have today if this citizenship scheme kills the property development for non-citizens. Let me just give you an idea of what we have.

There are almost, Madam Speaker, 300 units that have been constructed, unsold or are yet to be constructed, planned to be constructed for IRS. We are talking about villas of hundreds of millions of rupees. In total, in the IRS development there are around 600 units because we have apartments and residences and so on that are planned, which have been constructed and are waiting to be sold and for this we are talking about billions of rupees. For just the 300 units of IRS, we are talking about a minimum of 300 million dollars, Madam Speaker, Rs10 billion just for the IRS. To give you an idea *du manque à gagner que nous risquons de créer*.

If you talk about the RES in total over 2,059 units, whether have been given clearance, have been constructed or are planned to be constructed by the Board of Investment, now the EDB, and 800 of these have even not been sold yet or are planned to be constructed. *Et là aussi, le manque à gagner* is in billions, Madam Speaker. And then, this Government has introduced the PDS which has replaced it and you have nine projects that were given PDS certificate and that are being developed, as we speak. You have 40 projects that have been given letter of approval are waiting to start. Then you have the Smart City Scheme, again created by this Government and you have eight projects right now ongoing.

So, how do we reconcile all that, Madam Speaker? When you think about it very logically, why would an investor pay three million dollars to go into an IRS villa which does not give him nationality, which does not give him a passport, does not give his child, his

dependent the right to stay if he is aged over 24 years old? You pay 3 million for that or you pay 1 million for your citizenship and you get your passport. You pay another 100,000 USD you get for how many dependents you want, then you go and buy a piece of land in Mauritius and you build your own house. You want to buy at the NHDC complex, you rebuilt it, you do what you want. But, in his right mind, why would someone do it? Why? And, this is what I don't understand with this. It absolutely does not make sense.

Madam Speaker, worst is that these property development schemes, whatever you want to call it, all of them have direct contributions to the welfare of citizens. They contribute through social funds. They create employment. They create indirect jobs. They create wealth for restaurants, for cinemas, for this and that. But this Citizenship Scheme, the fund that you invest, is invested solely into that Sovereign Fund that might be used for capital projects or might be used for reimbursement of our debts, we don't know.

So, how do you compare the two? How do you reconcile, Madam Speaker, the massive amount of rupees that is at stake, of jobs and the fact that you are completely killing off the property development scheme for non-citizens with the sale of the citizenship? How? How can a Minister of Finance, in his right mind, think that it will be beneficial? And, especially, Madam Speaker, that the representations made by all these associations of IRS, RES and all of the property developments - do you know their representation for the budgetary measures was what? Their representation was that since it is becoming much more competitive globally and since there is less demand and more supply of units, of projects and since we are finding it hard now to attract someone, obviously, when his son or his daughter is 24 he has to leave. Who would spend 3 million dollars? That is subjective.

But then, what did they recommend? They recommended simply that it might be a good idea to do like it is being done now in Portugal. It is called the Golden visa. Golden visa, Madam Speaker, is to buy a passport with no right to vote, no right to buy land or anything like this, just to have the free access and to stay in the country. You buy the passport but in connection with the property under a scheme. Obviously, logically! So, if you want to boost the sale of your construction, you want to boost wealth being created in Mauritius, IRS and all this, you link it between the two. You will sell a villa for 1 million USD. This is what they actually recommended, 1 million USD. And then, you get your passport with it and if you want your dependents to get a passport you pay another 100,000. That would be logical! That would actually be a good idea to have done that.

(Interruptions)

Yes, just a simple passport, a golden visa we call it.

But, what does Government do? It does the complete opposite, Madam Speaker! It says: 'Now don't go and waste your money into big and expensive luxury gated communities. Now become a Mauritian and go and buy out wherever you want in this country and build your own mansion here. Come we lay the red carpet like Alvaro Sobrinho for you, come! With your good money, clean money, dirty money whatever it is, just come.' This is what, in fact, we are doing and I fail to understand who in their right mind would have done that.

Madam Speaker, there is the risk of corruptive political influence. Do you know why? Let me tell you a real case that happened in Austria. Austria has a scheme, less open door policy, less red carpet policy and much more controlled with residency requirements and all this and even though they have that, what happened, is that there is a case in Austria, there is someone called Stronach. You know, in fact, this person is of Canadian nationality. He became a multibillionaire in Canada.

So, what did he do? He went to Austria and he bought his citizenship. He bought his way into the country. He set up his headquarters in Austria. And do you know what he does, Madam Speaker? He suddenly decides that he wants to be a politician as well. He suddenly starts putting on his payroll, former politicians of Austria, current politicians and before you know it he is taking part in the election, before you want it he has got a party standing in the election and now he is in Parliament! He spent millions. What are millions when you are a billionaire? It is nothing! You spend millions on a political campaign and you end up with politicians, you end up with someone from anywhere. I do not want to bad name country in specific, but you may, like Sobrinho.

Let's take the example. His name is already bad. Let's take the example of Sobrinho. Sobrinho comes here. Sobrinho will be the example I will give for...

(Interruptions)

Let us take this scenario, Madam Speaker. Sobrinho becomes a citizen; he becomes a citizen after his eye-to-eye exercise. He decides he will be a candidate, *entre autres*, in Rose Hill, let's say, with his good friend, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo. Then, what happens, Madam Speaker? Is that acceptable? Is that to you, in any way, acceptable? Someone who buys his way into citizenship and becomes a political figure or yields - and this is more the case of

Sobrinho - power by proxy; through proxies, he yields political power. He decides on the business of the day through his proxies. And this is, Madam Speaker, a real, real - it has happened!

(*Interruptions*)

It has happened. Now, imagine! Take the Sobrinho affair again...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! No provocation!

Mr A. Duval: Imagine Sobrinho, a person who was not a citizen...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: You see, hon. Rutnah? I said, no provocation! Please, proceed!

Mr A. Duval: Take Sobrinho; the famous, the notorious Sobrinho, a person with no passport of Mauritius and, thank God, no citizenship of Mauritius. He comes to Mauritius. He comes as a simple investor. He gets his Investment Banking Licence, he gets his Management Company Licence - God knows what licences he has obtained - and he destabilises a country for weeks on end, Madam Speaker. For weeks on end! *Une guerre ouverte entre l'Exécutif, le Premier ministre, le gouvernement et la présidence ; du jamais vu à l'île Maurice.* And he does it. He gives Jaguars and Range Rovers left, right, centre. He gets red carpet treatment, I do not know how many VIP access. He gets a higher official of the Presidency to work for him. *Qui dit mieux?* This is Sobrinho. And then, we realise, after much effort from the Opposition and from the Press, that, in fact, Sobrinho is not as *Monsieur Propre*, as clean. His eyes perhaps have lied; his money might not be as clean as some purport to show. And then, through much pressure, through months on end, thank God, we suspended his licences.

You know, the FSC is well equipped, has experience. It is supposed to have the competence it has had. It only has political intervention. But the FSC has failed to stop someone like Sobrinho infiltrating our system, and now you want to give the power to decide on citizenship to none other than the Economic Development Board, which does not have as a tenth of the experience or the manpower to do the FSC's job. Where one, the mighty FSC fails, you give it to the EDB. And that is again a terrible idea. So, inadequate know your customer, inadequate vetting, obscure connections to the highest level of State and Government led this country, you like it or not, into a constitutional crisis for weeks. It led,

Madam Speaker, to the resignation of the President of the Republic. Let us not forget that. It led to chaos in our institutions and it led to tarnishing completely our reputation, our financial services sector and the reputation of the country as a whole. So, do we want now, for people like Sobrinho, who we have been able to stop, to get now the same rights that you and I enjoy, Madam Speaker, in this country, as citizens? I hope that we all realise the danger in this.

And then, the last point I want to make, Madam Speaker, is creating, in some legal way, citizens that have more rights than others. As you know, Madam Speaker, we have various treaties for the promotion and reciprocal protection of investments. These are called bilateral investment treaties. And Mauritius has signed a number of these treaties with many countries; France, South Africa, etc. And what this treaty does is that, if you are foreigner, let's say I am a foreigner, I invest in your country, Government - like hon. Gayan so often says, 'Government is Government, and Government decides' - decides to take back my land or revoke my banking licence, for example. Then, what do I do? I go to an International Tribunal and I sue the Mauritian State, like Mr Dawood Rawat has done for its decision in an International Tribunal, not in the jurisdiction of Mauritius. But, in the case of Mr Rawat, that is something else, because under that regime, he decided dual nationality and so forth he was not entitled. But it does not mean that all countries are bound by the same regime; it does not mean that all tribunals follow the same approach.

For example, someone from South Africa; let's take an example. Let's take Sobrinho himself. Let's say he was a South African; he comes, he invests in the country, Government decides to remove him, to revoke his licence or to expropriate his land, whatever it is. He, that person of Mauritian citizen now, having bought his citizenship, can go to international tribunals and sue the State. But us, mere Mauritians, we cannot do that. Us, Government takes back our land, we can only go to the Supreme Court of Mauritius for redress. So, you see, two types of rights for supposedly the same category of people. And that, Madam Speaker, is a problem as well that we need to address. It gives more rights to some people, through that scheme, over our own Mauritian people.

Lastly, Madam Speaker, as I have said, the Sovereign Welfare Fund, the intention is not to give a hundred. I have made the point. It is to give much more because it would cost more. There is no point to do it. But what does the IMF recommend? And I am sure that they have been reading it. It is that if you do that Fund, then you have to make sure that the Fund is transparent, you have to make sure that it is accountable to Parliament, you have to make

sure that the objectives that you want to reap through the investments, that the guidelines for investment, that the risks are explained, the risks for investment are explained, are given, communicated through Parliament. This is what it says. But knowing this Government, the way they hide information consistently; take Mauritius Telecom, for example. So many other cases of hiding behind this, behind the fact that it is a private company owned by Government, behind the fact that it is this and that - hides information. And I hope that whatever they do, but if they will create that Fund, they will make it accountable.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, citizenship by investment programmes, they have failed. It is not me saying it. They have failed to provide clear economic benefits. This is why I told you Ireland and so forth have to come back on that, Canada, etc. They have failed to provide economic benefits. What they do is they push up property prices in your country, what they do is that they risk upsetting the social fabric and it is, therefore, not worth it. In Saint Kitts and Nevis, 45,000 citizenships given through purchase, through sale, out of a population of 500,000. Only six countries, again, Madam Speaker, in the world, sell their citizenship; most of them being countries that have economies that are failing them, most of them being countries that are in dire economic situations.

You know, Cyprus started a scheme with residency requirements following the 2008 economic recession. Cyprus and Malta had to do that as well, but Cyprus especially because they had no more money. So, they had to do it. So, what is Pravind Jugnauth, the hon. Prime Minister, trying to say with this measure? Is it that *la santé économique de notre pays est menacée ? Prévoit-il, avec les informations qu'il a comme Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, une situation économique demain dans le rouge ? Pourquoi donc venir avec un système qui n'a fait que sauver les petits Etats de la banqueroute ? Y a-t-il un message caché dans cette mesure, Madame la présidente ?* I hope he tells us.

Madam Speaker, I say, if you want to go ahead with selling of passports even though it might tarnish our reputation, it might diminish our visa access, - the 129 we have, - it might give us a blow and reduce our free visa access, but if you link it with property development, then it might have some positive effects as well. It might restore *la croissance dans la construction.* It might bring a lot of positive benefits, in fact. But we say no completely, Madam Speaker, to the sale of citizenship. In no way is this going to do any good to the country. I tell you my personal conviction, Madam Speaker, that if I was sitting in that Government today, and if they were coming with such a programme, I personally would have resigned from that Government. I think it is as bad as trying to control the powers of the

DPP. I think it is as dangerous to our democracy, to the corruption in this country, to the well-being of our citizen *de brader le pays*, and I am serious on that, Madam Speaker.

I hope that MPs on both sides of the House realise, just as we realise, but I hope that these MPs there realise it as well. This is not a Human Transplant Bill where you can afford to say *après nu va gueter*. This is not the kind. This is giving *des droits irrévocables de citoyenneté à une personne* for a mere one million dollars. One million dollars! Is that what in the eyes of the Prime Minister to be a citizen of this country is worth? I found it *odieux*! *C'est odieux et c'est choquant*.

Madam Speaker, I hope that everybody who votes this, takes his responsibility in history. Because I tell you, if things go sour tomorrow, you will be the ones to be blame.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bholah!

(3.36 p.m.)

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Madame la Présidente, je vous remercie de me permettre de contribuer aux débats ayant trait au budget 2018-2019, présenté par le Premier ministre.

On se souvient en effet qu'à cette même période l'année dernière, nous étions toujours sous le joug de l'incertitude liée à de diverses perturbations économiques comme la montée du protectionnisme, les perspectives d'une guerre commerciale au niveau mondial ou encore d'un Brexit dur. Les organisations financières et économiques de référence exhortaient alors les gouvernements du monde entier à adopter la voie des réformes afin de renverser les effets des cycles potentiellement négatifs - choses que ce gouvernement a réalisées avec ses précédents budgets.

Aujourd'hui, à cet instant précis, les données ont changé et nous pouvons nous permettre d'être optimistes. La Banque mondiale prévoit une croissance économique mondiale qui devrait s'accélérer à 3,1 % en 2018, après avoir atteint un taux beaucoup plus élevé que prévu en 2017. La reprise des investissements, des activités manufacturières et des échanges commerciaux se poursuivront et les pays en développement exportateurs de produits de base profiteront du raffermissement des prix de ces produits. La croissance en Afrique sub-saharienne devrait atteindre 3,2%, comparé à 2,4% en 2017.

Où se situe l’Ile Maurice dans cette conjoncture favorable? Les chiffres disponibles démontrent clairement que nous amorçons un nouveau parcours au niveau économique dans un environnement propice à une reprise durable. Cela se fait d’ailleurs avec beaucoup de sérénité, comme le reflète le ton et l’esprit dans lequel le Premier ministre a prononcé son discours budgétaire, car les projections s’inscrivent dans la perspective souhaitée -

- Le PIB a atteint les 3,9% en 2017, soit le niveau le plus élevé depuis 2011 ;
- Le taux de chômage a régressé à 7,1% en 2017, en comparaison avec un taux de 8% en 2013 ;
- Le taux d’investissement a augmenté de 5% en 2017 ;
- Le pays a connu un bond spectaculaire de 24 places dans l’indice ‘*Ease of Doing Business*’ et est reconnu comme étant le pays africain le plus ‘*business-friendly*,’ et
- Pour le premier trimestre 2018, l’indice de confiance des entrepreneurs a atteint son niveau le plus haut depuis 2010.

Madame la présidente, ces chiffres éloquents ne sont nullement le fruit du hasard. Ils sont plutôt le résultat d’un travail de longue haleine enclenché par le gouvernement afin de promouvoir le développement et la transformation de notre modèle économique en vue d’atteindre une meilleure compétitivité et d’améliorer la qualité de vie de tout un chacun.

Notre pays a toujours su trouver les moyens de bâtir sa résilience et de s’adapter aux changements constants du contexte international. Nous nous sommes donné les moyens de nos ambitions. Il ne faut cependant pas considérer que nous avons accompli notre mission en inversant la tendance négative.

Ce budget montre clairement la volonté de ce gouvernement d’amener une transformation économique à travers la mise en place d’un modèle inclusif et durable. Je fais, par exemple, référence aux mesures ayant trait à la préservation du pouvoir d’achat de la classe moyenne, l’émancipation des femmes et la responsabilisation des jeunes sur le marché de l’emploi ou encore la création d’une économie circulaire par le biais de mesures en faveur de la protection de l’environnement.

Pour ce gouvernement, la modernisation du pays et la transition vers une économie à revenu élevé marche de pair avec le bien-être social de nos compatriotes. Et le Premier ministre a démontré sa capacité à répondre à ces deux impératifs tout en maintenant fermement le contrôle sur les principaux indicateurs macro-économiques – c'est-à-dire une

croissance prévue à 4,1%, un déficit budgétaire de 3,2% et la dette du secteur public estimé à 63,4%.

Selon une analyse de la Banque mondiale, 2018 est perçu comme étant une année ayant de bonnes chances d'être la première année depuis la crise financière où l'économie mondiale tournera à plein régime ou presque. Je comprends ceux qui ont tendance à juger un exercice budgétaire uniquement en se focalisant sur les chiffres du PIB et de la croissance économique.

Madame la présidente, j'ai attentivement écouté l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition qui s'est obstiné à démontrer qu'il y aurait un déclin de la performance économique de notre pays. Et si on remonte en arrière pendant la période de 2011 à 2014 durant laquelle l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval occupait le portefeuille des Finances? En 2011, la croissance économique qui était de 4% a graduellement connu une baisse pour atteindre 3,3% en 2012 et 3,2% en 2013. N'est-ce pas cela qu'on appelle un déclin? La croissance à cette époque lui permettait certainement de venir de l'avant avec des mesures pour renforcer l'Etat Providence. A quoi servent cependant des taux de croissance économiques flatteurs si les personnes vulnérables ne peuvent pas en tirer les bénéfices pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie?

Madame la présidente, c'est ce gouvernement dirigé par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth qui a jugé utile d'élever le niveau de vie de ceux au plus bas de l'échelle, sans pour autant mettre en péril les impératifs économiques. Ce n'est pas le taux de croissance qui nous a empêchés d'investir là où il fallait pour améliorer la vie de nos citoyens et les preuves sont tangibles. Je vais en citer quelques-uns -

- l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse à R 5,000 en janvier 2015;
- la réintroduction des subventions pour les frais d'examens du SC et du HSC ;
- l'allocation de la pension d'invalidité à environ 3,130 enfants handicapés âgés de moins de 15 ans ;
- la révision des salaires des femmes 'cleaners' qui sont passés de R 1,500 à R 9,000 ;
- l'approvisionnement en eau potable gratuitement aux familles dont l'utilisation ne dépasse pas les 6 m³ mensuellement;

- l'introduction de la *Negative Income Tax*, c'est-à-dire un soutien financier de la MRA aux employés dont le salaire de base ne dépasse pas les R 9,900 mensuellement ;
- l'introduction du salaire minimum ;
- la baisse du prix du gaz ménager, qui se vendait à R 330 en décembre 2014 et qui aujourd'hui coûte R 240 ;
- des allocations de subsistance aux chefs de famille qui sont enregistrés au *Social Register of Mauritius* et qui sont sans emploi pendant un an.

L'autre fait marquant de l'intervention de l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition est son inquiétude concernant la dette publique. Dommage qu'on n'ait pas eu droit à cette même préoccupation de l'honorable Xavier Luc Duval quand la plupart de nos institutions étaient dans le rouge alors qu'il était le Grand Argentier sous l'ancien régime.

Madame la présidente, je crois que l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition fait preuve d'une mémoire sélective ou d'une vision altérée en ce qu'il s'agit de la situation financière catastrophique au sein des diverses institutions. Ce gouvernement a hérité de ce cadeau empoisonné en décembre 2014 mais par la force du travail, nous avons pu progressivement remettre ces institutions malades sur les rails, je vais en citer quelques-uns –

1. la DBM était à genoux avec des dettes à la hauteur de R 3,7 milliards en janvier 2015 et était vouée à une mort lente et certaine. Mais grâce à des efforts, la DBM a pu se relever et ses dettes ont été considérablement réduites à ce jour ;
2. sur cette liste figure également la MBC qui affichait des dettes d'environ R 1 milliard R 18 millions en 2014. Aujourd'hui, la situation s'est nettement améliorée avec des dettes qui ont pu être ramenées à R 178 millions ;
3. la mauvaise gestion des casinos de Maurice a entraîné des pertes avoisinant les R 110 millions en 2014. Quand on a repris la barre, les pertes ont été réduites à R 24 millions en 2017. La projection pour 2018 est une réduction des pertes à R 15 millions ;
4. la STC qui disposait de surplus annuels avoisinant les R 400 millions en décembre 2014 a pu les amener à la hauteur de R 1,4 milliards pour une période de 18 mois, c'est-à-dire de janvier 2016 à juin 2017 grâce à des décisions stratégiques en vue de faire des économies ;

5. la MPCB était devenue la vache à lait sous l'ancien régime car des prêts toxiques d'un montant d'environ R 1,7 milliards furent découverts au sein de cette institution bancaire en décembre 2014.

Madame la présidente, cette liste n'est qu'une brève illustration de l'attitude de 'deux poids deux mesures' adoptée par l'honorable Duval. Je trouve cela regrettable que quelqu'un participe et assiste silencieusement à la dégradation de nos institutions sous un précédent gouvernement et qu'il crie au loup aujourd'hui alors que nous arrivons à remonter la pente avec des résultats concluants. Cela dit, la population n'est pas dupe. Elle saura différencier les discours démagogues des discours rassembleurs.

Madame la présidente, je crois qu'au contraire, un constat rassurant s'impose. En concoctant un budget qui allie prudence, sérieux et dynamisme en ce qu'il s'agit des niveaux fiscal et structurel, avec la compassion et l'empathie en vue d'une amélioration constante de la qualité de la vie des mauriciens, le Premier ministre ainsi que son équipe sont en parfaite adéquation avec la voie prêchée par la Banque Mondiale. Ceci est indéniablement un gage de confiance et devrait inspirer chacun d'entre nous à contribuer à la réalisation de cet objectif de croissance inclusive.

Madam Speaker, allow me now to comment on measures having to do with my ministerial portfolio and I will begin with the SME sector. Madam Speaker, with globalisation bringing about a restyling of the international economic phenotype, SMEs more than ever form the keystone of economic engines, budding innovative solutions to socio-economic and environmental challenges. However, we all know that SMEs continue to face hurdles restricting their growth and expansion, and that policy makers always have to be proactive to devise the most optimum support framework for them.

With more than 80% of all companies, accounting for 40% of GDP, and more than half of the country's employment, SMEs are considered to be the backbone of our economy. Government has since long put particular emphasis on SMEs and on fostering entrepreneurship. A process of deep transformation through a major overhaul of our SME ecosystem has already started. Last year's Budget had proposed audacious measures to infuse new competitive strengths into SMEs in the face of daunting challenges with which they have to deal while the 10-year Master Plan had also given substance, purpose and direction to this impetus.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, just to provide some information to this House, regarding the transition from SMEDA to SME Mauritius. As the House already knows, the law, the SME Bill was debated and passed in November/December 2017. The law was promulgated on 18 January 2018 and employees of SMEDA were handed over option forms and the deadline to exercise their option was 19 February 2018. 10 of the employees opted to join SME Mauritius, 77 opted for redeployment and 7 opted to retire.

All the redeployment has been completed and the employees who had opted to be redeployed left SMEDA on 23 April 2018. But I understand that there is a handful of some employees who were not happy and have expressed their discontent through letters written to the Prime Minister's Office, to the Equal Opportunity Commission and to the Ombudsman.

Mais Maurice étant un État de droit, il faut laisser les institutions fonctionner. And I also understand that some employees have even gone to Court to ask for a judicial review. Unfortunately, the ex-CEO Mr Puddoo, who was recruited since last year became a victim of attrition, that is, some employers found him to be very competent and poached him and he decided to join an international organisation. Again, the new CEO has been recruited and he is in place as from 11 June 2018.

By attrition, I mean that any employee can enter and go freely if they are found to be competent and worth well for any organisation. So, he was one of the competent employees which an international organisation found to be competent and suitable for a position in their organisation and he was offered a package which, unfortunately, SME Mauritius could not match and he chose to leave. In as far as the recruitment of other positions, the recruitment exercise is still on and also I have to inform that 5 employees of ex SMEDA in Rodrigues also have been redeployed.

Madam Speaker, moving forward from a national policy perspective, allow me to remind the House that the vision and mission set in the 10-year Master Plan for the SME sector are based on five main objectives that are envisaged to support the transformation of our enterprises into innovative, globally competitive, sustainable and value creation entities.

Madam Speaker, each and every objective mentioned has been specifically addressed either through strategies or schemes announced in the context of this Budget. Such a methodological approach is to be commended by all stakeholders of the sector as through the various measures geared towards entrepreneurs, the SME ecosystem, which is divisive and degenerative by default, will rather become distributive, inclusive and regenerative by design.

Madame la présidente, malgré leur poids dans les économies globales et en dépit de leur rôle moteur en termes de développement économique, les PME décrivent souvent un accès limité au financement. Ceci est conforté par une étude de l'OMC qui stipule qu'à l'échelle mondiale, la moitié des demandes de financement des PME est rejetée contre seulement 7% des demandes des entreprises multinationales. A maintes reprises, les institutions internationales font d'ailleurs un plaidoyer pour consentir des efforts additionnels pour soutenir les PME.

A Maurice, en 2016, nous avions lancé le *SME Development Certificate Scheme*, qui a mené à la validation par mon ministère de 369 projets d'une valeur totale de R 1.4 milliards. L'année 2017 a été marquée par la réintroduction du *Leasing Equipment and Modernisation Scheme (LEMS)*, sous lequel quelques R 72 millions ont été traitées à ce jour. 24 entrepreneurs ont fait appel au *SME Factoring Scheme*, ce qui représente une somme de R 76 millions.

En cette année encore, le Premier ministre a démontré que les PME sont parties prenantes de notre développement économique et qu'elles doivent continuellement bénéficier des soutiens nécessaires, notamment avec une panoplie de mécanismes financiers s'élevant à une enveloppe d'un milliard de roupies qui sera sous l'égide de la *Development Bank of Mauritius*. Ce nouveau '*package*' d'outils à destination des entrepreneurs se décline comme tels -

- Par exemple, des emprunts pour des *startups* à un taux d'intérêt de 3%.
- Des emprunts de R1 million à un taux d'intérêt de 3% à des planteurs engagés dans le '*sheltered farming*'.
- Des facilités d'emprunts à hauteur de R1 million pour des opérateurs de fermes organiques.
- L'introduction d'un *Entreprise Modernisation Scheme*.
- L'achat des équipements pour plus de R 150 000 sera exempté de la VAT.
- Un service de '*factoring*'.

A cela s'ajoute un service de '*Mentoring*' et de '*Hand-Holding*' pour aider les entrepreneurs.

Madame la présidente, le fait que la *DBM* s'ajoute à la liste des institutions de soutien aux PME est une bonne nouvelle et je tiens à faire valoir ma satisfaction personnelle quant à ce fait. Je félicite l'honorable Premier ministre d'avoir porté son choix sur la *DBM* comme institution financière de prédilection des entrepreneurs, car la *DBM* détient la logistique

nécessaire ainsi que l'expérience voulue dans ce sens, car elle est historiquement proche des entrepreneurs. De plus, le fait que la *DBM* ne soit pas une banque purement commerciale permettra aux entrepreneurs de bénéficier d'un service qui est davantage en adéquation avec leurs besoins et contraintes spécifiques. Je suis confiant que l'entrée en jeu de la DBM dans l'écosystème entrepreneurial marque la fin des lenteurs et autres tracasseries administratives auxquelles les entrepreneurs en demande de financement ont fait face jusqu'à présent – comme le temps excessivement long pour le traitement de chaque dossier, le manque d'information et de communication par rapport à l'avancement des dossiers, les longs délais entre l'approbation et le déboursement des prêts, les demandes de documents au compte-goutte.

Madam Speaker, year after year, this Government has undoubtedly demonstrated its willingness to improve SME performance and growth by transforming them into agile players with improved productivity, better quality products and resiliency to compete in the global economy.

The Master Plan for the SME sector makes comprehensive recommendations that contribute significantly in giving substance and direction to this reform agenda, and I am particularly thankful to the hon. Prime minister. As like last year, those recommendations have not fallen on deaf ears. I am pleased to report that as at May 2018, many of the key actions of the Master Plan have been triggered and are in process of being implemented.

This Budget allocates a sum of Rs30 m. for the implementation of further measures of the Master Plan during the forthcoming financial year -

- (a) A Certification Scheme will be introduced to provide technical assistance to SMEs and cooperatives for accreditation to international standards and certifications.

This is crucial as if we want to strengthen SME capacities to penetrate domestic and foreign markets, we have to show the way by ensuring that product quality of SMEs meets International Standards. This will comprise the provision of training in technical product specifications, product costing, marketing and support in obtaining globally known certifications, such as ISO 9000, HACCP and Eco-Labelling, among others.

- (b) an SME Productivity Improvement Programme.

Such a programme will be launched to offer opportunities to SMEs to have access to technicians in order to review their operations for enhancing productivity and minimising waste.

If we take the case of garment manufacturing, with productivity levels estimated to be about 45 to 60% as compared to 85+% in larger enterprises, our Small and Medium Enterprises are showing the characteristics of sluggish players, unfortunately. 45% are stagnating largely because the technology used is outdated, labour productivity is in general low and product quality seldom matching international standards. Under these conditions, Mauritian SMEs cannot face head-on competition from low-cost and high volume producers from China and India, for example. Unless they significantly raise their competitiveness, our SMEs will never be able to compete globally.

The SME Productivity Improvement Programme will thus be instrumental in improving the competitiveness of the products of Mauritian SMEs and it will be rolled out with, *inter alia*, the following components -

- Time-motion studies to be conducted in the textile and garment industry;
- Increasing the understanding of market trends and identifying niche to be in phase with international design trends;
- Building capacity of SMEs to be export-ready;
- Develop Quality Control Practices and apply for international certifications.

(c) A Foreign Expertise and Technical Assistance Scheme to boost the Handicraft Sector.

Madam Speaker, from the very beginning of my mandate as Minister, I have always given a prominent place to the handicraft sector because of its unique contribution in enriching our cultural heritage. This sector has been neglected since the NHPA/SMIDO merger in 2005 and it is, I believe, a matter of satisfaction that needs with regard to the sector have been catered for in two consecutive Budgets, including the present one.

At the level of SME Mauritius, a landmark initiative taken in favour of the handicraft sector is the launch, together with the MCCI, of the second phase of 'Creative Mauritius'. Thanks to this initiative, craftsmen will henceforth be on a direct commercial showcase platform, whereby purchasing them directly on the portal is being made possible. This, Madam Speaker, is, indeed, a source of legitimate national pride as Mauritius is now

positioning its rich handicraft culture on the global market via the Tax Free Shopping Portal of the MCCI.

Madam Speaker, my Ministry along with SME Mauritius has taken yet another unprecedented measure in order to further strengthen the protection of our local handicraft, with the introduction in May this year of a hologram which is henceforth being affixed on all locally manufactured handicraft products. The hologram, which is the intellectual property of SME Mauritius, will be an important tool differentiating genuine, local and high quality products of our handicraft SMEs with imported handicraft which are falsely tagged with the ‘Mauritius’ label. It will act as an identifier and an authenticator with an already registered logo and in-built high security features

I must say that the hologram is an initiative that was long awaited by the community of local craftsmen as they made such a request in as far back as at the time of SMIDO.

Milestones have thus been achieved, Madam Speaker, and I am particularly grateful that this Budget is providing a further boost to the sector with the Foreign Expertise and Technical Assistance Scheme. This will undoubtedly bring innovation in product development and design for our handicraft to remain competitive on the market and create a vibrant and authentic Handicraft sector reflecting the confluence of cultures in Mauritius.

(d) The National Entrepreneurship Campaign

Madam Speaker, the equation is now complete with the DBM as financing institution, SME Mauritius as a full-fledged support institution and the Master Plan charting the way forward for the sector. Government is now better equipped to devise actions aimed at inculcating an entrepreneurship culture in the country.

And precisely, this Budget will enable us to launch an annual National Entrepreneurship Campaign with year-long series of events, culminating with high-impact initiatives at regular intervals. This will bring new dynamism to the sector as on top of inspiring entrepreneurial activities among youth, women, professionals and graduates.

Madam Speaker, global production is increasingly characterised by rapid changes in technology and a more integrated approach to employment. In this environment, skills at all levels of enterprises become more and more critical for performance.

However, an increasing body of enterprise level survey evidence indicates that access to skills is a critical issue across countries of different income levels and for enterprises of

different sizes. SMEs are particularly prone to suffer from a lack of skilled labour according to the Global Business Monitor, which further states that skills shortages were identified as the number one issue faced by businesses in 2017.

As revealed in the Master Plan, the skills shortage is one of the most important national supply side constraints affecting the ability of Mauritian SMEs to enter or move up value chains. And one of the main reasons behind this state of affairs is that entrepreneurship is viewed as a risky and second option by youth, including many graduates and professionals.

In line with Government's vision to enhance the talent pool and to address the skills mismatch issue, this Budget introduces a series of programmes, including an unprecedented SME Employment Scheme, to cater mainly for the youth and their employability. *Cela tombe à point nommé, Madame la présidente.* Some one billion rupees is thus being allocated to support 14,000 unemployed to be re-skilled and to get the foundation to become entrepreneurs or attractive for employment.

The 10-Year Master Plan for the SME sector has touched upon the issue of employability of youth in the SME sector. In this context, a Youth Entrepreneurship Survey was also conducted to ascertain the willingness of young graduates to consider entrepreneurship as a career option. The following major obstacles to employ young graduates were identified by entrepreneurs -

- (i) Skills mismatch - over 70% of graduates are from fields such as management, economics, accounting and social science. Entrepreneurs feel that the industry in which they evolve require other qualifications.
- (ii) Youngsters are less attracted to look for jobs in the SME sector.
- (iii) Young graduates have high salary and career prospect expectations which cannot be met by SMEs.

The weak employability in the SME sector is not a problem, which is faced by Mauritian SMEs only. It is a global issue which has been highlighted in the International Labour Organisation's World Employment and Social Outlook 2017 Report, whereby the ILO estimates that the contribution of SMEs to total employment has stagnated. The organisation has appealed for policies to better promote SMEs. And today, Mauritius, being at the leading position in the Sub-Saharan Africa region in the Ease of Doing Business Report 2018, is setting the example through the introduction of the SME Employment Scheme.

Je suis d'avis, Madame la présidente, que le *SME Employment Scheme* est avantageux à deux volets. D'abord, en permettant l'embauche d'environ 1,000 gradués qui bénéficieront d'une allocation mensuelle de R 14,000 du HRDC dans le secteur des PME. Le gouvernement s'attaque au problème de chômage chez les jeunes.

Le 2^{ème} volet de cette mesure vise certainement à renforcer les PME en préconisant un rajeunissement du personnel et la professionnalisation de l'industrie. Avec l'entrée en opération de cette mesure, les PME vont pouvoir recruter des jeunes professionnels qui seront au service de leurs entreprises sans pour autant se soucier d'un quelconque fardeau financier, car les employeurs n'auront qu'à payer les frais de transport. Et je suis sûr que les domaines de la biotechnologie, des TIC et de la comptabilité seront certainement privilégiés.

Le fait est indéniable, et comme le conluent d'ailleurs les institutions internationales de renom, les PME pourvoient le plus grand nombre d'emplois dans le monde. A Maurice, les PME comprennent 55% des employés du privé. La mise en œuvre du *SME Employment Scheme* entraînera définitivement une hausse de ce pourcentage.

Madam Speaker, in this same line of thought, I will touch on the issue of training of employees who are already in the SME sector, which suffers from a lack of investment by SMEs.

Given the vulnerability of SMEs in the economy, their internal capabilities should be strengthened, and one way of empowering them is through the continuous training of their personnel. In order to encourage SMEs to look forward to improve the capabilities of employees, the Prime Minister has announced an increase from 60% to 75% of the refund of training costs. I will urge SMEs to perceive training as a strategic investment and to take full advantage of such a measure to maximise productivity gains.

By implementing the SME Employment Scheme and increasing the refund rate of training costs for SME employees, the Government is thus providing targeted support in high priority areas. First, we are laying the foundations for instilling an entrepreneurial culture among our youth as well as fostering high growth potential entrepreneurs that can innovate, scale up and create value. Second, we are creating the necessary conditions to consolidate SMEs for competing in global markets and move to higher-value-added functions.

Madam Speaker, for the very first time in Mauritius, Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be harnessed to establish a new Mauritius Innovation and Entrepreneurship Framework for young inventors and entrepreneurs. This will allow them to push their ideas into the market

and refine them accordingly. In addition, it will also provide a free service to Small and Medium businesses that wish to operate internationally to develop their online presence, use quantitative and computational methods to improve their business, and connect them with local entrepreneurs who can help them improve their process.

Madam Speaker, a future entrepreneur born today will graduate from university in 2035 approximately. In fact, in the same way, learning to read was an essential skill of the 1920s, so will understanding and working to deploy artificial intelligence in the 2020s. And in this perspective, I believe that this Budget's vision and foresightedness needs to be acknowledged as it is encouraging AI literacy, thus fuelling the entrepreneurial minds of tomorrow. Now is indeed the time to act before too many traditional career paths vanish.

Today, AI is an additional challenge that businesses must consider in order to be effective and that entrepreneurs need to master before being successful online.

Madame la présidente, le secteur des PME est ainsi appelé à tirer profit de l'intelligence artificielle et à identifier les nombreuses occasions qui émergent déjà avec l'utilisation des technologies et des applications en intelligence artificielle. En intégrant des systèmes capables d'apprendre, de reconnaître et de réagir, les PME qui feront désormais usage de l'intelligence artificielle comme un levier de maintien et d'amélioration de leur compétitivité détiendront un avantage concurrentiel en -

- réduisant les coûts grâce à l'amélioration des opérations ;
- optimisant la différenciation de leurs produits avec de nouvelles fonctionnalités, et
- répondant aux besoins spécifiques d'une clientèle de niche.

Madam Speaker, since the beginning of its mandate, Government has been devising strategies to foster the emergence of a wave of modern entrepreneurs, and I believe that measures with regard to the acceleration of the country's move to an age of digitisation through AI, blockchain technologies and Fintech are spot-on to create optimum conditions to spur the creation of such new, innovative entrepreneurial ventures integrating AI.

En effet, Madame la présidente, nous devons nous attendre à une transformation de notre paysage entrepreneurial dans les années à venir, avec des possibilités de créer des entreprises à forte valeur-ajoutée. Plusieurs opportunités verront le jour dans la création de technologies et d'applications en intelligence artificielle pour automatiser les réponses aux

questions pour le service à la clientèle et identifier leurs préférences de consommation, qualifier les clients potentiels, surveiller les commentaires sur les réseaux sociaux, automatiser les chaînes de montage, ou encore repérer les goulets d'étranglement, entre autres. Ceci sera d'ailleurs au bénéfice des entrepreneurs existants qui pourront alors améliorer leur niveau de productivité grâce aux produits innovants des entrepreneurs de l'ère de l'intelligence artificielle.

The SME sector has in any case already embarked on the digitisation journey since last year. I hereby wish to inform this House that the website of SME Mauritius Ltd has already been developed while its Management Information System (MIS) is being fine-tuned. A comprehensive CRM platform is being envisaged, which will represent a central depository of all the data relating to registered SMEs. This represents the first component of the SME platform, for which Budget 2017/2018, that is last year's, made provision, and this component of the portal is expected to be live by July this year.

In addition, in February 2018, SME Mauritius launched 5 innovative schemes for the betterment and enhancement of our SMEs, including one devise to assist SMEs in developing and implementing the various tools and means for online presence and marketing. 25 applications have been processed for this scheme.

The other 4 schemes which are being operated by SME Mauritius are -

1. the Access to Market Scheme, whereby 36 applications have been received;
2. the Technology and Skills Transfer Scheme for which 5 entrepreneurs have applied;
3. the Mentoring and Hand Holding Programme. 60 entrepreneurs have already expressed their willingness to benefit from this scheme, and
4. the Green Energy Promotion–Solar Photovoltaic Rebate Scheme for which 10 applications are being processed.

Madam Speaker, the liberalisation of trade has been having an adverse impact on local production for too long. This has led to a situation of unfair competition in local SMEs due to the influx of imported products mainly of subsectors such as textile and apparel manufacturing which enter the country on a duty-free basis. The domestic market is thus flooded with these imported products which are sold at a cheaper price than products of Mauritian SMEs.

In such a context, Mauritius is dangerously moving away from a production nation to an import nation. For example, the share of GDP from the manufacturing sector has fallen to 17% in recent years and, as Vision 2030 stipulates, this figure has to be increased to 25% for Mauritius to fully benefit from opportunities of a healthy industrial base.

The third pathway enunciated in this Budget which is to foster a new wave of import substitution industry and revive export led production is thus vital. This strategy is essential not only to revive local production, boost private investment and generate jobs, but also to reduce our trade and current account deficits. The context is right for the redeployment of such a strategy.

Madam Speaker, allow me to do justice to the cooperatives sector as this is one of the vital sectors and I will not exaggerate by telling that by 2014 this cooperatives sector was almost fading out. There was no sense of direction, absolutely no visibility, no motivation, be it at the level of the officers, nor at the level of the different cooperative societies or the federations.

The situation at the Vacoas Multipurpose Cooperative Society back in 2014 epitomises the chaotic situation that I have just described. It is as from January 2015 that we have been able to create a vibrant cooperative movement. And, I will list certain measures that we have taken.

First, we have come up with a new Cooperative Act 2016 which has introduced stricter control on the part of directors of the different cooperative societies and federations. But, at the same time, it has given more opportunities to the cooperative societies do indulge into other business activities by having joint ventures with other companies for example.

Secondly, we have restructured the cooperative movement. Formerly, prior to 2014, we had the cooperative primary societies and that the federations only whereas the new law provides for a tertiary cooperative society and in this vein, the Mauritius Cooperative Alliance was set up. The Mauritius Cooperative Alliance is

the mouthpiece of the cooperative movement, both locally and on the international scene.

I have had the opportunity to assist a conference last month in Maputo, Mozambique and while we presented the Cooperative Movement as it stands today in Mauritius, the other members attending that conference from the different parts of Africa were really amazed by the progress that we have done during the past three years. We are also coming up with the

National Cooperative College. The building has already been renovated *et on est en train de placer les mobiliers et je crois que ce sera opérationnel dans un ou deux mois.*

We have also introduced information technology at the level of the Ministry. One can imagine that in 2014 at the age of digitalisation when we speak of so many applications, all the files at the Ministry were papers in files, hardcopies everywhere. It is only when we came into office that we have started *l'informatisation de ce ministère.*

There was one cooperative society and I would like to say a few words on the Saint Antoine Cooperative Trust. This Trust was set up back in 1994 following the closure of the Saint Antoine Mill. The sugar milling company had injected some Rs25 m. in this Trust. *Evidemment c'était pour venir en aide aux planteurs* as the name implies the Saint Antoine Cooperative Trust in this catchment area of Saint Antoine.

From 1994 to 2014, that is, a period of 20 years, only Rs4 m. had been spent in favour of the planters and everybody will agree that there are enormous problems affecting the planters. Only Rs4 m.! And when I requested for the file and I went through the bank statement, there was Rs85 m. in the bank account of that Trust! *On s'est mis au travail et dans une seule année*, over a period of 12 months we have spent as much as was spent during the 20-year period by granting money to the planters to buy fertilizers, to buy sprayers, by providing grant on every tonne of sugarcane that they are harvesting, in road mending, just to name one of the cooperative federations, Madam Speaker. Everybody in the country recognises the work that that has been achieved by the Ministry in the cooperative movement so that there is visibility, there is motivation today, and we believe that the cooperative movement which has 105 years of existence still has *un avenir certain dans ce pays.*

Madam Speaker, I will see to it that the issue of the Vacoas Multipurpose Cooperative Society be handled properly because the remnants of all the perpetrators of the financial mess prior to 2014 are still there and they are watching for every opportunity to bleed further this cooperative society and I know what I am telling, Madam Speaker. And, as long as I will be at the head of the Ministry they will not be able, as I said, to bleed further this cooperative society.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I resume my desk.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(4.22 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South and Port Louis Central):

Madame la présidente, un budget panadol, un budget palliatif, un budget qui soulage momentanément mais qui ne guérit pas, un budget qui traite les symptômes mais pas les causes de la maladie, un budget qui apaise la colère et la grogne du peuple dans un premier temps mais ne prévoit aucune solution durable à leurs problèmes, un budget qui démontre l'incapacité de ce gouvernement à prendre des décisions courageuses. Un gouvernement qui reporte les décisions au calendre grecque. Un gouvernement qui refuse de s'attaquer aux problèmes économiques. Un gouvernement qui refuse de s'attaquer aux problèmes sectoriels. Un gouvernement qui refuse à s'attaquer aux problèmes liés au vieillissement de la population. Pourtant le problème de l'industrie sucrière ne date pas d'hier.

On sait qu'il faut une meilleure répartition des recettes de la canne, du sucre, de la mélasse, de la bagasse entre usiniers et planteurs. On sait qu'il faut revoir l'accord entre la CEB et les IPPs. On sait que les laboureurs, artisans et autres travailleurs du l'industrie sucrière ne doivent pas être les éternelles sacrifiés. Mais on sait aussi que le gouvernement doit revoir sa politique d'encourager la conversion des terrains agricoles en terrain de golf et en *smart cities*. Mais on a à faire à un gouvernement qui n'assume pas sa responsabilité et qui refuse de prendre les mesures qui s'imposent.

En conséquence, Madame la présidente, on a eu droit, la semaine dernière, à un budget sans vision, sans orientation et qui ne relancera certainement pas l'économie. D'ailleurs, pour la troisième année consécutive, le taux de croissance est en dessous des prévisions budgétaires. On est bien loin des 5.7% annoncé par l'ancien ministre des finances, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo. On est toujours en dessous du seuil fatidique de 4%.

Pourtant, contrairement à ses prédécesseurs, le Premier ministre avait une large marge de manœuvre ; ayant bénéficié des milliards de roupies si généreusement offertes par le gouvernement Indien et que nous remercions infiniment une nouvelle fois. Mais comment avoir un taux de croissance plus élevé si le gouvernement, lui-même, ne dépense pas ce qu'on a voté. ? Selon les chiffres publiés par les *Estimates*, sur les R 18 milliards du *Capital Budget* prévues pour l'année écoulée, le gouvernement n'a dépensé que R 13 milliards. Et si on retire les transferts dans des fonds, des transferts au corps paraétatique, des vieux trucs de métier, le gouvernement n'a dépensé, en tout et pour tout, que R 8 milliards. Et si on tient compte des chiffres de la Banque Centrale, c'est encore moins que cela. Quant au *grant*, les donations qu'on a reçues des R 6.9 milliards prévu, on a décaissé que R 3.3 milliards, même pas la moitié.

En d'autres mots, Madame la présidente, on a de l'argent, mais le gouvernement ne le dépense pas. Et quand le gouvernement décide de dépenser, il le fait sur des dépenses courantes. En effet, les dépenses courantes ont connu une augmentation vertigineuse pour atteindre R 106 milliards cette année, et presque R 116 milliards l'année prochaine, soit une augmentation de 10%. Tout simplement insoutenable à long terme.

Donc, Madame la présidente, on a une nouvelle fois eu droit à un budget irresponsable où l'investissement est sacrifié au profit de la consommation, où le budget de l'investissement est sacrifié au profit des dépenses courantes. Et quel *Capital Budget* ? Si, au moins, ce gouvernement avait eu la vision de venir avec de nouveaux projets, hélas, on a eu droit à un budget réchauffé. Le Premier ministre n'a fait que de répéter une longue liste de projets déjà annoncés lors des budgets précédents, notamment sous la *Road Decongestion Programme*. Certains de ces sentiers, d'ailleurs, datent depuis le temps où Anil Baichoo était ministre. Donc, on a eu droit, une nouvelle fois, au rondpoint Jumbo-Phœnix, au pont reliant Coromandel à Sorèze, au pont à la Rue Decaen et j'en passe. Le même disque rayé à une exception près, il n'y a pas mention de *Ring Road*. Finalement, le gouvernement semble avoir assez tourné en rond sur ce projet, qui a quand même englouti plusieurs milliards de roupies.

Par contre, le gouvernement nous promet l'ouverture du tronçon Terre Rouge-Verdun pour décembre 2014, soit quatre ans après. Votre ministre, malheureusement, préférant la valse des consultants, après le rapport des consultants singapouriens, on a eu droit au rapport des coréens, après le rapport des Coréens, on a eu droit au rapport des français, et maintenant on a droit au rapport des Coréens sur les rapports des français sur les rapports des singapouriens. Non, mais écoutez, c'est du grand n'importe quoi ! Dois-je rappeler au ministre, comme jadis le disait si bien Margaret Thatcher:

“Advisors are here to advise, Ministers are here to decide.”

Donc, de grâce, M. le ministre ! Cessez de vous cacher derrière les consultants qui ne font que de s'engraisser des deniers publics. Trois ans et demi déjà, et vous n'avez même pas pu réparer une route, mais comment allez-vous donc faire pour le Metro Express ? A se demander si ce gouvernement a vraiment les compétences nécessaires...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please !

Mr Uteem: ...pour faire avancer les dossiers, sinon les compétences pour faire réaliser les projets. Pendant trois ans, ils n'ont pas pu atteindre leurs objectifs. Pendant trois ans, ils n'ont pas réalisé ce qu'ils ont promis et maintenant ils veulent nous faire croire qu'en l'espace d'une année ou deux, ils vont tout réaliser ? C'est pourquoi je qualifie ce budget de budget farceur.

Prenons le cas de logements sociaux. Malheureusement, le ministre qu'hier parlait beaucoup, s'exprimait largement, il n'est pas là aujourd'hui pour écouter la réplique. Dans la campagne électorale, ils avaient promis de construire 10,000 logements sociaux, soit 20,000 par an. Une promesse qu'ils ont archi répété dans le discours du trône. 10,000 logements sociaux ! 2,000 par an. Répondant à une question parlementaire du 15 mai du 2018, soit le mois dernier, PQ B/374, le ministre du logement déclarait et je cite –

“From figures that I just mentioned, we are going to construct not only 10,000, it will be above 10,000 housing units.”

Il faut monter les enchères. Il est en direct à la télé. Donc, il va construire plus de 10,000 maisons. Mais ce même ministre, à peine quelques minutes plus tôt, nous disait, et je cite –

“Construction of 612 housing units started as from 2015, out of which 268 units have already been delivered and the remaining are expected to be delivered by June 2018.”

Quel aveu! Depuis 2015, depuis la prise de pouvoir de ce gouvernement, ils n'ont construit et livré que 268 nouvelles maisons. 268 nouvelles maisons en trois ans ! Voilà ce que vous avez fait. Et aujourd'hui, ils veulent nous faire croire qu'en l'espace de deux ans, ils vont construire 6,800 maisons ! Non mais, il ne faut tout de même pas prendre les enfants du bon Dieu pour des imbéciles. Et si vous pouviez construire et livrer 3,000 maisons par an, pourquoi ne l'avez-vous pas fait plus tôt ? Est-ce que parce que votre ministre d'alors, le Vice-Premier ministre, était plus occupé à voyager en jet privé et se faire photographier avec les princes et les émirs de ce monde ? Où était-il plus intéressé à rencontrer des types comme M. Chalopard, qui, n'oublions pas, a fait de graves allégations de pots de vin. Mais bien sûr, cela n'intéresse pas l'ICAC.

Madame la présidente, en épluchant les *Estimates*, on constate que la NHDC compte construire ces 6,800 logements sociaux au coût de R 7.6 milliards. Comment ? Des fonds propres de la NHDC. Et pas un mot dans le budget, ni dans les *Estimates* ! Où la NHDC va trouver ces R 7.6 milliards ? Est-ce qu'une nouvelle ponction des poches des contribuables ?

Est-ce qu'une nouvelle donation des pays amis ? Est-ce de nouveaux prêts qui ne sont pas répercutés sur les *Estimates* ? J'espère que l'honorable Premier ministre va nous éclairer parce que, hier, le ministre de Logement, nous a pipé mot, comment il compte financer la construction de 6,800 logements sociaux.

Madame la présidente, si on jette un coup d'œil aux endroits où le ministre va construire ces nouveaux logements sociaux à l'*Appendix 1* du discours du budget. 17 endroits sont identifiés, mais aucun des 17 sites identifiés ne se trouvent à Port Louis ou aux alentours de Port Louis. Alors que Port Louis est l'endroit où il y a la plus grande demande de logement. Et hier dans son discours, le même ministre voulait faire croire qu'il a résolu le problème des *squatters*. M. le ministre, aller faire un tour du côté des habitants de Résidence Manna, de Résidences Nazareth, de Camp Brûlé à Tranquebar ou même dans les hauteurs de Vallée Pitot, et vous constaterez les centaines de familles qui vivent toujours dans des habitations les plus précaires, dans des conditions les plus déplorables, et cela je l'ai dit depuis des années, Madame la présidente, mais ce gouvernement ne fait rien. *Pas zot dimoune sa ti malheureux sa.*

Toujours, sous l'item budget farceur, comment passer sous silence l'autre grande promesse électorale archi répétée, le fameux *dilo 24/7*. Et le Premier ministre a l'audace de venir dire la semaine dernière, au paragraphe 154 du discours –

“Our resolve to have 24-7 water supply across the country for all households is undiminished.”

Madame la présidente, heureusement que le ridicule ne tue pas. Depuis janvier 2015, ce gouvernement à prélevé R 4 sur chaque litre d'essence et de diesel pour la *Build Mauritius Fund*. Vous avez promis d'utiliser ces fonds pour remplacer les vieux tuyaux, mais vous n'avez utilisé qu'une fraction de ce fonds. Le *Deputy Prime Minister* répondant à une question parlementaire que je lui avais adressée en Avril de cette année, nous informait que selon les consultants Singapouriens en 2012 - je dis bien en 2012 - the *non-revenue water*, c'est-à-dire, la perte d'eau – d'eau commerciale - était 55 %. Et ce même ministre, le *Deputy Prime Minister*, nous dit qu'en 2017, selon le rapport de la Banque Mondiale, le *non-revenue water* qui était 55% en 2012 a passé à 60%, dont 40% de perte physique et 20% en perte commerciale.

Donc, sous ce gouvernement, loin de s'améliorer, il y a eu une nette détérioration dans le *non-water revenue*. Un aveu d'échec/de taille de la part du *Deputy Prime Minister*.

Madame la présidente, devrions-nous nous en étonner pour autant? On a un *Deputy Prime Minister* obsédé par l'augmentation du prix de l'eau. Un *Deputy Prime Minister* obsédé par la privatisation de la gestion et la distribution d'eau, pour qui toutes n'est que *doom and gloom* au niveau de la CWA. Heureusement, le Premier ministre a annoncé qu'il n'y aura pas d'augmentation dans le prix de l'eau. Quelle claque magistrale *au Deputy Prime Minister*, qui à peine quelques semaines de cela, annonçait dans cette auguste Assemblée que la Banque Mondiale travaillait sur une nouvelle grille tarifaire.

Si le Premier ministre a bien désavoué son *Deputy Prime Minister* sur le prix de l'eau, il n'a par contre pas pipé mot sur le contrat d'affermage. Un contrat qui aura sans doute un impact direct sur l'emploi de travailleurs de la CWA et sur le tarif d'eau. Le silence du Premier ministre, Madame la présidente, à ce propos, est en train de créer un climat malsain au sein de la CWA. Aujourd'hui même, dans un quotidien, on pouvait lire à la même page deux articles. Un venant d'une source proche de CWA qui faisait comprendre que le projet d'affermage tient la route avec ou sans révision des tarifs. Alors que dans ce même journal, un autre article cette fois-ci, une source proche du bureau du Premier ministre étudie en ce moment une option de remplacement préférant miser une sur importante exercice de recrutement pour prendre en main la gestion de l'organiste.

Donc, on ne peut pas continuer dans cette incertitude, et j'espère que le Premier ministre dans son *summing-up* aura l'occasion une fois pour toutes de venir confirmer qu'on n'aura pas de contrat d'affermage parce que, Madame la présidente, nous n'avons pas besoin de contrat d'affermage. Nous avons déjà des compétences voulues. Nous avons déjà les moyens financiers. Il nous ne manque que la volonté politique pour améliorer les choses. Sinon, comment expliquer que l'on ne dépense pas l'argent qu'on a *earmark* pour les remplacements des vieux tuyaux?

Comment expliquer que la Bagatelle Dam qui aurait soulagé des milliers des familles n'est toujours pas entièrement opérationnelle car la *Bagatelle Treatment Plant* n'est pas toujours complétée ? Pourtant selon les *Estimates*, la Bagatelle Dam nous a quand même coûtée la bagatelle somme de R 7 milliards. On a dépensé des centaines de millions de roupies pour la station de traitement de Pailles. Pourtant, à chaque averse, il y a toujours des coupures d'eau à Port Louis. Et que dire du réservoir à Rivière des Anguilles annoncé depuis 2015. Combien d'argent a été *earmark* pour ce projet dans cette année financière ? Allons voir ! A la page 88 des *Estimates - item 31113, Construction of Dams (b) Rivière des Anguilles, project value R 3.2 milliards earmarked* pour 2017/2018, R 87 millions,

2018/2019 R 55 millions, 2019/2020, et 2020/2021, zéro. Zéro ! Comment vous - les trois députés, Ministre et transfuge du numéro 13 - allez expliquer à vos mandants que zéro roupie a été prévue pour la construction du réservoir à Rivière des Anguilles et puis vous voulez avoir 24/7.

24/7, oui, Madame la présidente, c'est possible, mais pas avec ce gouvernement et certainement pas avec ces mesures farceuses de ce budget.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalk!

Mr Uteem: Madame la présidente, au final, ce budget a voulu être avant tout un budget populiste. En plein mois de juin, le Premier ministre a décidé de jouer au Père Noël et faire des cadeaux à gauche et à droite. Dommage le *Deputy Prime Minister* vient de manquer mon allocution concernant son ministère! Donc, en plein mois de Juin, le Premier ministre a choisi de se revêtir des habilles du Père Noël pour faire des cadeaux à gauche et à droite. Baisser impôt par si, baisser prix des gaz ménagers par la, pourtant, Madame la présidente, le peuple dans son ensemble n'est pas dupe. *There is no such thing as the free lunch.* Tout se paie! Ce que main droite donne, main gauche reprend et avec intérêt, en plus. Les supposés largesses de ce budget sont, en fait, des trompe-l'œil. Le gouvernement compte bien nous plumer, mais il n'a pas le courage de le dire.

Aussi faut-il décrypter les *Budget Estimates* pour comprendre que loin de s'attendre à une réduction des recettes budgétaires, le Grand Argentier a, en effet, prévu une augmentation des revenus émanant des taxes directes et indirectes. En effet, alors qu'on n'aurait pu s'attendre à une réduction de recettes venant des impôts directs sur les individus suite à la baisse du taux d'impôt de 15% à 10%.

Selon les *Estimates*, à la page 358, revenus de l'*income tax* pour l'année encourue, R 9.5 milliards, et pour l'année prochaine R 9.8 milliards, soit une augmentation de R 300 millions. Il faudra me dire comment ! Et bien, tout simplement, attendez-vous à être harcelés par les limiers de la MRA.

Pourquoi je dis cela ? Regardez à la page 17 de l'annexe du discours du budget -

“The provisions regarding an amended assessment by the MRA will be reviewed and an objection and appeal procedure will be set out for any additional assessment raised by the MRA.”

Additional assessment. On donne le pouvoir à la MRA qui vous a déjà *assess* de vous *assess* de nouveau. Voilà, on ne vous le dit pas ça ! Il faut lire dans les petites lignes. Et si vous avez l'audace de faire appel contre la décision de la MRA à l'*Assessment Review Committee*, sachez que ce *caring Government* a décidé que vous aurez à payer un montant additionnel de 5 % de la somme réclamée. C'était déjà 10 % ; 5% additionnels, ça vous fait 15 %.

Pourtant, la Cour suprême a eu l'occasion de se prononcer sur la constitutionnalité d'une telle démarche. Là, on ne peut pas, constitutionnellement, empêcher une personne de faire appel si elle n'a pas les moyens financiers de le faire. Donc, Madame la présidente, le gouvernement ne prévoit aucune baisse d'impôts directs des familles mauriciennes. Mais là où le bât blesse, Madame la présidente, c'est par rapport aux revenus émanant de la TVA.

L'État s'attend à récupérer R 36 milliards l'année prochaine comparé à R 33 milliards collectées cette année, soit R 3 milliards en plus. R 3 milliards en plus des poches des consommateurs, des poches de la classe moyenne, et là, personne n'applaudit ; on n'applaudit plus. Maintenant on réalise que tout ce que main droite a donné, main gauche le reprend avec intérêts. On parle de réduire l'inégalité entre riches et pauvres, mais le même taux de TVA s'applique aux riches qu'aux pauvres.

Donc, en vérité, Madame la présidente, ceux qui ont vu leur taux d'impôt réduit de 15 % à 10 % - la classe moyenne - paieront en termes de taxe indirecte, en termes de taxe déguisée. Mais ça, le gouvernement ne vous le dira pas.

Autre cadeau budgétaire, la baisse du prix du gaz ménager. De l'arnaque. De l'arnaque, Madame la présidente. Le mot n'est pas trop fort. C'est de l'arnaque pure et simple. Depuis des années, on prélève un montant sur chaque litre d'essence et de diesel pour subventionner le prix du riz, le prix de la farine, le prix du gaz ménager.

Au mois de décembre 2014, soit juste avant les élections générales, la *State Trading Corporation* (STC) prélevait R 1.50 sur chaque litre de carburant sous l'item *contribution for subsidy on LPG, flour and rice*. Donc, en décembre 2014, R 1.50 sur chaque litre. Un an plus tard, sous ce gouvernement, le 13 novembre 2015, coup de théâtre, sans tambour ni trompette, la taxe passe de R 1.50 à R 2.70 par litre d'essence et de diesel, soit une augmentation de 80 % ; je le dis bien, une augmentation de 80 %.

Selon les comptes de la STC, Madame la présidente, les derniers en date pour les 18 mois au juin 2017, la STC a prélevé, entendez-vous bien, R 1.9 milliards sous l'item *contribution for subsidy on LPG, flour and rice* ; R 1.9 milliards des poches des

automobilistes, de notre poche. Et ce ne sont que des chiffres au 30 juin 2017. On n'a pas encore compté le montant prélevé depuis juin 2017 à juin de cette année, qui devrait être aux alentours de R 1.5 milliards.

R 1.9 milliards prélevés, et combien avez-vous utilisé pour subventionner le prix du riz, de la farine, du gaz ménager ? Seulement R 716 millions. Sur les R 1.9 milliards, on a utilisé en tout et pour tout seulement R 716 millions, soit seulement 37 %. Combien a-t-on utilisé de ces R 1.9 milliards pour subventionner le prix du gaz ménager ? Seulement R 162 millions, même pas 10 % des sommes prélevées.

Madame la présidente, selon les dispositions de l'Article 122 de notre Code pénal, et je cite –

« Tout perceuteur qui aura détourné des deniers publics ou privés qui étaient entre ses mains en vertu de ses fonctions sera passible de servitude pénale, c'est-à-dire au moins trois ans de prison, et aussi d'une amende qui ne pourra excéder la totalité de la somme détournée. »

La STC a agi comme perceuteur et a dépouillé les consommateurs de R 1.9 milliards, et au lieu de subventionner le prix du gaz ménager, comme promis, elle a payé des dividendes de R 1.25 milliards au gouvernement. N'est-ce pas là un cas flagrant de détournement de fonds ? On nous ponctue R 1.9 milliards, et au lieu de baisser le prix du gaz ménager, que fait le gouvernement avec cet argent ? Que fait-il avec cet argent ? Il donne R 15 millions en cadeau à son protégé, l'honorable Dayal ! Je le dis bien ! Cadeau ! Car Monsieur Dayal a bien été destitué comme Commissaire de police en suivant les procédures prévues par la constitution. Il a été blâmé par les anciens Chefs Juges Sik Yuen et feu Rajsoomer Lallah, et qui plus est, il a initié ces actions bidons contre l'État en dehors des délits prescrits, *time barred*, ce qui est fatal. Et pourquoi une telle générosité avec notre argent ?

Est-ce que le *Sun Trust* n'a plus d'argent pour entretenir ses activistes de bas étage ? Est-ce que l'*Attorney General* - qui n'est plus là -, en décidant de faire un tel cadeau, a agi en tant que conseiller du gouvernement comme le prévoit la constitution ou a-t-il porté sa toge d'avocat du citoyen Dayal ?

Mais ne vous en faites pas, demain le gouvernement, le MMM sera intraitable envers ceux...

(*Interruptions*)

Vous pouvez rire ! Demain, dans un gouvernement, le MMM sera intraitable envers ceux qui détournent les fonds publics, ceux qui confondent biens publics et biens privés, ceux qui se font des largesses.

Donc, Madame la présidente, la baisse du prix du gaz ménager n'est pas vraiment un cadeau, ce n'est qu'un remboursement, et là je dois le dire, un remboursement partiel de ce qui a été prélevé des consommateurs. Et le ministre du Commerce a eu tort hier, dans son intervention, de se targuer que ce gouvernement a baissé le prix du gaz ménager. Vous auriez dû le faire depuis belle lurette, Monsieur le ministre, les automobilistes étaient déjà passés à la caisse.

Madame la présidente, autre supposé cadeau, la baisse des prix pétroliers ; *zot meme monter zot mem baisser*. Non, mais franchement, quelle mascarade ! Le 15 mai 2018, la STC augmentait le prix de l'essence par R 4.70, soit près de 10 % et le prix du diesel par R 3.80, soit aussi une augmentation d'environ 10 %. Une semaine plus tard l'honorable Premier ministre refuse de répondre à la PNQ de l'honorable *leader* de l'opposition, ayant sans nul doute eu vent de la grogne parmi les automobilistes. À sa place, le ministre du Commerce et de l'Industrie, l'honorable Gungah défendait bec et ongles l'augmentation.

Hier aussi, le pauvre, il a essayé de justifier l'augmentation. Pourtant, la semaine dernière, son Premier ministre l'a bel et bien désavoué et a baissé le prix de l'essence et de diesel. Tout cela n'est pas sérieux, Madame la présidente ! On ne peut pas avoir un gouvernement de *trial and error*, qui malheureusement ressemble de plus en plus à un gouvernement d'*error and error*. La population n'est pas contre une augmentation de prix des produits pétroliers quand il y a une hausse majeure dans le coût international du prix de pétrole. Aussi, faut-il en contrepartie que la population puisse bénéficier de toute baisse conséquente dans le coût international du prix du pétrole. Mais, ce que la population n'accepte pas, c'est que le coût mondial du prix du baril de pétrole soit utilisé comme prétexte pour la plumer davantage.

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de rappeler à la Chambre que l'une des toutes premières mesures que ce gouvernement avait prise, à peine installé au pouvoir en janvier 2015, c'était bien d'imposer une taxe additionnelle de R3 sur chaque litre d'essence et de diesel. Soit une augmentation de 300%. Je dis bien 300%, sous l'item '*Contribution to Build Mauritius Fund*'. Puis, en novembre 2015, le gouvernement décide d'augmenter la taxe sous l'item '*Contribution to Rodrigues Transport and Storage*' qui passe de 16 sous à 41 sous sur

chaque litre d'essence et de diesel. Soit une augmentation de 150 % et ce n'est pas tout. Comme nous sommes un peuple docile, le gouvernement en profite pour ajouter une nouvelle taxe de 10 sous sur chaque litre d'essence et du diesel pour la construction des *storage facilities*. 41 sous, 10 sous, cela peut vous paraître peu, mais, sachez, Madame la présidente, que selon le dernier bilan de la *STC*, quelque R300 millions ont été récoltés sous ces items de janvier 2016 à juin 2017. R 300 millions de roupies ! C'est-à-dire, R 150 millions peut-être depuis l'année dernière. Et comme le prix du pétrole avait bien baissé au niveau mondial en 2015, toujours en novembre 2015, le gouvernement en profite pour augmenter la redevance pour le soi-disant subside sur le gaz ménager qui passe de R 1.50 à R 2.70.

Donc, en résumé, Madame la présidente, depuis janvier 2015 à juin 2018 ce soi-disant '*caring Government*' qui a tellement à cœur le bien-être de la population et le combat contre la vie chère, a imposé R 4.55 de plus sur la taxe. Mais je devrais plutôt dire R 5.25 parce qu'il faut ajouter les 15% de la TVA sur ces R4.55. Donc, depuis janvier 2015, ce gouvernement a prélevé R 5.25 sur chaque litre d'essence et de diesel additionnel. Pendant 18 mois, ils n'ont pas cru bon de baisser le prix du gaz ménager. Ils n'ont pas cru bon de baisser le prix du carburant. R 5.25 de taxe additionnelle, et aujourd'hui on se félicite d'avoir baissé le prix de l'essence de seulement R 2.35 et le prix de diesel par seulement R 1.90. Si au moins vous aviez enlevé toutes les taxes additionnelles que vous aviez mises, mais non !

Les R 4 du *Build Mauritius Fund* sont toujours prélevées sous forme d'*excise duty*. Ils ont soi-disant à cœur la classe moyenne, Madame la présidente, mais ils continuent de la plumer à la pompe. Ils s'attendent en plus à ce qu'on les félicite pour avoir fait baisser le prix de carburant. Non, mais franchement ! Et pourtant, l'honorable Premier ministre connaît le poids du prix des produits pétroliers dans le coût de l'opération des petites et moyennes entreprises.

L'honorable Premier ministre sait ce que représente le coût du transport dans le budget des PMEs. Mais il semblerait que les PME soient malheureusement le cadet des soucis de ce gouvernement. Et on est bien loin, Madame la présidente, du discours rempli d'espoir du premier argentier de ce gouvernement, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo, qui, en 2015, annonçait une série de mesures pour redynamiser le secteur des PME, pourtant porteurs de tant de création d'emplois et principal secteur en terme de contribution à la croissance économique. Des mesures qui, malheureusement, sont restées lettre morte. Notamment, ce fameux *SME Bank*, avec un capital de R 10 milliards, soit R 2 milliards pour chacun.

Madame la présidente, les PME continuent d'agoniser sous ce régime. Et quand je pense que la semaine dernière la MauBank a eu l'audace de publier dans les journaux un communiqué de presse, se vantant d'avoir prêté R 400 millions aux PME alors que le gouvernement a injecté directement et indirectement plus de R 6 milliards de roupies dans cette banque ! R 400 millions sur R 6 milliards d'investissement ! Même pas 10% ! Quelle incompétence ! Vous auriez dû avoir honte au lieu de vous en féliciter !

Madame la présidente, les PME qui étaient annoncées par l'honorable Luchmeenaraidoo comme étant le *backbone* de l'économie est aujourd'hui le *broken bone* de notre économie. Et ce gouvernement en porte l'entièvre responsabilité. Non seulement les PME n'ont pas eu accès aux financements nécessaires pour pouvoir se développer, mais en plus ce gouvernement a trouvé le moyen de se débarrasser de la SMEDA qui œuvrait en faveur des PME pour les remplacer une compagnie privée, la SME (Mauritius) contre l'avis du *10-year Master Plan* qui préconisait lui, un corps paraétatique au lieu d'une compagnie privée. Une décision, Madame la présidente, que j'avais décriée lors des débats sur le *SME (Mauritius) Bill*. Malheureusement, et je le dis avec un grand pincement au cœur, pour les PME je n'avais pas tort. Sur les 94 employés de la SMEDA, comme vient de l'annoncer l'honorable ministre de tutelle, seulement 10 ont choisis d'intégrer SME (Mauritius). Mais ce que l'honorable ministre ne nous a pas dit, c'est que la plupart de ces 10 employés ne sont pas des techniciens. Ils sont des personnels administratifs comprenant des réceptionnistes, des *attendants*, des chauffeurs. Le premier CEO a préféré jeter l'éponge quelques semaines seulement après sa nomination qui n'était pas sans controverse.

Aujourd'hui, SME (Mauritius) se retrouve sans techniciens de carrière, sans techniciens qui ont été formés pour aider les PME. Comment est-ce que ce gouvernement compte-t-il implémenter le *10-year Master Plan* sans ces cadres ? Madame la présidente, SME (Mauritius) avait tellement un problème de staff, était tellement désespéré - et ça l'honorable ministre ne l'a pas dit - qu'en avril 2018, l'*officer-in-charge* s'est permis d'écrire au *Permanent Secretary* du ministère du Travail pour leur demander de déléguer 10 stagiaires sous le YEP. 10 stagiaires, sans aucune expérience, parce qu'il n'arrivait pas à trouver preneur. Quand je pense, Madame la présidente, que la plupart des employés de la SMEDA ont été redéployés à des positions subalternes dans des corps paraétatiques où leurs expériences ne sont ni reconnus, ni valorisés. Quel gâchis !

Madame la présidente, il n'est jamais trop tard pour reconnaître ses erreurs et de rectifier le tir. Aussi je fais un appel au ministre de tutelle, que je sais est un homme très

raisonnable et à travers lui au Premier ministre d'entamer un dialogue avec ses anciens cadres et techniciens de la SMEDA pour qu'ils puissent à nouveau mettre leurs compétences au service des PME qui ont grandement besoin.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur le secteur manufacturier. En Août 2015, lors de la présentation de sa Vision 2030, le ministre Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, qui à ce moment était Premier ministre, nous disait, et je cite –

“Manufacturing today accounts for about 18% of our economy and we aim to increase its share significantly to 25% within the next three years.”

Il annonçait, et je cite –

“A revamped and dynamic manufacturing base with clearly identified focus on promoting high end precision driven technology abled manufacturing in the country.”

Trois ans plus tard où en sommes-nous, M. le ministre de l'Industrie ? Où sont les usines, où sont les investisseurs, oublions les *High End Precision Driven Manufacturing*, où sont passés les investisseurs indiens qui devaient construire des bicyclettes et des motocyclettes, où sont les bijoutiers ? Que du bla-bla-bla!

Pourtant l'année dernière, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances avait réduit le taux d'impôt pour les exportateurs de 15% à 3%, soit 80% de remise, et quel résultat? Eh bien, ces grands messieurs se sont rempli les poches, et il n'y a pas eu d'augmentation dans nos recettes d'exportation. Au contraire,

Madame la présidente, selon les chiffres publiés par *Statistics Mauritius* du mois dernier, et je cite –

“Total export for first quarter of 2018 amounted to Rs18.1 billion, 8.1% lower compared to the corresponding quarter of 2017.”

Le constat est afflignant. Ni les Mauriciens ni les étrangers n'investissent dans notre secteur manufacturier et pourquoi le feront-ils ? Le gouvernement a bien démantelé *Enterprise Mauritius* au profit de l'*Economic Development Board*. Depuis, la promotion de l'exportation a été reléguée au second plan. La politique de diplomatie économique de ce gouvernement a été un échec total, pourtant le marché africain est porteur d'espoir. Et, Madame la présidente, ce n'est certainement pas en promettant pour la énième fois un parc pharmaceutique que les choses vont changer.

Madame la présidente, mettez-vous à la place d'un investisseur mauricien. Aujourd'hui, il peut économiser des milliards de roupies en termes de *Registration Duty*, de *Land Transfer Tax*, de *Morcellement Tax*, de *Value Added Tax*, d'*Income Tax*, et j'en passe. En investissant dans les *Smart Cities* et dans des terrains de golf ; il peut se faire du *easy money* en vendant des bungalows à des étrangers fortunés à prix d'or.

Pourquoi ira-t-il investir dans le secteur manufacturier alors qu'avec moins d'effort, il peut gagner plus. Pourtant on a archi prévenu le gouvernement que tout développement durable ne peut reposer sur une politique favorisant le développement foncier au profit des secteurs productifs. Au moins le ministre Mentor, quand il était Premier ministre avait bien résumé la situation en Août 2015 dans son discours de Vision 2030 lorsqu'il dit, et de cite –

“History is not written by prophets of gloom and doom, it is written by achievers.”

Hélas, ce gouvernement est loin d'être des *achievers*. On patauge dans la médiocrité !

Et qu'advient notre secteur financier, notre secteur *offshore*. En 2015, le ministre Mentor, alors Premier ministre annonçait la création de 15,000 nouveaux emplois dans ce secteur. 15,000 nouveaux emplois ! Aujourd'hui, je me demande bien combien de pertes d'emplois il y aura dans ce secteur. Car depuis 2015, Madame la présidente, on n'entend que des mauvaises nouvelles. D'abord, le traité de non double imposition fiscale avec l'inde a été revu à notre détriment, mais l'impact réel du protocole ne se fera sentir qu'à partir du mois d'avril de l'année prochaine, quand la plus-value réalisée sur la vente des titres indiens sera entièrement imposable en Inde.

Autre coup de massue, la décision de démanteler le *Financial Services Promotion Agency*, organe sensé promouvoir le secteur financier au profit d'*Economic Development Board*. Répondant à une question que je lui ai posée le 22 mai dernier, le ministre de tutelle, l'honorable Sesungkur déclarait sans gêne ni pudeur qu'il ne connaissait même pas le nom de la personne du *cluster* responsable du *Financial Services* au sein de l'*Economic Development Board*. À se demander s'il y a-t-il vraiment encore un pilote à bord. Et maintenant alors que tout le secteur s'attendait à ce que le Premier ministre annonce un plan de sauvetage pour notre secteur financier, niet, pas une seule mesure pour rassurer les opérateurs de ce secteur. Par contre, on annonce l'abolition des compagnies globales de *Category II* pour 2019.

Madame la présidente, selon les statistiques publiées par la FSC, en janvier 2018, on comptait pas moins de 10,303 compagnies globales de Catégorie II. Il y a des *managements*

companies qui ne font qu'in particulier ces types de compagnies. Qu'adviendra-t-il de ces *managements companies* ? Qu'adviendra-t-il de leurs employés ?

Sous la pression de l'OCDE et de l'Union Européenne, qui n'ont à cœur que leur intérêt personnel de pouvoir taxer encore plus leur citoyen et leur entreprise, l'île Maurice, de nouveau, courbe l'échine. Elle élimine la dime, *Foreign Tax Credit*, elle élimine même le régime fiscal applicable aux compagnies opérant dans le *Freeport*. Mais a-t-on, Madame la présidente, réalisé une étude pour évaluer l'impact de ces décisions pour le secteur *offshore*, pour le secteur *Freeport* avant de prendre de telle décision ? Est-ce que le gouvernement compte venir avec un plan de sauvetage ? Est-ce que le gouvernement compte faire quelque chose pour ces milliers de travailleurs, d'employeurs dans le secteur *offshore*, dans le secteur du *Freeport* qui sont suspendus à ses lèvres.

Malheureusement, jusqu'à présent rien du tout. Et c'est certain, donc, pas en bradant notre citoyenneté que ce gouvernement va améliorer, va redorer le blason de notre centre financier. Un centre financier dont la réputation a été entachée par des multiples scandales abondamment rapportés dans la presse internationale. On pense aux *Panama Papers*, aux *Paradise Papers*, à l'affaire *Quantum Global* et surtout à M. Alvaro Sobrinho qui malgré la soi-disant enquête de l'ICAC, malgré la démission de la présidente de la République, malgré les avis défavorables émis par des ténors du barreau, est toujours propriétaire d'un *management company*. Sans nul doute, car le *Deputy Prime Minister* l'a regardé dans les yeux et a conclu il doit être un type bien, et surtout un type très riche et très généreux avec l'argent des autres.

Que résonnant à ce que je considère, Madame la présidente, être la mesure la plus scandaleuse et la plus dangereuse de ce budget, octroyer la citoyenneté mauricienne aux étrangers pour quelques malheureux. Je ne répéterai pas tout ce qui a été dit par l'honorable Adrien Duval. Mais j'ai fait le constat suivant. Alors que le père se débrouille quand un bon petit diable malgré son âge pour qu'on récupère notre archipel des Chagos, alors que le père se bat contre notre ancien colonisateur pour reprendre nos biens, le fils choisit de brader notre patrie aux étrangers pour quelques misérables dollars. Quel acte antipatriotique ! Alors qu'on vient de célébrer nos 50 ans d'indépendance, le Premier ministre ne trouve pas mieux que de brader notre citoyenneté.

Madame la présidente, nous ne sommes pas xénophobes. D'ailleurs, les touristes reconnaissent notre accueil et notre hospitalité. Mais nous ne voulons pas non plus devenir

étrangers dans notre propre pays. Nous ne voulons pas nous retrouver dans une situation où on ne pourra plus se permettre d'acheter une maison ou un lopin de terre car on n'aura pas les mêmes ressources, les mêmes moyens que les naturalisés.

Mais, Madame la présidente, ce n'est malheureusement pas la première fois. Ce n'est pas la première fois que le Premier ministre essaye de faire des concessions aux étrangers. Alors qu'il présentait son tout premier budget en tant que troisième ministre des Finances du gouvernement *Lepep* en 2016, souvenez-vous, que voulait faire l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth ? Il voulait amender la loi pour permettre aux étrangers de détenir jusqu'à 25 % chacun des actions dans des sociétés immobilières et dans des sociétés agricoles sans avoir l'aval du Premier ministre. Il voulait permettre aux étrangers de s'accaparer des biens immobiliers des Mauriciens sans passer par le bureau du Premier ministre.

Et l'on se souvient de la remarque, mais surtout du ton de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, alors Premier ministre, qui, au moment du *committee stage*, réprimanda son fils avec un cinglant '*fou sa dehors*'. J'espère que le même ministre Mentor, une nouvelle fois, guidera fiston avec le nouveau '*fou sa dehors*'. En tant que patriote, c'est le moins qu'on puisse faire.

Madame la présidente, je ne pourrais terminer mon intervention sans dire quelques mots sur la performance économique de ce gouvernement. Le Premier ministre n'a passé que très peu de temps sur les indicateurs économiques. Je le comprends. Il n'y a malheureusement rien pour lui d'être euphorique. Peut-être a-t-il décidé de suivre les conseils de son prédécesseur, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraaidoo, qui, lorsqu'il était ministre des Finances - qui paraît déjà une éternité - dans un entretien à la presse, déclarait qu'il ne croyait pas dans les chiffres. Pourtant les chiffres sont importants. Ils nous permettent de faire un constat de la situation économique. Ils nous permettent de voir si on a réalisé nos objectifs, si on a atteint nos objectifs et si la situation économique s'améliore ou au contraire se détériore.

Donc, prenons quelques chiffres : indicateurs, objectifs et réalisés.

- (i) taux de croissance - objectif annoncé de l'année dernière 4.1%, réalisation 3.9 %, *fail* ;
- (ii) taux d'investissement par rapport au *GDP* - objectif 18.8%, objectif réalisé - 17.6%, *fail* ;
- (iii) taux d'inflation - objectif 3 %, résultat 4.3%, *fail* ;
- (iv) dette publique - objectif 63%, réalisation 63.4%, *fail* ;

(v) déficit du compte courant - objectif moins de 4. 9 %, réalisation, plus de 5.5%, *fail* ;

(*Interruptions*)

Ce n'est pas moi qui le dis, Madame la présidente. Ce sont les chiffres publiés dans le budget et les *Estimates*. Je parie que même la plupart des gens de l'autre côté de la salle n'avaient pas réalisé comment ce gouvernement, ce sont des *under achievers*. Je suis sûr qu'ils n'avaient pas réalisé. D'ailleurs, hier le PPS Aliphon, quand il parlait, il a dit qu'il a fallu deux heures pour que tout le monde soit rassuré. Parce qu'il n'a rien compris ! Il n'a rien compris ! Il a vraiment cru que la situation économique est en train de s'améliorer.

(*Interruptions*)

Alors que tous les indicateurs sont au rouge, Madame la présidente, comment le Premier ministre a-t-il bien pu faire de telles largesses ? Comment a-t-il pu faire tant de cadeaux alors que les chiffres d'une année à une autre démontrent clairement une nette détérioration de notre situation économique ? Et là, je laisserai le soin à mes amis du Parti travailliste de comparer les indicateurs économiques de cette année aux indicateurs économiques de 2014.

Donc, comment est-ce que ce Premier ministre a pu présenter ce budget 'Panadol' ? A-t-il récupéré la baguette magique de l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo ? *Did the kitchen Cabinet come up with a secret recipe? No, Madam Speaker! Far from it! But the kitchen Cabinet did do one disgraceful act. They cooked the books.* On a manipulé les chiffres. On a faussé les données, les dés ont été pipés. Ce budget a essayé de berner la population comme l'Alliance *Lepen* avait berné le peuple en 2014 en promettant un miracle économique.

Tiens, mais où est donc passé le miracle économique ? Pas un mot dans ce budget, car il n'y aura pas de miracle économique ! Même pire, tous les économistes qui se respectent ont déjà tiré la sonnette d'alarme. L'économie va mal. L'économie va de mal en pis, et ce budget ne fait qu'empirer les choses.

Tout d'abord, il y a cette façon honteuse de faire croire, Madame la présidente, que le taux de chômage est soi-disant en baisse. Scandaleux ! Ayez au moins le courage d'expliquer à la population que le taux de chômage a baissé parce que *Statistics Mauritius* a changé sa façon de calculer le taux de chômage ! Ayez au moins le courage de lire et d'expliquer ce que le bulletin de *Statistics Mauritius* a dit, et je cite à la page 3 -

"The number of persons aged 16 stood at 397,100. Some 5,800 of them were classified as forming part of the potential labour force, that is, persons not in

employment who were not looking for a job, but were available for work, or those who were looking for a job, but were not available for work. Those persons (...)"

Ecoutez bien!

"Those persons (...)"

C'est à dire les 5,800 -

"Those persons have not been classified as unemployed since they did not satisfy the criteria of unemployment."

Voilà comment vous avez pu réduire le taux de chômage. Au lieu des 41,800 chômeurs, en vérité nous avons, quand on prend 41,800 et 5,600, 47,600 de chômeurs, n'est-ce pas, honorable Rutnah ? Et savez-vous à combien le taux de chômage passe ? Il passe à 8.1% ! 8.1% alors que l'année dernière c'était 7.3%. 8.1%, Madame la présidente, et ce gouvernement qui a non seulement lamentablement échoué dans son combat contre le chômage, aujourd'hui essaye de convaincre la population du contraire. Cela, Madame la présidente, relève de la malhonnêteté tout court, et venant d'un Premier ministre, c'est quand même déplorable.

Autre mensonge, le déficit budgétaire. Il n'est pas à 3.2% comme annoncé par le Premier ministre, mais selon nos estimations, et là je me fie aux experts en la matière, le déficit budgétaire a dépassé les 4 % pour l'année en cours et dépassera certainement la barre des 5 % pour l'année 2018-2019. Pourquoi je le dis avec tant d'assurance ? Tout bonnement parce que les chiffres manipulés de ce budget ne tiennent pas en compte, d'une part, les dépenses encourues par les *Special Fund et Extra Budgetary Funds* comme la *National Resilience Fund*, le *Lotto Fund* et, d'autre part, ils ne tiennent pas en compte les dépenses encourues par les entreprises privées en dehors du budget ; les *off-Budget expenses*.

Ainsi, par exemple, Madame la présidente, ce budget ne prends pas en considération toutes les dépenses du Metro Express, du Safe City project, et j'en passe. En conséquence, Madame la présidente, notre dette publique est en réalité de loin supérieure à 63.4% annoncé pour l'année en cours, et sera certainement largement supérieure au 63.1% annoncé pour l'année prochaine. Et je trouve cela vraiment déplorable, Madame la présidente, vraiment déplorable que l'on vienne manipuler les chiffres.

Les projets d'investissements publics sont financés à travers des prêts garantis par l'Etat. Mais ces prêts ne sont pas considérés comme faisant partie de notre dette publique, car

l'Etat a trouvé l'astuce, et ils ont l'audace de s'auto féliciter, d'utiliser la State Bank, d'utiliser Mauritius Telecom, d'utiliser d'autres *special purpose vehicles* pour que cela ne passe pas comme une dette publique. Mais quand on garantit une dette, Madame la présidente, on assume la responsabilité économique de rembourser cette dette. Si demain, Mauritius Telecom ne remboursait pas cette dette ? Si demain State Bank of Mauritius ne remboursait pas la dette ? Si demain les *special purpose vehicles* ne remboursaient pas la dette ? Mais ce sera au gouvernement de le faire, sous la garantie. Donc, Madame la présidente, c'est honteux ; honteux de manipuler ainsi les chiffres. Le peuple a droit à la vérité, et la vérité, c'est que ce gouvernement est en train de nous endetter et d'endetter nos générations futures. Après moi, le déluge.

Madame la présidente, j'ai parlé de budget 'panadol', mais ce budget est avant tout un budget électoraliste. On a bien compris que c'est peut-être le dernier budget de ce gouvernement, le pays étant suspendu au procès en appel devant le Conseil privé de la Reine dans l'affaire MedPoint, qui décidera de l'avenir politique de notre Premier ministre. Un appel prévu pour janvier 2018. Pour rappel, l'affaire MedPoint concerne l'acquisition par l'Etat d'une clinique privée dont les actionnaires majoritaires n'étaient nuls autres que la sœur et le beau-frère du Premier ministre. Une clinique qui aurait dû servir d'hôpital gériatrique, et puis comme hôpital pour le traitement du cancer, d'oncologie. Sept ans et demi après, la clinique MedPoint est en ruine. Les procès contre certains protagonistes sont toujours en cours. Mais la famille, bien sûr, a été payée avec intérêts. Et avec ce budget, on essaye d'anesthésier le peuple.

Merci.

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

At 5.27 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.07 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Roopun !

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr P. Roopun): Madam Speaker, at the very outset, I wish to join all the previous orators to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of an inclusive Budget, designed to set the foundation for the next 50 years while pursuing our transformative journey in the true spirit of *la main dans la main*.

I have listened attentively to the intervention of hon. Uteem and other Members of the Opposition, and it has not surprised me. It has been the usual ranting and rhetoric. They have been harping on a few measures, disagreeing with some forecasts, predicting doom and gloom, but as usual nothing concrete and constructive. Sterile criticism! Another Member from the Opposition intervened just before hon. Uteem, as if he had a piece of bone and talked lengthily on an alleged selling of passport.

Let me say loud and clear, Madam Speaker, we are not selling passport. We are not selling citizenship. We are providing incentives to high network individuals and this has not been taken out in our imagination. There was a Blueprint. We had a very prestigious firm, Mankingsley who came with a report and there were consultations among stakeholders. In addition to other schemes which exist, this is yet another scheme which we want to introduce in a way to enlarge the various opportunities that we have, in terms of attracting foreign direct investment. It is not a surprise that already we have got advertising by law firms.

I understand that even hon. Members close to some firms - MC Law - have advertised this measure. And what troubles me, Madam Speaker, is that already we are talking so long about this measure, a whole speech was devoted on this particular measure when details have not yet been released. Details are not yet known. I would have expected that whatever debate on this issue would have come at the Finance Bill when we have all the details about this new scheme. Of course, whatever apprehensions have been stated here in this House or outside will enable Government to come with necessary *garde-fous* so that this scheme is not abused upon, and I am sure that when we will have the opportunity to know the details, this will reassure everybody.

We know, Madam Speaker, that none of the political parties in Opposition today represents a credible alternative.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, don't make remarks!

Mr Roopun: Of course, I will re-join hon. Members and speak on my Ministry later on, but allow me to speak on a few issues which have been raised by the Opposition; I won't dwell lengthily on these issues. Hon. Uteem mentioned about underachievers. When we talk about underachievers, I have in mind: 15 years in Opposition; eight consecutive elections, all lost; 14 MPs 15 years back, hardly seven today and one taken from another party. A party broken into six parts! The last by-election in December of last year, more than 85% of the

voting electorate voted against the party. It is the tone which troubles me. I would have expected, at least, some humility, I must say. It is not my style of coming with nasty remarks, but, at least, when we talk about *budget panadol, mesure palliative, traiter les symptômes* - I believe that elsewhere, I won't talk about 'lysol', but at least I will talk about serum. I will talk about the writings which are on the wall since long. On parle de refuser de s'attaquer aux problèmes sectoriels, but we know what has been the fate of this so-called *parti historique*. So many years in Opposition, painting everything dark and which has not been able to reinvent itself.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Control your language, hon. Rutnah!

Mr Roopun: We talk about rhetoric, Madam Speaker, we talk about *disc rayé*, how many times have we not heard weeks after weeks that election is coming. That this is the last budget of the so-called Government! This *bla bla bla*. How many times, this has been used to explain everything along for so many years, demanding election, but we know that a party now in six pieces, I believe that there is much order to be put in the house itself. I don't want to add insult to injury about this intestinal war and I only wish them good luck for the next Central Committee election.

Madam Speaker, at least, you know for so long in Opposition whatever Members of the MMM state, they believe in that. Contrary to the PMSD, their views and stands vary on which side of the House they are. Vociferous and very imaginative in Opposition! Sorry! Only in Opposition that they are imaginative!

Another virtue that we have discovered about the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has been a senior Member for the last 20 years in various Governments, he takes credit for whatever is well and whenever there is any criticism, it is others who have failed. But on Monday, a few days back, he was so far as taking paternity for measures taken by the Ministry of Health. I do not know how to qualify this. But what is more important, during his speech, there was note of undertone about support given by two friendly countries, India and China.

The undertone with which he commented on those supports given by these two friendly countries this, in fact, is a matter of great concern for somebody who has been Deputy Prime Minister for so long and who has been a longstanding Member of this House.

He has also been stating that the Budget is a budget *demi kwi*, but we know how he has been taken aback, just to use the same analogy, Madam Speaker.

Let me state that this Budget has been well marinated, exquisitely concocted with the exact dosage and blend of social and economic measures. This is evident and explains the incoherence within his own party, when they commented on the Budget. Somebody mentioned about budget *demi kwi*, another Member stated *bidze manger/bwar*. And then Budget *la bouche doux* which means that she will not only appreciate the meal but also the dessert.

(Interruptions)

Of course, the drink.

But we should sympathize with those Members as we know that since December last, there *dhal pa fine kwi*. They have been subject to high indigestion; they have been so pretentious dreaming of becoming Prime Minister. Now that they have been cut to size their only hope is to secure a place on the table yet again to enjoy a free meal.

I prefer at this stage not to talk about the third-party Opposition and, of course, I leave it to hon. Hurreeram to respond, but we know that the *parti travailliste* has lost all credibility and their *casserole* - just to add to what the hon. Jhugroo stated - and other accessories, they are going to drag it for years to come.

Madam Speaker, the country is grateful that we have a Prime Minister who is in sharp contrast with Members of the Opposition. His dedication, his consistency and calmness is now recognised and highly appreciated. He has developed a new leadership model and on more than one occasion, he has been able to make persons with divergent interest to agree and we have got so many examples.

When he came at the helm of power, he has, on many occasions shown his acumen in leading this country. This Budget is yet another example where on practically all measures there has been consensus. The private sector, trade unions, different stakeholders and the population at large, have largely commented this Budget.

Madam Speaker, 2018 marks an important milestone for all of us. Mauritius celebrated its Golden Jubilee of Independence while the world is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the birth of Nelson Mandela. We are also commemorating the century of the end of World War I and the 50th anniversary of the death of Martin Luther King.

Today, as we look back over the past 50 years, we have every reason to feel satisfied with what we have been able to achieve. A proud achievement where we have been able to prove wrong all the doubters who viewed our multi-ethnicity as a source of weakness and who predicted doomsday for our country. I am glad that with the help of my colleague Ministers, our friendly countries, the private sector, the Mauritian Diaspora and our fellow countrymen of all walks of life, we have been able to celebrate the 50th anniversary and the 26th anniversary of the Republic of Mauritius with a dignified pomp and further that such an event deserves.

Most Mauritians of my generation, Madam Speaker, were too young to know exactly what happened in 1968. And this year shall remain the single most important celebration of our history in terms of independence where they have been able to participate since God knows how many will be around 50 years from now to celebrate our 100th anniversary. It is also a matter of great rejoice that all citizens of the Republic, including Rodrigues and Agalega, participated actively.

Our national flags were proudly displayed in all towns and villages and the celebration revived our spirit, enthusiasm and sense of patriotism. We owe our success to the general consensus and the largely inclusive and collaborative approach adopted by successive Governments. In fact, the Mauritian success story is based on democratic principles, mutual respect, peace and unity and constant dialogue and consultation.

Most of those attributes, Madam Speaker, are personified by our Prime Minister. His leadership is further characterised by his capacity to listen, his humility, accessibility, openness, respect for others, empathy and compassion. Both in public and private life, he practices what he professes. And this is his main quality. In short, he has emerged as a responsible and caring head of Government, while assuming fully his role as a son, husband and father.

He has already entered history with the introduction of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme when he was Minister of Agriculture. Today, he is being acclaimed as the father of the Minimum Wage and Negative Income Tax and the initiator of the Subsistence Allowance Scheme designed to eradicate extreme poverty.

With the successive Budgets presented by the hon. Prime Minister, the foundations have been laid to accelerate growth, diversify the economy, establish social justice so that every citizen benefits from the nation's development.

In his first Budget, the hon. Prime Minister implemented measures dealing with the root causes of poverty while empowering the most vulnerable.

In his second Budget, with the implementation of two historic measures - the Negative Income Tax and national minimum wage, support was given to those in relative poverty.

Pursuing in this transformative journey towards ushering a new era of development, the hon. Prime Minister went, this year, one step further in bringing social justice and relief to the middle-income income earners.

In addition, bold, decisive and innovative measures are being taken to address unemployment, especially among the youth. And carrying forward the momentum created during these three years to boost employment generation, this year again, a series of programmes have been announced to enhance the employability of our youth and to broaden their career aspirations.

Comprehensive approach is being developed to equip our youth with the right skills to integrate the labour market of now and tomorrow. The measures announced by the hon. Prime Minister will help address the major skill gap in the country and the shortage of skilled labour.

Madam Speaker that, according to the Employment Service - Monthly Bulletin April 2018, among the registered unemployed, there are 17% who do not have a CPE. 8% who possess only a CPE as their qualification while 28% do not have a School Certificate. This represents 53% of our unemployed and this is an alarming rate. And the paradox is that there is a high demand of low skilled jobs, like housekeeping, gardening, plumbing, welding, carpentry, mason and so on. This Rs1 billion earmarked to address this mismatch is something which we should applaud.

The realisation of the importance of skill development will help to not only bridge the gap between education and employment, but also to reduce our dependency on foreign labour because taking into consideration the education system we had earlier and the actual job market scenario, appropriate skills complement a formal degree and increase career opportunities.

On the other hand, Madam Speaker, the Government is paving the way for a smart and intelligent Mauritius through new technological revolution, such as Artificial

Intelligence, blockchain technologies and Fintech, which are poised to revolutionise the way all of us go about our daily lives.

Changes are coming and we have only two choices - either we get on board or we are left behind; either we adapt or we are going to perish, and this Government has chosen to create a more prosperous economy, improve our public services and enable more efficient and effective business by using the power of data.

Madam Speaker, the number of road accidents is alarming. And we should applaud that this Government is taking the bulls by the horns to improve road safety through the zero tolerance campaign and tougher penalties.

We can no more let families be destroyed by the death of their loved ones, especially young victims and it is high time that bold decisions are taken and the hon. Prime Minister should be commended for that. Road safety is everyone's concern and every citizen should shoulder more responsibility with regard to their behaviour and attitude on the roads and adopt a safe driving culture.

The zero tolerance policy of this Government with regard to the relentless fight against drug abuse and drug trafficking is also highly appreciated by the population. And we are already giving results and we know that additional support and measures have been included in this Budget to provide another arsenal of measures that will help to deal with this social ill.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius has witnessed five decades of continuous progress; and the population will recall that every time the MSM has been in Government, it has left its print.

From 1987 to 1995, first economic miracle; 2000-2005, Boost in the ICT sector; the first Cybercity built at Ebène, creating a modern and hi-tech working environment; massive infrastructural changes in the field of education; the Voluntary Retirement Scheme was introduced. And in our current mandate, Madam Speaker, we are not resting on our laurels; increase of Basic Pensions and salary compensations which have given as much as Rs24 billion of additional revenue to households. In 2016, the subsistence allowance of up to Rs9,500 to the extreme poor; last year, Negative Income Tax system bringing an additional Rs1.3 billion revenue to some 150,000 full-time employees earning less than Rs10, 000 a month. The figures speak for themselves, Madam Speaker.

During this Budget we know how much is being done in terms of infrastructure, be it road, metro, hospitals. I am glad that we are going to have a full-fledged state-of-the-art regional hospital in Flacq. And I told that it will cost over Rs4 billion and this new hospital will be the first ever teaching hospital in Mauritius which means that there will be enhanced services for the inhabitants of District of Flacq, District of Moka and District of Rivière du Rempart. I am sure that the people of the East will appreciate.

I won't dwell into other infrastructural works which have been carried out in nearly all villages in the Constituency of Flacq-Bon Accueil. I leave it upon my hon. friend, PPS of the Constituency to talk on them, but I wish also to highlight that one project which has already started and which I am sure is going to be of great help essentially to the old age of Flacq, who have been demanding a hall is the construction of multipurpose hall, is the construction of a multipurpose hall at Cité Hibiscus which is going to be completed in December this year.

Madam Speaker, with your permission I shall now focus on measures relating to my Ministry and I will start by reacting to a comment made the hon. Leader of the Opposition who stated that his wish is that the Budget of the Ministry of Arts and Culture is doubled and that it reaches 1% of Government expenditure.

I hope that he is sincere in what he stated. I do not want to dwell into figures, but what we are having today has been what has been provided for over decades to this Ministry. I know that our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is very sensitive to the demands of our artists. He has got the necessary artistic and cultural sensitivity and appreciate how dynamic and sensitive this sector is; a sector which is loaded with huge emotional, social and economic potentials, and I am sure that whenever greater effort needs to be made, he is going to cater for them.

The more so, we know that since the Prime Minister took office, he has been particularly attentive to the needs and aspirations of artists. This year again, new measures have been taken to strengthen this sector, thus paving the way towards a vibrant creative economy, at a time when it is being increasingly acknowledged that arts and culture transcend all sectors and is crucial for the wellbeing of the population and the development and sustainability of the economy.

I am glad that following amendments to the Copyright Act last year, a new Board of the MASA has now been set up. It is now more representative of all art forms and consists of

seven members as compared to three in the past, who are from the categories of music author, composer and performer, audio-visual/theatrical, literary author, publisher and other works. MASA has been empowered to protect the works of all its members and to address new challenges regarding copyright issues. My Ministry will give its full support to the new Board in this endeavour and we want to consolidate our relationship with artists and better support them in their artistic and cultural journey.

In this endeavour, Madam Speaker, we have reinforced our human resources. Six new Culture Officers and 10 Arts Officers, some of whom are themselves accomplished artists, have been recruited. I am well aware also that there is a wish among the artists community for their requests to be processed in a timely manner. I am de-layering the decision-making process by putting into place a new system while enhancing our communication with artists.

It should be noted, Madam Speaker, that at the level of my Ministry, emerging artists at grassroots level receive an assistance of Rs30,000 for the production of musical CDs. This scheme has enabled new talents to emerge and develop further to contribute to the creative economy. In the same line, the International Travel Grant Scheme, which provides up to Rs200,000, enables artists to get international exposure.

During the last Budget consultations, there was a request for an increase in the quantum of grant to artists. The Prime Minister has been responsive and has increased the grant from Rs30,000 to Rs40,000, and I am confident that this increase will be a further incentive for artists to express their creative talents.

I wish also to point out that these two measures, assistance to artists and support for them for travel grant, were introduced in early 2000 by the MMM/MSM Government. And after about two decades, history will recall that we are taking the lead again. With a view to encouraging the professionalisation of artists, this Government has set up the National Arts Fund (NAF).

It is the first time that a Government will provide such a level of financial support and has placed artists, creators and performers on such a high pedestal. The philosophy of the Fund is not only to provide support to organise events, but also to serve a noble cause: empower artists and accompany them in the implementation of a wide range of artistic projects.

This will undoubtedly unleash the creative potential of artists and enable them to achieve new heights. We are fully conscious about the tribulations of artists to get financial

support for the production of high-level artistic endeavours. This will help them to move forward.

The Managing Committee of the National Arts Fund has already been set up and the guidelines are being cleared at the level of the Attorney General's Office and the Ministry of Finance. It is only a question of days for the launching of calls. At this initial stage, the National Arts Fund will partially fund artistic projects through the launching of the following four main schemes -

First, the Emerging Talents Grant Scheme will aim at supporting projects with a view to nurturing our future generations of talents. A one-off grant up to a ceiling of Rs300,000 will be provided.

Second, the Production Grant Scheme will support established artists up to Rs800,000 whenever they are engaged in original and creative artistic projects.

Third, the Capacity Building Grant Scheme aims at supporting continuous professional development of artists. Financial assistance up to a ceiling of Rs300,000 will be provided. This grant will cater for short training programmes provided free-of-charge and which will target artists and art practitioners.

And lastly, a Research Grant Scheme will be available to support research and documentation in the artistic field. This Grant will fill a void as there are insufficient researches being carried out in this area. Approved projects will be financed up to a ceiling of Rs500,000. We hope that these schemes will enable all art forms to develop and reach new heights.

Madam Speaker, I am pleased to share that the Médiathèque, announced in last year's Budget, will be launched tomorrow, on the occasion of Music Day. It will be housed at the National Library and will serve as a repertoire of our national folklore, including collections of Sega Tipik, Sega Tambour, Geet Gawai, Sega Chagos, Qawwali and Bhojpuri songs, which are important elements of our intangible cultural heritage.

The implementation of this project will not only ensure that the audio-visual versions of our heritage be preserved, but it will also allow access for users to interface with the records. To start with, a total of 6,000 audio recordings from CD, DVD, VHS Cassettes to 35 tours and 45 tours vinyl discs will be accessible. A special unit has been created and will be further enhanced once the National Library is accommodated in a more spacious building.

In line with our mission to recognise the contribution of our local artists and encouraging their professionalisation, my Ministry organised the first National Award Ceremony in May. This event was highly appreciated by all artists.

Eighteen artists in six disciplines were awarded cash prizes and a souvenir shield. Among them, a prolific writer who has enriched the world of literature in Mauritius, but who unfortunately left us recently, Shri Abhimanyu Unnuth, whom I have the opportunity to visit a few days before his demise, and I seize this opportunity to pay tribute to him and present my condolences to all loved ones.

The National Award Ceremony will become an annual feature, and I have no doubt that it will be a further incentive for our artists to pursue the process of creativity.

Madam Speaker, one of the main drivers of the creative economy is cultural tourism. According to the Mauritius National Export Strategy 2017-2021 released by the Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, the movement of people motivated by cultural intents has continuously increased in recent decades to become a major segment for most tourism destinations. It is important that tourists not only visit our beaches and sites, but also have a taste of the Mauritian culture. The Mauritian experience is essential for branding and gaining a competitive edge by differentiating Mauritius from other destinations.

The measure announced whereby Mahebourg shall become a *village touristique* testifies the wish of this Government to further promote cultural tourism and local economic development. I know that my friends, hon. Hurreeram and hon. Jhugroo have been cherishing this idea since long and I am glad that we are going together with the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry responsible for handicraft and SMEs work together to ensure that this project materialises within the least possible delay.

Unfortunately, I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition who seemed not to be satisfied with Mahebourg for this pilot project and he has criticised this choice. But, I wonder why. He himself has been organising so many regattas there in the context of the *Festival Kreole* when he was Minister of Tourism. On this issue, of course, I am sure that if I don't understand something my hon. friends from the PMSD will enlighten us, more especially hon. Thierry Henry. I wish to hear what he has to say on that issue. Because I strongly believe that the region of Mahebourg is the most appropriate place for this pilot project.

(Interruptions)

I sincerely believe this is the most appropriate place for this project as Mahebourg has all the characteristics of being a model tourist village. It has amongst the greatest number of historical sites which are tangible testimony to our rich history from the Dutch period up till now. Mahebourg has maintained up to now much of its historical cachet. Through this project, we will be able to create a historic cultural and national trail for foreign and local tourists, ensure the protection of our national heritage, empower the local population to gain economically, develop eco-tourism and assert our uniqueness as a preferred destination and highlight the talents of our craft persons, performers and creators. I am convinced that this model can be successfully replicated throughout the island. I have in mind Souillac, Trou d'Eau Douce and why not other places.

I wish to highlight that the foundation for the creation of a *village touristique et culturel* at Mahebourg has been laid. Already various historical sites in the region have been restored. The Pointe Canon Air Theatre has been upgraded. Shortly major restoration works to the tune of Rs7.5 m. will be carried out as a National History Museum hopefully by the end of this year, whilst the NHF will also be developing heritage trails for the area.

The creation of a Film Promotion Fund, Madam Speaker, under the aegis of the Economic Development Board is yet another landmark measure. The EDB will be provided with a seed capital of Rs500 m. This is an innovative measure aiming at enhancing the industry's competitiveness and positioning Mauritius as a major film shooting destination in the region. This Fund will ensure long-term sustainability of the Film Rebate Scheme and shall also encourage foreign film producers with big budgets to shoot their entire production in Mauritius, hence, attracting further export earnings in the country.

The direct and indirect contributions and taxes paid by foreign and local film producers and studios will be transferred to this Fund. And, it is worth noting that since the implementation of the Film Rebate Scheme the EDB has facilitated the completion of some 70 film projects representing a total production expenditure of some Rs1.85 billion. The multiplier effect is such that for each rupee spent locally in film production an estimate of Rs2.40 is generated in the economy. In 2017 some 2,200 job opportunities were created by foreign and local film producers in different fields.

It is also comforting that local commercial banks have better recognised the potential of film production and are nowadays offering bridging finance and I am told that lately some Rs300 m. was advanced to foreign and local film producers to that effect. A full-fledged film

studio project with an estimated investment amounting to some Rs1.4 billion is in the pipeline for implementation. I wish also to point out that since last year an undergraduate course BA (Hons) Film and Video Production has been launched by the University of Technology in collaboration with the MFDC, the EDB and the MBC. This course is being conducted successfully with some 20 students who are aspiring to become professionals in the film industry.

I am also pleased, Madam Speaker, that the hon. Prime Minister announced the renovation of the ex-Borstal at Grande-Rivière-Nord-Ouest to accommodate the National Art Gallery and the National Heritage Fund. The restoration and renovation of this listed building will ensure its maintenance and prevent it from falling into further decrepitude while giving it added value. This new building will include office space, a documentation unit, indoor and outdoor exhibition space for sculptures, paintings and other artworks. The estimated project value is Rs45 m. and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development will provide funds whenever the feasibility study has been completed and the Ministry is ready to implement the project.

It should also be noted that other historical sites and buildings are being restored for the further promotion of artistic activities. For example, the area around Batterie de l'Harmonie is undergoing presently major infrastructural developments. Access to the Batterie de l'Harmonie which was very rudimentary until recently, the construction of a new access road to the tune of Rs384 m. has started last year. And, just to add up, I visited the site twice for the information of hon. Thierry Henry. I went there last month and I can reassure you...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't talk to him, please!

Mr Roopun: Last month I went there. In the meantime, the Batterie de l'Harmonie has been secured through fencing. An archaeological survey and mapping of the site is being undertaken by the NHF and thereafter procedures for a feasibility study will be launched for the creation of the *village des artistes*.

Fort Adelaide, that is, La Citadelle, which has not been used to its full potential in the past years, renovation works are actually being carried out by the Ministry of Tourism and are expected to be completed by August this year. The *Espace Artistique* at La Citadelle will be developed to provide additional venues for artists to showcase their talents and skills. In

parallel, the possibility of housing the Malcolm de Chazal Trust Fund thereat, with a permanent exhibition of the works of this great Mauritian figure as well as an exhibition of the history of the site is being contemplated. The site will also host live, artistic and cultural performances, and the sale of art works and handicrafts is also envisaged in the first instance. This endeavour will enable to revive the Malcolm de Chazal Trust Fund, which has remained dormant for years and can become a culturally vibrant iconic site to be visited by both locals and tourists throughout the year.

Members of the House will appreciate that this Government made provision for the restoration of our historic buildings, which have been closely linked to our past memories. Last year, seven sites were restored; funds are being provided for the restoration of yet eight additional sites this year. Phase I of the restoration works at Port Louis theatre, which comprise roofing and structural works, was initiated in February this year, and is expected to be completed by early next year.

With respect to the restoration works being carried out at Plaza Theatre, the tender for Phase 3 of the project was closed in May last, and I understand that the Evaluation Exercise is ongoing.

Madam Speaker, another project which this Government has at heart, is the setting up of the Inter-Continental Slavery Museum. After recent consultations with UNESCO and ICOMOS, the Prime Minister has reiterated his commitment to implement this project, which is one of the key recommendations of the Truth and Justice Commission. The location is at the ex-Labourdonnais Military Hospital in Port Louis. The procurement of a consultant for carrying out a preliminary study and survey is at an advanced stage. The selected consultant will have to, amongst others, carry out wide consultations with stakeholders, including academia, the Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture, Le Morne Heritage, the National Heritage Fund, relevant NGOs and local community, to name a few, with a view to developing the concept and design of the museum. I have no doubt that the concretisation of this project will fill a void that was long overdue.

Madam Speaker, the VAT Fund on musical instruments, including guitar, drum, dhol, flute and violin is also a commendable measure. This decision will encourage registered artists to purchase or renew their musical instruments. This is yet another request which we received during consultations with artists and I am glad that this has been included. I cannot

say, right now, hon. Hurreeram whether djembe is going to be included, but we will see when the Finance Bill comes.

There are two important measures, Madam Speaker, in the Budget which perhaps have gone unnoticed by many. Because it appears in the Annex to the Budget, in Part A, under the heading: “Taxation and Public Finance”. And I wish to state here that we are coming with two very important measures. First, a registered unsalaried artist will be given an option up to a given threshold to deduct 50% of the earnings generated from his artistic work other than a literary work without having to document or justify such expenses.

We know that, at times, how difficult it is to justify any expenses that we have, in terms of input and *entrants*, and this is going to help enormously because we know that behind any hour of performance, there are many hours of repetition, and I am sure that this measure is going to give a new boost to the community of artists and improve their over-existing tax practice.

There is yet another very important measure which is provided, wherein an enterprise not engaged in the business of buying and selling artwork will be allowed to deduct the cost of acquisition of artworks from local artists up to a maximum of Rs500,000, if these artworks are displayed in the place of business where the public can view them and the artworks are kept for at least 3 years. This measure will undoubtedly benefit the artist, the buyer of the artwork and the public at large. In the first instance, it will enable the artist to continue producing artworks and earn a living by his creation. On the other hand, the buyer will benefit from this incentive to invest more in artworks.

The public at large will also eventually get an opportunity to appreciate artworks, away from conventional art galleries and exhibition as those artworks will be displayed in the lobbies and waiting rooms of enterprises.

Madam Speaker, our forebears have transmitted intangible cultural values and heritage, and we are duty bound not only to protect them but also to promote, safeguard and disseminate them. This Government has successfully brought our intangible cultural heritage at planetary level through the inscription of the *Sega Tipik, Geet Gawai and Seg Tambour* on the representative list of intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO.

The Nomination Dossier for *Sega Chagos* has already been submitted to UNESCO in March this year and procedures have started for the inscription of this *Sega Chagos* on the

Intangible Cultural Heritage List in need of urgent safeguarding and, hopefully, by next year, this application will be heard by UNESCO.

Mauritius will be hosting the 13th Session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO from 26 November to 01 December next. This is going to be a landmark in the history of a Small Island State country as we will have the privilege of welcoming delegates from various countries around the world. We know that there is a great likelihood that highest officials of UNESCO will also be present for that occasion.

Madam Speaker, I will start by, more or less, thanking everybody for their kind attention and also quote John Keats –

*'Heard music is sweet,
but those unheard are even sweeter'*

The stage is set, funds have been earmarked, realistic projects have been approved for implementation. Works have started. Measures announced will give a further boost to the creative economy, while empowering our artists, creators and performers in their process of creativity. And our hope is that what will emerge will be even sweeter.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement a fait le choix d'agir simultanément sur les éviers politiques, économiques et sociaux pour une relance durable de l'économie tout en améliorant la vie quotidienne de chaque citoyen. D'audacieuses réformes ont déjà été apportées en ce sens à travers ce budget. Le gouvernement est venu une nouvelle fois réitérer sa détermination et sa volonté. Ce n'est pas un budget électoraliste, mais un exercice honnête, sincère, réaliste et réalisable, imprégné d'une dose de sociale en consolidant l'État-providence et en répondant à l'attente de la classe moyenne. C'est un budget de continuité. Les jalons ont déjà été jetés avec la mise en chantier de projets infrastructurels d'envergure jamais réalisée dans le passé. Personnes ne nous arrêtera sur cette lancée, car nous avons la confiance de la population qui sait faire la différence entre les véritables bâtisseurs et les beaux parleurs qui multiplient les belles paroles, les phrases creuses et les formules toutes faites.

Afin de permettre Maurice de passer au statut de pays à revenu élevé tout en s'assurant que le développement profite à l'ensemble de la population, nous accorderons toute notre considération à l'épanouissement de l'art et de la culture. Ce gouvernement, d'ailleurs fait de la politique culturelle un acte de foi. Nous avons remis les artistes de toutes

disciplines confondues sur un pied d'égalité avec les autres acteurs économiques. Aujourd'hui, nous reconnaissons leurs contributions à l'épanouissement du pays et nous redoublerons notre effort pour redonner les lettres de noblesse aux artistes. Ensemble la main dans la main, nous développerons nos potentiels inexploités de ce secteur qui depuis trop longtemps ne demande qu'à être révélé.

Ce qui me fait penser à cette citation de Saint François d'Assise et avec laquelle je vais terminer mon discours. Je cite –

«Celui qui travaille avec ses mains est un ouvrier, celui qui travaille avec ses mains et sa tête est un artisan, celui qui travaille avec ses mains, sa tête et son cœur est un artiste.»

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr. Boolell!

(7.06 p.m.)

Dr. A. Boolell (Second Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Madam Speaker, there are two momentous events in the life of a Parliamentarian that he/she never misses to intervene in the debates on the Presidential Address and in the debates on the Budget.

Madam Speaker, I will quote what Edmund Burke said –

“Parliament - Madam Speaker - is more of a judgment than inclination.”

Shashi Tharoor went as far as to say –

“The Parliamentarian should have the freedom at large to express himself freely irrespective whether he is sitting on the Opposition bench or on the Government bench.”

My task, Madam Speaker, has been made easier than I thought it would be. I have to convey my congratulations to our friends on the Opposition bench, who have rightly unravelled this Budget and have come with the conclusion: ‘it is a huge disappointment.’ We feel that we have been discredited on three counts –

- the political;
- the economic and
- the social.

It is not because there are few palatable measures, Madam Speaker, that we can convince the public at large of the merits of this Budget. In fact, the demerits far, far, outweigh some of the alleged merits. You know, when you have been given an Opportunity, and this Government had an opportunity of a lifetime, when it was returned, unfortunately, it spoiled the opportunity. Its vote which had been wasted. If you talk to members of the public, they express their disappointment freely. Expectations were high, but on the day they were sworn in, they forgot that they had an allegiance to public. Arrogance, Madam Speaker, was very high on the agenda.

As a new Government which had sworn in, what is your first responsibility towards the public and to the international communities? It is first and foremost to show respect and the respect that has to be earned because it is not thrust upon you. What is it that you say? There was a Government, it has served, probably there were shortcomings, a few or many, but in respect of its achievements, some of the goods things that have been done, you don't go and fix it. As we say, you never fix something if it works properly. I must tell Government the worse crime they committed against the nation, when this Government decided to do away with speed camera and penalty points.

I must tell them, today, they have blood on the hands. If we have sweat in our hands, they have blood on their hands, Madam Speaker. It is a responsibility that they have to carry forever; in trying to be too popular; they took a measure which went against the wish of the people. You cannot play on the emotion of the people, exercise an influence with the consequences that there is a huge setback. This country deserves better. I don't intend to condescend to the level of those who deem it fit to make unwarranted attacks on Members of the Opposition. There is decency in politics.

If there is decency in politics, you never walk alone, but this Government has chosen to walk alone, Madam Speaker, when it embarked upon political vendetta. Right from day one, when it selectively and arbitrary picked up on innocent people, if I have to highlight the number of arbitrary arrests, I would advise all of you, through you, Madam Speaker, to buy a copy of the book written by an Editor-in-Chief of a Weekly. Then you would realise the number of arbitrary arrests...

(Interruptions)

You are a lawyer my good friend, you should know what decency is, what the rule of law is and what human rights are. The number of arbitrary arrests ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan!

Dr. Boolell: Let me tell you the number of arbitrary arrests, I have in mind the likes of the daughters ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

No, we are not asking you, hon. Rutnah! Allow the Member to talk! He has the right to talk! Allow him to talk!

Dr. Boolell: ... the likes of the daughters of Mr Rawat. I have in mind, a couple by the name of Ruhomally. I have in mind Ish Sookun. I have in mind the number of politicians, who for the wrong reasons, were arrested. I condemn anybody who was arrested arbitrary, irrespective of the party of the day, because we are sending the wrong signals to the international community. We are under the constant watch and gaze of the international community.

They have representative in this country, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, I have spoken of decency and decency compels us to state facts and the truth. I have the highest respect for a country like India; we have special relationship with India. The bondage is very strong. But where the shoe pinches, Madam Speaker, as a sovereign State we have to make sure that under no circumstances, there is any encroachment upon our territory, whether it is perception or reality.

This is why I say to our endeared friends, a country which put a lot of premium upon a freedom of information, right at this time the items on the Budget are yet to be voted. Yet, what this Government has done? I call it through perfid means, while the items on the Budget are yet to be voted, the Indian High Commission through subterfuges of this Government have started to invite bidders to submit their bids.

And he has to highlight the number of projects which are yet to be voted in this House. And through special purpose vehicles, money rooted through the SBM, what we call the SBM Infrastructure Development. These are channelled to many companies and tenders have already been called for and we are asked to vote for items listed in the Estimates of 2018/2019. I am not talking of one cent, a few pennies we are talking of more than Rs22 billion, Madam Speaker.

And let me tell you, we value our relationship with India. But I have to tell the High Commissioner and it is best that he is advised, Mauritius is a sovereign State. You cannot call for tenders and tenders to be allocated only to Indian companies. Either we are a sovereign State, either we have a private sector, either we widen circle of opportunities for our private sector, this is Mauritius, Mauritius *Hai Desh Hamara*, but we are not going to be taken for a ride by any power emerging or existing, Madam Speaker.

And I say it without fear or prejudice, I love India, India is a country where democracy flourishes, India is a great secular State, India puts a lot of premium upon freedom of information. That's why my message to the Indian Government not to bow to the caprices of this Government, not to think in terms of ethnic politics, but to react and act properly and leverage the friendship that we have and say loud and clear that we are equal partners. We stand shoulder to shoulder, be it with India, China and Saudi Arabia.

And I will go out not out of my way, but to say that this Government made a blunder when they delegated Minister Soodhun to attend the Islamic Organisation Conference. Either we are a secular State or we are not and this is a country where there is rule of law, where there is decency. And I have said to whoever wants to listen to me, that when we tread, we don't have to tread cautiously, but we tread and walk as a nation, free at large with our heads up. Because we believe in a hands up policy and not a hands out.

That's why I say, it's not because India is dishing out loan to Mauritius that we have to act like Oliver Twist and ask for more and more. Madam Speaker, either we look at engine of growth we shall come to a standstill, either we make sure that those engines of growth work, function properly or we accept that if we don't export, if there is no sound investment we are going to die or forever we are going to remain in what I call the middle income trap. But we can get out of this trap. We can get out of this trap subject that there is transparency, that there is accountability, that there is a roadmap, that we are coherent in our politics, that we put a premium upon reconciliation of social and economic activities.

And we need India; we want India to be the main security provider of the Indian Ocean. But what I am saying, Madam Speaker, we should be clear as to the presence of India in Agaléga. Are they there because we need to give them a place or they are there because they will have a base? Madam Speaker, this country should never beg, we should walk dignified, as a Minister and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, we had lengthy discussion with India and we discussed lengthily with India, but there was mutual respect, be it at international, domestic or regional level.

In International Fora we are mutually supportive of each other, that's why I am telling my India Friends, we are grateful that they are going to construct a runway, we are grateful that there will be new port facilities, we are grateful also that they will use Agaléga to install a server which will be relayed with a central server in New Delhi. We are grateful that they have entered into a major defence partnership with the States because we have to know what is it that we are trying to do.

We have to know whether we have outsourced the safety and security of our Maritime Surveillance to India. If we have done it, say it, there is no harm because Mauritius on its own will never be able to exercise undue surveillance over a vast Maritime Territory of the size of Europe almost, bigger than Germany and other European countries, as big as 2.4 million km². We need India as a friend as a reliable partner, but we don't want to have a big brother, little brother relationship.

And I say it, be it for India or Saudi Arabia or any other country for that matter, we have to put a lot of premium upon our sovereignty and I have seen what has happened recently in Seychelles when Seychelles didn't even have Foreign currency to pay its contribution to regional and International Fora. That is why I say, either we are a full sovereign State which is going to defend its case, rightly so, before the International Court of Justice or we become a neo colony. And I don't want my country to be a neo colony, Madam Speaker.

That is why I say, yes, we want India to come and help us, but we want India to show mutual respect in respect of funds that are going to be disbursed. We want Mauritians to partner with Indian businessmen. We want to operate in a win-win situation. It is precisely because we are operating in a win-win situation that we extend facilities to India, first and foremost; that we extend facilities to India to conduct hydro graphic and bathymetric studies. These data are a treasure trove, but, at the same time, the data has to be shared.

Why do I put a lot of emphasis upon sovereignty? When people of our country feel that there is encroachment, that we are condescending, it impacts upon the psyche. It impacts upon the psyche, Madam Speaker, and you know what the consequences of these are, instead of looking at issues which are relevant. We want India to come and invest. We want them to invest in sectors which are productive. We want India to come and partner with us. And what is true of India is equally true for that matter of any other country.

Madam Speaker, it is precisely because we need partners that we cannot be a world on our own or a world of our own. And the stark reality today is that no one owes us a living. The days of preferences are over. As I said earlier, either we export and we attract sound investment or we die. And you know very well, Madam Speaker, we cannot live beyond our means. The only factor that remains constant in life is change, but this Government does not want to change.

This Government wants to have a quick fix solution. There is no quick fix solution. I did not listen to the intervention of this young budding politician, my good friend, hon. Duval. I did not listen, but I share some of the views. I share the views that he expressed freely and willingly to the nation.

When we talk of contribution to a fund, call it Mauritius Sovereign Fund, what happens if the money is not forthcoming? What happens if suddenly for reasons beyond our control because there has been disruption of national unity, that national unity has been put at risk? Recently, events have shown us how fragile we are in this country. That is why when we speak, we have to make sure that we don't have to hurt the feelings of one another; that there are mutual respect. This is a secular State, and compliance to the law is paramount. I recall when I was in Kenya, in Nairobi, attending the AGOA meeting in 2009, Mrs Clinton, Secretary of Foreign Affairs for the State - Secretary of State, as they call it - praised Mauritius as a world in miniature, as a shining example of national unity, as a country which is emerging, citing Mauritius as a showcase. Where are we now? Where are we now, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

Better? My eye! Better dream and forever you shall dream!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't interrupt!

Dr. Boolell: I will tell him to dream and carry on dreaming! That is why we need to look at fundamentals, and my good friend hon. Reza Uteem has been very explicit. We need to look at fundamentals, address fundamentals, look at the engine of growth, and not like Oliver Twist, begged for more and more, Madam Speaker. It doesn't work! It doesn't work when you come and say we are opening up.

Of course, I am for opening up. Who does not want people who have the skills to come and invest in Mauritius? We want people who have the skills to come and invest. In fact, I will extend the hand of friendship to them and say, come over, invest in sectors which are emerging. We call it nanotechnology or by whatever name, call it artificial intelligence! But then, I will invite our friends to read a statement made by the gentleman who was voted the 'Most Outstanding Young Person of Mauritius', Dr. Mohabbeer. Go and read what he said! He is an expert in artificial intelligence. The talents are here. Why don't we appeal to our diaspora and extend the hand of friendship if there is a call to give passport to first, second or third generations? Why not? Do you know the pool of talents among Mauritians overseas? What are we doing to attract those Mauritians?

All of us who are here have relatives overseas who have done extremely well in different fields, and I appeal to all of us, first give consideration to the Mauritian diaspora. Then, to those who want to set up what we call the 'golden hopes', inviting the elderly to come and spend the winter of their country here - which reminds me also of what happened in, I think, 1988. There was a Mauritian by the name of Orian, who was a classmate of mine; the parents were well-known. The father was a well-known scientific research person and the mother, a beautiful lady, a well-known teacher. She used to teach at Loreto Convent...

(Interruptions)

We are all beautiful people. The Speaker is a beautiful lady. There is no harm!

(Interruptions)

You know, in this country there are only beautiful people. We have to show respect!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Ramgoolam created opportunities for you and you grasp those opportunities. Show respect! Show respect!

(Interruptions)

Alright! Now, we can talk. I have in mind Mr Orian, born in Australia of Mauritian parents, he was denied a passport when he submitted his application. And yet, the Orian family in Australia are much sought after for their expertise, for their grey cells. We are denying opportunities to our locals, our own blood.

I am not saying that we should not extend the hand of friendship to those who have the grey cells, who are very keen to invest in sectors which are emerging, but let us be clear in our policy. And when in 1983 the issue of passport was raised, probably then by the opposition, there were some outcry that passports were given too easily to some entrepreneurs. But then, there was uncertainty in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The fear of China taking over Hong Kong, which was inevitable. The fear of one China two economic policies! The fear of being unsettled by China!

So, Ministers of the day travel to those countries, and they invited those entrepreneurs to come, but they did not invest in Sovereign Wealth Fund. They set up enterprises, people were recruited, and people became dignified. It is employment which brought men and women at par, when they have the power to purchase, when parity of esteem did happen overnight, it happened through free education. Politics of empowerment happened through employment. This is why I am telling my friends: let us look at the engine of growth and give up this Oliver Twist Syndrome. I am not saying that there is no room to attract investors. In fact, let me refer to some of the opportunities and measures which have been taken up since 2000 by successive Governments.

In 2000, Permanent Residence Permit to those transferring 500,000 in a Permanent Residence Investment Fund, possibility to acquire residential property, and that Mauritius has always provided residence permit under the Immigration Act and work permit Non-Citizens (Employment Restriction) Act since 1973.

In 2002, scheme to attract professionals in emerging sectors. 2002: Introduction of IRS to attract high-net-worth individuals to acquire residential property about Rs500,000. In 2006, introduction of occupation residence permits to retirees and permanent residence. In 2007, introduction of RES to attract foreigners to buy residential properties. We are talking of people whom we invited to come and invest. And when you invest, you generate employment, you generate wealth, you create a community, and you allow this community to blend. I am glad that foreigners today can live in an apartment, but there are strict criteria

applied to ensure that the prices of property do not over inflate. This is why I say it is very important that policies are clearly defined and not being done in a hush-hush manner.

I did listen to the speech delivered by hon. Adrien Duval, but he said one thing, and which is true because he is a very practical and pragmatic young man, although I did not like what he said during the electoral campaign, during the by-election, but he is a good man.

What did he say? That if you encourage people to come and invest in a Sovereign Fund, they become citizen at par. We do not know whether it is dirty money or money which is going to spin-dry, which is going to be re-spin-dry and circulated in the monetary circuit of Mauritius. We do not know, and do not tell me that we will rely on Interpol or World-Check.

But under this Government, they do away with provisions in the legislation. They amend provision in the legislation at the very last minute to cater for the needs of the likes of Sobrinho, who have exploited dignified people working in different places, desperately trying to eke out a living in Angola.

It is dirty stinking money and, to a large extent, aided and abetted by the former President of Angola. I am glad that there is a new President. I am glad that he will raise, if he had not done so, the issue at the African Union. And I hope that there be mutual legal assistance between the two countries. And I hope that all relevant information will be disseminated and given to the relevant authorities.

As I said, we used to be a showcase in Africa. Today, our reputation has taken a huge setback. That is why I say tread cautiously. It is very important that we tread cautiously. We cannot be seen and perceived by our African friends as if we are giving in. While they are moving up, the human right index, the democracy freedom index, Mauritius is receding, and it does not augur well for Mauritius, as a Small Island Developing State, which is putting a lot of emphasis upon services sector. If you are to do justice to those young people who are talented, who can take up the rung of the social ladder, and who has achieved mobility because of investment made in education, you should not deny them the rights, because, as a State, you have an obligation to protect them.

And I will tell my friend in the Financial Services Sector, the Minister responsible: 'make sure that you do not allow the EDB to do your job; you have to stand up to them; EDB cannot become a super Ministry run by the inner circle of the Prime Minister. Either, we have a Government, we have Ministers or like an errant boy and errant girl, you have to crawl to

people running the EDB, and I have been told, that amendments are going to be brought to the legislation to turn it into a super Ministry.

You need to have your way, and you need to have your say, and, as Minister, I invite you to go to Africa, visit the countries where you have concluded Investment Promotion Agreement, and where we have signed Double Taxation Avoidance Treaty. Make sure that their Parliament ratifies those treaties. Make sure that they understand the relevance and importance of taxing rights. Highlight Mauritius as a country which is conducive for investment. Use Mauritius as a stepping stone for Africa, and for things to happen on the African Continent, I will tell you one thing.

Why is it that we do not create a Sovereign Wealth Fund? Use the huge reserves of the Bank of Mauritius, make sure that we enlist the services of professionals, and invest the money portfolio where we will have a return and adequate return, instead of saying and spelling out in the Budget that you have a huge foreign reserve of more than 10.5 of months.

What is the point of keeping money under the mattress? Money is meant to be used and to be invested judiciously. That is why I will come back to what was stated in 2015, and I will refer to an article which appeared in the newspaper. In 2015, this Government had opportunities which knocked, but, unfortunately, they have allowed these opportunities to knock them over. We are talking of the price of commodities being very low, we are talking of money that could have been saved and used judiciously and not spent in a manner which is not conducive to transparency and accountability. Instead of using the money and investing in our manpower, make sure that we were able to send 50 young graduates to the best universities in the world.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Dr. Boolell: I don't intend to condescend to the level! Grow up!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Dr. Boolell: Grow up, you are still a kid! Grow up! Be wise!

(Interruptions)

I know you...

(Interruptions)

I know you well...

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, please! Hon. Jhugroo, allow me to tell you that when you were intervening the hon. Member was silent. Please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: My friend let me give you a sound advice...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, address to the Chair!

Dr. Boolell: Okay.

Madam Speaker: Not to you the hon. Minister, please! Please, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Let me...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No comment, please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: You know, laugh but the world will not laugh with you; cry and you will cry alone, my friend!

(Interruptions)

I am not crying. I can measure up to any one of you and take you on any time you want. You choose the venue and I shall be there.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: You know...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Dr. Boolell: You know...

(Interruptions)

...do you know what General MacArthur said?

(Interruptions)

“I have returned”. Madam Speaker, through you I will tell him what General MacArthur said:

“I have returned and I shall return and the party will come back in force!”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, let me come to an issue which has been raised and canvassed forcefully by hon. Uteem. The public sector debt - and my friend in a very nice way put it across and in the way and manner he did it he reached out and had a great outreach to the public. I will refer to what he said but let me, first of all, impress upon this Government: stop feeding the population with illusion that such level of spending can be sustained.

Hon. Ezra Jhuboo stated: “In no certain terms that for Rs100 earned”, and when he said it our friends outside understood very well that for every Rs100 earned, Rs70 has to be reimbursed to the creditors. Whether the percentage of the loan is 75% domestic or 25% international, part of it is redeemable or non-redeemable shares or equity, a loan, Madam Speaker, is a loan and it has to be reimbursed. And, if the loan is not reimbursed, I can tell you what happened to Sri Lanka. Do you know what happened in Sri Lanka? It lost control of a newly constructed port to China for failing to reimburse its loan despite the terms being favourable. That’s the crux of the matter! But it is a fact, you know as well as I do.

Let me then come to the main thrust of what I have to say on public sector debt. The off-balance Budget that you cannot beat. Amazing what this Government is up to. This is

what I call the road to corruption. The road to corruption where tender will not be called for and tender will be tailor-made as I have said and the bidders will be selected according to the whims and caprices. I don't know from which kitchen, but this is the fact. And owing to the high budget deficit...

(Interruptions)

Betamax, you have got to pay for it. You rescinded a contract which was legal! And, you know what were the consequences of this...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, they don't hear what they are saying!

(Interruptions)

Yes, on top of that he is a Senior Counsel. But he is good criminal lawyer. Now, Betamax has not been computed in the public debt but I don't have in mind only Betamax and I hope that the ruling does not in favour of BAI. And, let me tell you one thing, we may forget about BAI, probably there were measures that needed to be taken to redress the situation. But what was done?

We are talking of expropriation and nationalisation. I shuddered with fear the other day when I saw my friend, the CEO of Omnicane saying that his company owes more than Rs10 billion. I shuddered with fear and I said: 'I hope they don't expropriate and nationalise Omnicane because of the habit of expropriating and nationalising, of hiving off and then sell it for peanuts to the chosen few. They have the habit of doing that, Madam Speaker, and then they want to talk of the reputation of Mauritius as a country which we need to save, which we have to make sure is a country that we have to do our best to protect the interest of our citizens!'

So, in respect of the public sector debt, Madam Speaker, and my friend said it, the total public sector debt and Betamax is not included because it is not in the contingency liabilities, has risen to a peak of over 65% and if you bring in off Budget Expenditure, then it is more than 70% of GDP.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Xavier-Luc Duval, stated that he would write to the IMF to warn them of impending doom, to warn them of the manner that this Government is running the financial affairs of this country. But, there is a commitment, we don't have to refer to article - we know that there will be consultations under the article of IFM. We don't

even have to forward a mail to them because Statistics Mauritius has to inform IMF on all budgetary aggregates in respect of revenue expenditure, off budgetary expenditure. And, I tell you, as from this year under what they call the Special Data Dissemination Services, I think, they have an undertaking to compute all public debts. They can't get away with it! They think they can get away but there is a firm commitment. Statistics Mauritius will report. They cannot wash their hands off the problem, not all the perfumes of Arabia will sweeten their dirty stinking hands!

Madam Speaker, as I said, the debt of public financial corporations, such as SBM and Maubank would be included. I don't want to repeat what has been stated by hon. Uteem in the manner with which public finances are being used. But, there is some truth in what is being said by the common men, not that they are demagogue because they feel it, they sense it and they know what purchasing power is all about.

But when they hear that to construct a bus shelter, it cost almost Rs1 m! Where is that money coming from? From whose pocket? Forget about the three consultants who were listed to address the problem of Ripailles-Valton, Terre Rouge-Verdun. Forget about whether Colas and Transinvest is one and the same. And they are one and the same! And they are the same people who enlisted the services of Professor Magnan. They are one and the same and they are the same people. My good friend is a very intelligent man; he knows how to wriggle his way. But the facts are they are one and the same person; Transinvest and Colas. My friend agrees with me. He is nodding; he is giving me his blessings.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! Your comments are not warranted!

Dr. Boolell: What do I tell those people? And people react. Education, Madam Speaker. Access to information and education is a right, and the State has an obligation. It is no longer a privilege. Those were the days when it was a privilege to buy a magazine. Today, no! Access to information, whether in Agaléga or elsewhere, is a basic right. And you cannot treat people with contempt, you cannot treat people lightly; people react. And the day they react, mind you. Learn what happened in Tunisia. Draw lessons from the Tunisian experience. When you treat people with contempt, you treat them lightly, you do not bring them into the mainstream, and you think the world belongs to you, you have to bear the

consequences. Thanks God, people can express their feelings, their anger through the ballot box and not the bullet, Madam Speaker.

Let me tell you a little bit of the reaction and the feeling expressed by people from my constituency. Rose Belle is still in my heart. What can you do?

(Interruptions)

You know, I have been in Rose Belle since 1987, except for 2014. I call it of great human bondage between that constituency and me. I know every nook and corner of that constituency. I took him by the hand, showed him around, my good friend, the Minister of Agriculture. He knows very well. We campaigned together in 2010. We worked as a team, but you know, life as it is, sometimes you have got to retreat, but I never surrender. I may retreat, but I never surrender. That is why I say I shall return, my Party shall return, Madam Speaker.

So, between Rose Belle and Belle Rose, between Quatre Soeurs and Quatre Bornes, it is all one and the same; same people, same problems, same heavings, same disappointment. And let me tell you what they are waiting for when I will tell them that the Prime Minister has earmarked Rs1.2 billion for NDU projects for construction and upgrading of drains, secondary roads, and there will be small sports facilities across the island. But then? Where are the aggregates to construct those roads? Where are the aggregates to resurface? I have been told that there is no tar. That is what has been reported.

(Interruptions)

Temporary! OK. I hope the matter will be addressed. What do I tell our friends from La Source or junction of SSR Avenue, Candos and La Louise who have experienced flash rains and flooding?

On the issue of flash rains and flooding, the other day, our friends sitting on the Government bench were highly critical of the previous Government, as if no money was disbursed, as if the problem was not addressed. I agree, you cannot do anything and everything all the time, but much has been done.

Do you know what happened in countries like UK or France? As I said, at the touch of the finger, access to information is a right. What are you going to tell? That the Government, in these places, has failed to assume the responsibilities fully? We have to live with what we call flash flooding and flash rain. But that does not mean that money should not

be earmarked and disbursed upfront. We have to disburse the money upfront, but we have to make sure that there is transparency and accountability, that contracts are not awarded and rescinded simply because the contract was awarded by the previous Government and stop projects midway! I believe in *permanence de l'Etat*. I told you what were the consequences of not applying with rigour the politics of *permanence de l'Etat*. And I told you, today, you have blood in your hands, worse than the days of apartheid, when the former Prime Minister shook hands with Botha! So, that is why I say, either we stand up as a dignified Nation, a country which believes in a hands-up policy and let us give up what I call the hands-out policy.

Madam Speaker, you and I have worked together. You were, Madam Speaker, former PS at the Ministry of Agriculture. I became Minister in 1995, young, little bit at a loss, but I lent me ears, and I bow to those who had sound advice, who could dispense sound advice. And I have to pay tribute, not only to the former Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, but to Paul Raymond Bérenger. I recall, he was Deputy Prime Minister, he convened me to his office; we called the former Solicitor General, late Mr Venchard.

(Interruptions)

No! 1995. Are you sure? Who was it? But, anyway...

(Interruptions)

Okay, but he came to the office. And the problem of the ex-stevedore workers was a great preoccupation of the leader of the MMM, then Deputy Prime Minister. We worked together, and he came up with the relevant solution. And I told him, 'Don't worry! We will act'. And, of course, Cabinet approved the decision taken. And today, ex-stevedore workers, those who worked in the Sugar Bulk, the first in, last out, there is, what I call, redemption. They have been entitled to a proper pension. And it is a pension of a lifetime, Madam Speaker. But we did more!

In 1997, you were there, Madam Speaker, when we decided to accelerate the pace of reform, and we brought about the centralisation of factories. And why was it done then? Because we encouraged the corporate sector, miller and all the planters. We highlighted to them the merits of centralisation of sugar factories. Why? To amortise the cost at the time when the price of sugar in the EU market was very remunerative. I feel a bit sorry for Omnicane which came last, but we have to pay tribute to them because they have built a factory which is a sugar cane factory.

As for the planters, Madam Speaker, you will recall the fight we had with other friends from the private sector when we decided to revise the apportionment ratio and to be more favourable to the planters when we revised it from 76:24 to 78:22. This decision gave the planters an additional sum of money, more than Rs100 m. as a result of this decision was disbursed to the sugar planters. But we went further, Madam Speaker. I went all over the country, canvassing the small planters to regroup and to highlight to them the importance, the relevance of restructuration of the sugar cane industry. We lost in 2000. Whenever our good friend, the Minister of Agriculture intervenes - I am not going to hit below the belt, don't you worry, you can relax and enjoy your chair conformability. When I hear him talking on the sugar cane industry, heaping praise unnecessary upon the Prime Minister - what a joke, game for a laugh!

Let me tell you the genesis of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme. We have to pay tribute to Mr Maire. He came up with that proposal when St Antoine ceased its operation. Let us give credit to where credit should be. The authority learned from the experience of St Antoine. Of course, they had to work together. Madan Dulloo, I recall, was not keen for the closure of St Antoine. They waited for him to go overseas and got one of the errand boys, the then hon. Ghurbudhun, in the absence of Madan Dulloo, to approve the closure of St Antoine. Not that I am against closure. Of course, there should be closure of factory, but don't come and say that Pravind Jugnauth was the architect of the VRS I. I feel sorry for my good friend. We grew up together. We are good friends and I feel sorry for him. No mention was made of my good friend, hon. Bodha, as if he never assume that portfolio, set aside completely. I do not know why. Do you scare people within their rank and file of your party? Why?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, you know, in politics - let me tell you one thing ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Last time hon. Jhugroo I call you to order! This is the last time!

Dr. Boolell: Let me give him a piece of warning. We know when he was not appointed Minister, how he took a dig at the Jugnauth family. We know that. But let me tell him one thing. Between the tree and the bark, don't insert your dirty fingers!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, I told you this is the last time! Now, I think I will call you to order. If you continue I will have to take sanctions.

Dr. Boolell: Madam Speaker, we have talked about regrouping of planters. Of course, the process was an ongoing process. We know today what is happening on the world market. Even Brazil has had to close a few factories, but then what did Brazil do in respect of the drop in the price of sugar when India and Thailand have flooded the market. What did Brazil do? They shifted from sugar to ethanol production. What are we saying? At a time when there is undue hardship being faced by this sector which, to me, king sugar is here today and has to stay. The sugarcane has a multi-functional dimension.

I appeal to Members of the Government. You need to have the interest of all stakeholders at heart. You cannot set aside the interest of workers. You cannot set aside the interest of small planters. We need to commission a study on the premium and value we put upon the standing cane. If you refer to the Mass Report which was commissioned under the Labour Government, there is a lot of emphasis being put on the standing cane, but our friends from the corporate sector, they have to understand that this country belongs to all of us. We are one and the same. We stand together. There is an organic link between corporate millers, planters and workers. Don't forget there was a time when there were almost 40,000 working in the sugarcane industry. Now, the number has been reduced to 4,100. What is wrong?

Why is it that what was spelt out in the Blueprint on centralisation cannot be implemented? It has to be implemented in *toto*. They should be entitled to the rights. These rights have been become acquired. When they met the Minister of Agriculture, it was decided there and then that those rights are acquired rights, and these rights are here today and here to stay. And while I talk also of rights of workers, I appeal to the other young gentleman - the Minister is not here - whose father I know very well, Minister Callichurn. I appeal to him not to concede an inch or an iota to the corporate sector to amend the Employment Rights or Relation Act.

The right to strike is a legitimate right. It is a God given right. It was acquired after hard struggle and that right cannot be removed, it is a legitimate right. The State has an

obligation. The country does not only belong to the corporate sector, it belongs to one and all. I cannot understand why our friends on the corporate sector are asking for Rs1.3 billion every year to be spread for the next five years.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Dr. Boolell: My good friend, you are young, you are on the learning curve, learn and acquire. Live and learn to let live.

(Interruptions)

Zip your lips when it is called upon to zip.

Let me come to this report, Madam Speaker, the joint technical work on sugar. Lopsided, corporate centric! And don't tell me the Minister did not delegate his Permanent Secretary to co-chair that meeting. The representatives of the workers and representatives of the planters were not even invited to submit a memorandum. Planters, workers none of them! And did you see the recommendation made?

What I am saying, Madam Speaker, is that in respect of by-products, there should be fair and equitable distribution. In respect of renegotiation of IPP, the planters need to have its fair share, molasses, bagasse and ethanol because there is no cost in respect of production of molasses and bagasse it is only when the value addition. I make an appeal to one and all. We are here today and here to stay. This country is a great little country. It belongs to all of us and, as patriots, I appeal to all of us to address fundamentals, to look at the engine of growth, to make sure that we re-ignite those engines of growth. Let us look at the level of preparedness of our people. We need to overcome and to overcome we have to come together as one people, one nation.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Hurreeram!

(8.14 p.m.)

Mr M. Hurreeram (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Hon. Boolell has been talking a lot. I should thank him for this course in history. Unfortunately, much has not been said on the debate itself, but let me tell him at the outset that where they are talking, we are acting. Already in Africa, a Special Economic

Zone in Senegal of 50 Hectares in Diamniadio, second Mauritius Africa Fund financing of infrastructure in ICT free zone in Ivory Coast, while they are dreaming, we are doing it.

In the very first Budget of this Government, presented by hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, there was a list of incentives that was given to our Diaspora all over the world. Last year, the University of Mauritius in the context of our 50th anniversary launched a forum where our Diaspora has been invited from all over the world, they were there present in the University of Mauritius, where they are contributing already to the progress of Mauritius. So, there is nothing new in what hon. Dr. Boolell is proposing.

And when he talks about, it feels awkward when he talks about human rights and all. Let me remind him that under his Government, the Labour Government where he was a very senior Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth was arrested. You yourself, Madam Speaker, was arrested, Dharmanand Dooharika, journalist was arrested; my good friend, Yogida Sawmynaden was arrested under the orders of *Madame là* and even Zakir Mohamed was arrested. And even the journalists who were inquiring about that *Kalimaye* that apparently was very much disturbing, the ex-Prime Minister, even they were arrested.

(Interruptions)

Yes, my good friend, Ravi Rutnah – my apologies, please - even he was arrested. And I won't go into that India bashing speech we had today from hon. Dr. Boolell. I hope Dr. Navin Ramgoolam has corrected that speech like he did when you were at the UN. Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Hurreeram: Madam Speaker, let me...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Hurreeram: Let me go into the essence of this wonderful Budget, because hon. Dr. Boolell has been all over the place, but hasn't been into the Budget. This Government has kick-started a new era of development paving the way of our country to rise to the challenges

of our ambitions. With the 2018/2019 Budget, we are now pursuing our transformative journey to the high income country.

I am struck, Madam Speaker, by the vehemence in the description and appreciation of the Budget. Among these disruptive adjectives the term *effrayant* caught my attention. Allow me to seize the opportunity to remind the House of some frightening facts, the disruption that the world is facing right now. The Middle-East is, once again, the hotspot of instability and violence, impacting the price of oil and petrol on the international market.

As stated already by the Opposition, there are signs of impending trade wars among big nations. The world order is being reset. And the G8 after being reduced to G7, might downsize further to G6.

Increasing attacks by terrorist groups on the African Continent, the latest spat hitting Nigeria and Mozambique. Possibilities for peace and opportunities for conflicts are dancing around each other like two boxers on a ring not knowing when the next blow will hit the hardest. The rise of the far right and the far left political parties and Governments across the world coupled with unprecedented challenges caused by Brexit for both Britain and European Union added to the uncertainties. What would have been really *effrayant* and irresponsible would be for our Government to stand aside or bury our head in the sand instead of strengthening the social, economic and financial position of Mauritius through an abundance of measures, opportunities and projects.

In his Budget Speech, the Prime Minister has underlined a hard fact. We import 77% of our foodstuffs annually and we all know that we would hit trouble waters in case of deterioration of the world situation. Thus, Madam Speaker, the 2018/19 Budget brings out the visionary capacity of the Prime Minister and his ability to actively lead change in the face of the global and stable environment and accelerating disruptive trends. This is underscored by the introduction of the Sheltered Farming Scheme for the setting up of 100 sustainable, ready to operate farms as a means, not only to enhance the country's capacity to produce food, to cover domestic consumption, but also to enable all Mauritian to have access economically to healthy food.

This Budget provides for the necessary support to put the import substitution in endeavour in a strong footing, namely through loans with preference rates of interest, moratorium on capital repayment in the first three years, exemption of taxes among others. It also creates the enabling condition for the emergence of strong *agri-preneurs*. Moreover,

efforts to improve food security will benefit the Mauritian families at large through the Mini-Sheltered Farming Scheme and aquaponics. I cannot but commend such schemes.

Madam Speaker, the 2018/19 Budget outlines the vigorous strategy in pursuing our huge undertaking to build for the future. And as our youth represent the future of the nation, it comes as no surprise that the Prime Minister dedicated a sizable junk of the Budget to tackle youth unemployment and inculcate to our young people the relevant knowledge, skills, abilities, technical training and entrepreneurial spirit.

Let me recall the comprehensive approach adopted in the Budget in this purpose, namely –

- 1 billion to target some 14,000 unemployed young people;
- 50 new annual scholarships in the field of digital technology;
- doubling the intake of students in Computer Science and Software Engineering at the University of Mauritius;
- training in coding for students of primary and secondary schools;
- necessary technical assistance and mentoring to young graduates to develop their agri-projects;
- loan facilities for start-ups and young entrepreneurs at the rate of 3%.

Perusing the 2018-2019 Budget, it is clear we are on our way to an unprecedented low unemployment rate. The hon. Prime Minister has announced intensive recruitment in several sectors such as education, Local Government, family welfare, Police Force and health sectors.

Madam Speaker, 2018-2019 Budget is about continuity; continuity in philosophy and actions. The Budget contains measures aim at consolidating our traditional emerging productive sectors in line with previous Budgets. The Global Business Sector, agricultural non-sugar sector, tea industry, cane sector, ocean economy, manufacturing sector, tourism industry and film industry, all feature in the 2018–2019 Budget with concrete initiatives to support their resilience and development. The course to modernise the land transport system, provide 24/7 water supply, and transform our port into regional hub is still being pursued.

It is a remarkable feat of ingenuity that the Budget makes provision for the leverage of technological advancement to make traditional sectors more responsive and effective.

Technology will contribute to mapping abandoned agricultural land for their optimisation; the electronic identification of livestock to protect them from outbreak of diseases and digitalisation of public sector services.

Consistency and innovation in policies, strategies and performance remain an important cornerstone of the Government's actions in its endeavours to bring a high level of social equity. While the previous Budget focuses on those at the lower end of the economic ladder with the introduction of the Negative Income Tax and the Minimum Wage, the 2018-2019 Budget gives prominence to the middle class and propose concrete steps to ease the purse strings of the middle income group. It also extends the eligibility for the Water Tank Scheme and casting of Roof Slab Grant to the same group. While maintaining continuity in several areas, the 2018 2019 Budget, Madam Speaker, embraces changes at various levels. It paves the way for Mauritius to avail itself of the endless opportunities arising from continuing advances in technological innovation. It sets the scene for the development of high tech industries revolving around artificial intelligence, blockchain technologies and FinTech.

Madam Speaker, in the early days of the technological boom in the United States of America, there was a climate that nurtured innovation and ideas. The philosophy revolved around getting the best minds, local and foreign, to come together to do research and build technologies that will change the world. We recognise here the value of creating the Silicon Valley. With this Budget, this Government is emulating that same effort. It encourages foreign investors' capital into innovative entrepreneurial ideas by introducing the innovator occupation permit for innovative start-ups. These start-ups should have at least 20% of their capital geared towards research. This might not yield immediate results and people with little vision, will see it as long shot.

However, our Prime Minister with this measure has laid the foundation for a smarter Mauritius. Maybe he has put the silicon in the Silicon Valley. AI is the programming or training of a computer system to do task typically reserved for human, whether it is recommending which video to watch next or answering questions. From online services, such as Google and Facebook, to assistants on our phones like Siri, Google Assistant, we are already interacting with artificial intelligence on a nearly daily basis rather than rely on artificial intelligence sometime than to rely on the natural ones of some of my colleagues on the other side.

Soon, artificial intelligence will permeate the way we interact with our Government too. Artificial Intelligence can reduce administrative burdens, help resolved resource allocation problems and take on significantly complex task. The setting up of Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council set the foundation stone for this brilliant future. The Council will be under the aegis of the Prime Minister Office. This will ensure that the cohesion between all parties, which is crucial to its success, is given the highest priority. Technology is already a growing pillar of our economy and is a major employment sector. We need to up the game. We need now to be ready to export those services to new markets, mainly Africa.

With this view, Government in its foresightedness will promote the building of state-of-the art data centres by pushing the CEB to offer a special rate for power accredited data centres, operators having, at least, a Tier-3 infrastructure. Of course, we will need qualified engineers to man those data centres. And this is why this Government plans to give IT scholarship to an additional 50 students and double its intake of students in computer science and software engineering.

Madam Speaker, because the Opposition looks at the Budget through the lenses and paradigm of yesterdays, their reactions were entirely predictable, albeit a bit extreme like when we hear Dr. Boolell, you know what I am talking about. As the Government looks forward towards the future and the implementation of our 2030 Vision, the Opposition MPs seem locked in the past basing themselves on the mind-set, policies and actions belonging to a former time. Unfortunately, this cannot be more true. Opposition MPs do not seem to want to break with the past and embrace the future.

Nos amis de l'opposition rivalisent de slogans pour décrier le budget. Que n'avons-nous pas entendu ? Les formules budget Panadol! Peut-être que ça a eu effet d'un suppositoire ?

(Interruptions)

'Labous dou avan ler' 'Budget confetti' Sans compter les états d'âme des uns et des autres qui se disent déçus et les *wishful thinkers* qui voient des élections à chaque coin de la rue, pour ne pas dire à chaque décision gouvernementale.

Listening to the various speakers from the Opposition side of the House, I am stunned by the spin and hypocrisy. They seem prone to occasional lapse of memory. They had 10 years in power as well as plenty of opportunities and scopes to change the country for the better, to implement the so needed reform in key sectors. But what are we witnessing?

Instead of reflecting on their own past performance, they cloak themselves in the mantle of *donneurs de leçons* - we just had one - even indulging in the assessment of the present Government achievement and progress!

Madame la présidente, les membres de l'opposition ont manifestement besoin qu'on leur rafraîchisse la mémoire. Les différents gouvernements, sous la férule de Sir Anerood Jugnauth et aujourd'hui de Pravind Jugnauth, ont à cœur l'industrie sucrière.

Que de mesures et initiatives ont été mises en place pour assurer non seulement la survie, mais la viabilité de ce secteur, notamment la réforme de l'industrie sucrière enclenchée vers les années 2000 par le ministre de l'Agriculture et de Technologie alimentaire et Ressources naturelles d'alors, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. N'en déplaise à l'honorable Dr. Boolell !

L'introduction à travers cette réforme du *Voluntary Retirement Scheme*, visant à soutenir les employés de l'industrie sucrière travaillant dans les champs et dans les usines. L'élimination des camps sucriers qui a été commencée par l'ancien Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, et terminée par mon ami Mahen Seeruthun l'année dernière. L'augmentation du prix de la bagasse permettant aux petits planteurs de recevoir la somme de R 1,100.

C'est le MSM au gouvernement qui a reconnu la valeur de la bagasse pour les petits planteurs. Et en 1999, quand les sucriers ont protesté contre cette décision, c'est à ce moment-là que monsieur Boolell, qui a été ministre de l'Agriculture, est tombé d'accord pour un 50-50 partage. Alors, le peuple qui nous regarde à travers ces caméras aujourd'hui est assez intelligent pour réaliser qui travaille vraiment dans l'intérêt de ce petit peuple.

Je dois aussi ici saluer le traitement rapide des dossiers du VRS II, laissés en suspens par l'ancien gouvernement. C'est le ministre de l'Agro-industrie, Mahen Seeruttun, sous le leadership de notre Premier ministre, qui a institué un comité et traité 5,838 cas en trois ans, permettant aux travailleurs finalement d'obtenir leur titre de propriété.

(Interruptions)

Figures are speaking for themselves!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order.

Mr Hurreeram: Pour rappel - ils sont en train de protester, laissez-moi leur rappeler encore plus !

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Hurreeram: Le *Voluntary Retirement Scheme* II a certainement été lancé par l'honorable Dr. Arvind Boolell, qui était le ministre de l'Agro-industrie en 2007...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Hurreeram: Ce *VRS* II était destiné à 8,287 travailleurs. A la fin de 2014, sur ces 8,287 travailleurs, combien d'entre eux ont obtenu leur titre de propriété ? 1,500 travailleurs seulement en sept ans...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: En sept ans ! Quelle honte !

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: Il a fallu les compétences de mon ami, Mahen Seeruttun, ministre, pour débloquer cette situation.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnay!

Mr Hurreeram: Madame la présidente, l'industrie sucrière demeure une priorité pour ce gouvernement. C'est pourquoi c'est notre Premier ministre lui-même qui présidera le comité ministériel pour le secteur sucrier, contrairement au précédent gouvernement, qui a permis la fusion de six entités, y compris le MSIRI, avec l'impact que nous connaissons sur les travaux de recherche censés améliorer notre industrie cannière.

Et que dire du secteur du thé, Madame la présidente ! Nous nous rappelons tous de celui qui a entrepris le démantèlement criminel - complètement - de ce secteur, encourageant la conversion des terres sous culture de thé en terrains abandonnés, ou de sucre, qui jusqu'à aujourd'hui sont restés abandonnés.

(*Interruptions*)

The hon. Member was just talking about...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Hurreeram: No, I am not giving way.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Dr. Boolell, cool down!

(*Interruptions*)

Please, proceed!

Mr Hurreeram: Ce n'est que maintenant, sous ce gouvernement, que le secteur revit. Le thé mauricien est en grande demande, courtisé localement et à l'étranger. Et aujourd'hui, c'est ce gouvernement, sous le leadership du Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, qui a donné une série d'*incentives* à ce secteur pour en faire, j'espère, un nouveau pilier de notre économie agricole.

Au contraire de ceux qui regorgent de paroles, déclamant de fausses promesses, les unes après les autres, ce gouvernement donne les moyens au secteur du thé pour monter en puissance d'année en année. Nous ne nous contentons pas de belles paroles, nous agissons.

Some need to understand that gone are the days where you could get yourself elected just going around, walking in the market, drinking tea here and there, and rubbing backs here and there. No! Today, you have to deliver!

C'est pourquoi nous allons bientôt mettre sur pied le *National Biotechnology Institute*. Ce projet a été mis au frigo, toujours par l'ancien gouvernement, avec pour conséquence un retard de 15 ans à rattraper dans le secteur de la biotechnologie. La communauté des planteurs qui nous regarde aujourd'hui ne pardonnera jamais à ceux qui ont fait cela.

I must stress, Madam Speaker, that this Government, unlike our friends from the Opposition, goes by the saying: 'If you are going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk.' One day they criticise Government's decision on the creation and funding of the Mauritius Sovereign Fund, but the next day they are promoting same, in particular those to attract high-net-worth individuals, foreign talents, foreign retirees and the promotion of the upcoming Fintech sector. Inevitably, their actions speak louder than their words.

Madam Speaker, the plethora of measures announced by the Prime Minister to reach out to our people is proof that this Government walks the talk. May I cite it here the construction of the market fair, community centres, fire stations, jogging tracks, multipurpose complex and sports infrastructure, the upgrading of market fairs, community centres, municipal and village councils, and provision of scavenging lorries, street lighting and fire engines.

These measures together with investment in education and decent dwelling for all families meet the community's need. There are imperatives to lift up the quality of life of the population and positively impact the health, education and livability of the environment. The implementation of these measures will let people see the human face of this Government. In the same vein, the elderly and the special education needs students have not been forgotten. Madam Speaker, the Budget provides the means to boost the services, offered to them.

Moreover, to empower women and boost their role and participation in the economy, several proposals have been put forward such as the payment of a remuneration for those mothers reckoning less than 12-month service, gender streaming measures, investment in crèche, loan facilities for women entrepreneurs at an interest rate of 3%, the Work@Home Scheme and use of pepper spray as a self-defence. I believe that the essential ingredient to empowering women is to offer them choices. This is exactly what this Budget sets out to do.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister was reading the Budget Speech last Thursday and I must say that, at some point in time, I was baffled. I was even tempted to think that the hon. Prime Minister could read minds. I was mystified by the announcement of the Mahebourg regeneration project since I was coming with a parliamentary question regarding same. Let me, therefore, Madam Speaker, thank the hon. Prime Minister on behalf of the inhabitants of Mahebourg and my big brother hon. Mahen Jhugroo, Minister, and those who care about our historical and cultural heritage

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Hurreeram: No, it is our project, it is not your project.

(Interruptions)

Your Leader was against it! We are confident that this pilot project full of promise will indeed...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Hurreeram: *Pas fer nanien. Toi to sire to pou re gagne batter !*

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

Mr Hurreeram: We are confident that this pilot project full of promise will indeed make of Mahebourg *a village touristique* and a major cultural and eco-tourism attraction. What this demonstrates though is the foresightedness and leadership capacity of hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who knows his partners well and can thus anticipate their ideas and proposals.

I am also pleasantly surprised that the issue of reviewing permit processing protocol in light of the climate change and the impact has been taken into consideration. I welcome the decision to integrate climate resiliency in infrastructure projects, the upcoming required legal framework to pull down illegal construction and the provision for a drain impact assessment to be undertaken as part of the EIA report. On top of that, I must salute the initiative to make our environment safer through an audit of rivers and water courses to assess their carrying capacity with a view to take remedial action. This shows that our Prime Minister is attentive and listens to the concerns voiced out by his political partners and stakeholders.

We are all aware, Madam Speaker, of the growing incidence of cancer in the country. With this in mind, the hon. Prime Minister has made provision for the acquisition of a fully-fledged mobile caravan to promote early detection of breast and cervical cancer. This endeavour to fight cancer and decentralise cancer prevention services converges with the project to which I am personally and fully committed. The project which has the blessing of my hon. colleague, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, will expand access and outreach of cancer prevention services to the southern and south-eastern region of Mauritius through the setting up of an early detection centre for breast cancer.

The project in collaboration with the recognised NGO having an appreciable track record rests on a public-private-civil-partnership. With the contribution and cooperation of the dedicated stakeholders, the project is well underway. Once more, this reveals the close sensibilities amongst Members of the Government and the sense of common purpose which is a real force for good. To the Opposition, I will remind them that the by-election in

Constituency No. 18 has set the political topography. In fact, it came as a blessing in disguise in particular with regard to all those who claimed during four years *plus fort que jamais* and consider themselves *un des plus grand partis, seul contre tous*.

Finally, figures black on white, showed their worth. The winner of the by-election received the support of 18% of voters while the main Opposition party only 4.9% of voters! Some parties had even to forfeit the required deposit because they could not even reach 1/10 of the total number of votes polled, *ine perdi caution!*

(Interruptions)

What was more pitiful and pathetic was when adding together the total number of votes of the Opposition parties, the total percentage scored does not go beyond 30%.

(Interruptions)

I am not claiming...

Madam Speaker: No! No crosstalking, please!

Mr Hurreeram: I am not claiming that the 70% of the electorate who have not expressed themselves are with the Government.

(Interruptions)

But, the figures clearly showed that standing alone we won against all of them!

Madam Speaker, the Budget appears...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: What is this foul language? Who used that foul language? I think you have to respect the decorum of the House, whoever said it!

Mr Hurreeram: Madam Speaker, the Budget appears to be a well-balanced act of calculated, restrained and measured action. It contains a number of initiatives aimed at revitalising the export sector, increasing foreign direct investment, improving business facilitation and further opening the economy. It also includes a series of provisions to improve the life of people, especially the young, the elderly, women and the middle income groups. *Bref, toutes les composantes de la société Mauricienne.*

I have the impression, Madam Speaker, that although we repeatedly keep telling the facts, the Opposition does not want to be convinced. We wish to empower our people and not

create *un peuple assisté* that some think can be tempted with hollow promises or a pack of macaroni. We are giving to the people of Mauritius the country they deserve, a country which is geared towards the future of a country which is safe, a country which is a land of opportunity, a country that we will be proud to pass on to the future generation.

Let me end, Madam Speaker, with one line in Sanskrit that says “*surya uday purbe nabhaalte paschime*”, which means you pay respect to the rising sun not *enn la clé rouille cofor*.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour!

At 8.53 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.05 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Benydin!

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is a fact and an undeniable one that the 2018-2019 Budget presented by our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, has been and continue to be acclaimed as one that responds to the aspirations of the nation. Indeed, he has successfully brought back the feel good factor as this Budget addresses crucial and fundamental issues pertaining to education, health, social housing, law and order, youth employment, renewable energy, environment, equitable tax system, quality of life, infrastructure development, road safety, sports and leisure, and so on.

This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also encompasses a wide range of issues and incentives to boost up key sectors like Ocean Economy, Tourism, Financial Services and the Digital Economy, amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Budget Speech is not only an exercise of presenting the income of a country over a given period of time and how this income is going to be spent. But it is always a tough and a difficult exercise to maintain equilibrium between Government taxation policies to increase revenue, to create an enabling environment for economic growth and also to well safeguard and consolidate the culture of the Welfare State.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said this, I feel honoured in this August Assembly today to be a Member of the ruling Government and to say it loudly and to place on record that hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development

has masterly handled the situations against all odds to present the 2018-2019 Budget, which contains a host of measures geared at re-engineering the economy and driving efficiencies with the promotion of modern technologies, like the Artificial Intelligence, namely Fintech and the Blockchain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is clear that the essence of this Budget is directed in favour of a progressive society. As I have said earlier, this Budget is not about money, funds or revenue, but it is also about bringing equilibrium between economic growth and the welfare of the citizens. Attracting foreign investors is an imperative requisite for economic growth as a stabilising element for any society. Measures enunciated in the Budget have left the opposite side of the House speechless, as deep down in their mind, they know that these are the bold initiatives that are needed to build a better economic future of the country. There can never be any development or inclusiveness without growth. And growth can be supported by foreign as well as private domestic investors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has already proved itself by embarking in mega projects, to quote, amongst others, the Metro Express project and the billions rupees earmarked for public infrastructure, namely Road Decongestion Projects which have conquered already the heart of not only investors to come and invest in Mauritius, but for sure, will also attract foreigners to come and to opt for the Mauritian citizenship, as enunciated in the Budget Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, already with the implementation of the minimum wage, the negative income tax and the dialogue established with the social partners, namely the trade unions, there are essential factors that are adding value to consolidate social justice, the Welfare State and above all instilling a feel good factor, as I said earlier, in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is known all over the world that economic development lies also in the promotion of SMEs, not only for growth domestic products, but for income generating activities that can set the base for a decent livelihood for the population. In the context of promoting innovative and entrepreneurship, it is expected that the amount of Rs1 billion earmarked by DBM, will be of great support to micro, small and medium size enterprises. This project is a positive one to support youth and women entrepreneurs in their endeavour to facilitate their integration into the labour market. This Budget deals also with youth unemployment. 3,000 youths will join the National Skills Development Programme for technical training. The Youth Service Programme will involve 1,000 young people in the age

bracket of 17-25 to develop skills and improve their employability. Further, the Youth Employment Programme, YEP, will also help to put some 3,500 youngsters, holders of HSC, in job placements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the use of information technology, the Work Home Scheme is another major breakthrough in the world of work, as this scheme will allow women, in particular, to work in a family friendly environment and avoid hustling to a workplace every day. In the USA, for example, more than 40 million Americans work remotely with the use of a computer and an Internet connection. How this cannot be possible in Mauritius?

M. le président, je me souviens que lorsque je travaillais à Bruxelles en tant que Secrétaire Confédérale de la Confédération Mondiale du Travail, les traducteurs et traductrices de l'organisation, car à cette époque-là on travaillait en 5 langues, nous avait demandé qu'ils puissent travailler à la maison. C'est ce qu'on appelait le *telework*. Au début, nous, en tant que dirigeants de la Confédération Mondiale, on était un peu réticent à cette proposition. Mais ces employés nous avaient convaincu que c'était même profitable pour l'organisation, notamment on peut économiser, *savings* sur l'électricité. Et surtout en Europe, où il fait froid la plupart du temps, donc pas besoin de chauffage. Donc là aussi il y a des économies. Également moins de remboursement de frais de transport et aussi pas de problèmes logistiques, tels que bureaux, etc. Donc, nous saluons cette initiative et les mesures qui vont certainement profiter surtout aux femmes travailleuses qui ont des contraintes familiales.

Decent living, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also means having an employment for subsistence. This Budget has taken on board the sufferings and expectations of these graduates, who are desperately looking for an employment. And a further provision of Rs1 billion has been made for the employment of the 14,000 graduates. We note, with optimism, that the employment rate is expected to fall down from 7.1% to 6.9% in this year, 2018. And we have to rely.

I have heard earlier that they used statistics when it suits their purpose and when it does not shoot their purpose, then they will say that the figures presented by Statistics Mauritius are not correct. We do not believe in that. We must rely on Statistics Mauritius which is recognised internationally.

Already, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the Negative Income Tax, the minimum wage measures; this Government has moved an important step to improve living standards of workers. Another remarkable measure which is taken now is to alleviate tax burden, particularly on the middle income earners from 15 to 10% for those earning up to Rs650,000 and to even increase the income exemption threshold of all employees by Rs5,000. These measures will definitely contribute to improve quality of life and purchasing power of workers and their families.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we analyse the various measures, there can be no better Budget than this one, given the particular world economic conjuncture. In spite of this situation, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has taken a bold action to reduce the price of petroleum, Mogas by Rs2.35 per litre and Gasoil, diesel by Rs1.90 per litre and also gas cylinders of 12 kilos by Rs30 to enhance consumer welfare.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these measures will definitely contribute to boost economic growth and, on the other hand, contribute to reduce or, at least, stabilise the debt ratio essential for economic growth. In order to consolidate the Welfare State, various measures are taken to alleviate poverty and a provision of Rs760 m. has been earmarked to empower the poor and the vulnerable groups of our society.

Also, we note with satisfaction that for those who are bedridden, the monthly carer's allowance has been increased from Rs2,500 to Rs3,000. There is also an increase of monthly grant to employees of residential care home taking care mostly of elderly with disabilities and this has been increased from Rs6,070 to Rs8,500.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, this Budget has set the pace to meet these objectives and I find it hard for the Opposition to find out the black spot on this wide white spreadsheet to criticise. Their task seems to be harder than presenting a budget that has already captured the esteem and consideration of the population. *Même les plus bouillants syndicalistes – mes frères syndicalistes – estiment que ce budget contient des mesures positives qui soulagent la population et le consommateur. Ils qualifient aussi ce budget de très balancé et satisfaisant.*

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the very fact that the Opposition is claiming that this Budget is announcing a wishful thinking on their part and that the election is at the doorsteps, shows in itself that this Budget is well acclaimed, but to their discomfort. They can keep themselves dreaming of election every day, but the Government will continue relentlessly to uplift standards of living of the population and to work harder to meet growing challenges to attain

economic and social prosperity for all. When elections' time come, we all know what will be the results. Remember December 2014!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very encouraging that Rs1.2 billion have been earmarked in the Budget for NDU projects mainly for the construction and upgrading of drains, secondary schools, sports facilities and leisure amenities. Insofar as constituencies of which I am responsible, No. 15 and No. 18 are concerned, I would like to highlight the followings. In Constituency No.15, for Financial Year 2017/2018 –

- we have already realised the construction of new roads and resurfacing works amounting to over Rs54 m.;
- drain works for more than Rs75 m. which include major retaining wall projects at Solferino River;
- rockbeds project at River Mesnil, Highlands; Allyman Canal, La Caverne to mitigate the effects of flooding in these regions;

So, these works have been done.

- amenities, in terms of construction of a mini soccer pitch at gymkhana, St Paul and at Parisot road have been realised;
- we are also upgrading Petit Camp, Phoenix and Hermitage football grounds. The works are already in progress and are about to be completed, and
- other items like children playground, handrails, pavements and embellishment works for more than Rs50 m. have been effected.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a new bridge - I think that was raised by my colleague, hon. Eddy Boissézon yesterday, - will be built at Hollyrood to facilitate traffic flow to Beaux Songes and *vice versa*. Works in connection with Wastewater in Highlands have already started. The inhabitants there waited for years and years to have this project realised, but it is this Government which took the decision to implement this long awaited project. This project cost over more than Rs150 m.

As at 18 June 2018, for the construction of drains, upgrading of roads, amenities, children playground, mini soccer pitch, etc., NDU, in collaboration with the Municipal Council of Vacoas/Phoenix, we have completed more than 60 Projects, not taking into consideration ongoing ones to the tune of around Rs30 m. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the coming Financial Year 2018/2019, more than 200 projects have already been identified and

we are on the verge of starting, as I said earlier, the major projects at Hollyrood which will cost over Rs55 m.

For Constituency No. 18, Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes, I heard hon. Dr. Boolell raised the issue and I will give him some information regarding works that have been done. A number of works amounting to Rs33 m. have already been carried out with regard to construction and upgrading of roads as well as drains and amenities like children playground, ongoing drain works at Vacoas road. The hon. Member raised the issue of Hillary Blood near Candos Stadium, the work is starting anytime now.

With regard to La Source (Rotin) work order has already been issued for a cost estimate of around Rs5 m. and works will start. With regard to Sir Seewoosagur Avenue - I think the hon. Member came also with the issue when there were floods - we are taking actions, so that these works will also be done.

We have also issued financial clearance to the tune of Rs12 m. by the NDU, of course. We have granted this sum to the Municipality Council of Quatre Bornes for new roads and construction of drains. Hon. Dr. Boolell, you should appreciate also that the market which we had before in Quatre Bornes was an eyesore. It remained like this although tourists visit this place regularly. It was an eyesore, but this Government, in collaboration with the NDU and the Municipal Council, we have now quite a modern market fair and particularly - I don't know whether it exists elsewhere - even the parking can accommodate around 100-150 cars at one time. And arrangements are now made so that, even at night, if you want to walk when the parking is empty, we have made provision for lightning also, and this work will be done by the Municipality of Quatre Bornes.

We are also working together with PPS hon. Alain Aliphon and with the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and the hon. Deputy Prime Minister for Constituency No. 19. We are working together for the big project relating to the widening of Berthaud Avenue. This itself also is a landmark realised after so many years. So, we have a lot of projects; we have to work, we mean business. It's like this - even those who were in the previous Government. We don't lie to people, we don't bluff. We have constraints.

At times, particularly myself, whenever there are programmes and my constituents say "*zot tou pareil*", I say, "No, we are not *pareil*". But I told them the work can take some time, the work can be delayed, but the work will be effected. So, on this, you can rest reassured when we say there are more projects in the pipeline. We are going to realise them,

because we have the means, the money is here, but there are procedures, the procurement, and administrative procedures take time. So, we should not say “Oh!”, we are bluffing. No, we mean business.

We also appreciate that there is an amount of Rs2 billion that will be transferred to the National Environment Fund. This is also another landmark for projects relating to environment and climate change, including as well rehabilitation. Yesterday or the day before, money to be appropriated - Rs2 billion - was discussed. So, this money is meant to improve our environment, take care of climate change, rehabilitation of beaches, solid waste, flood, landslide and embellishment works. I think these are the positive sides of the work that we are conducting.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thanks also to the vision of the hon. Prime Minister, Parliamentary Private Secretaries have now been called upon to preside over regional task force to identify, propose and implement more projects for the betterment of the population in conjunction with public bodies and stakeholders concerned.

With regard to food security and also to particularly arouse interest amongst young entrepreneurs to be involved in agriculture, we welcome the import substitution project of the Ministry of Agro-Industry to support the setting up of 160 farms over the next two years under a Sheltered Farming Scheme.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Public Service, where I made a career, it is regrettable to note that some of the Members on the other side of the House have expressed doubts on the quality of service provided.

I think some were referring to Africa, but you should also go a bit in Africa - because I was also the president of the Regional Trade Union Organisation in Africa - and see how the Public Service works, and then you compare and give marks. Then, you will see the difference and the quality of service that is being provided by civil servants and public officers in Mauritius.

Of course, there is room for improvement, but we must reckon the performance of public officers in many fields. For example, during the floods, we must pay tribute to officers like the firefighters, Special Mobile Force, Police, PPSs, MPs, because we have to be on the field when there is flood. When people are sleeping at home, we have to rush; we receive phone calls, we cannot stay at home, we have to help. So, I think that these officers

that I have mentioned have acted with braveness and patriotism during floods and cyclones to relieve citizens in distress. So, these actions should be commended.

As I have said, in the Public Service, they are doing quite a very good job; we must encourage them so that they can improve the delivery of service. But we cannot say that we don't have a good Public Service in Mauritius. This is not good to say.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, also the recent amount of seizure of drugs of Rs3.7 billion (street value) effected by ADSU and Customs Officers should not by any means be ignored as these officers also have put their lives at stake and exposed themselves to great risks in the exercise of their duties to eliminate the social evil that drugs represent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is indeed a matter of satisfaction that in its committed engagement and policy to provide water on a 24/7 basis, already some - this has been mentioned earlier, but I think I have to mention it also - 227,400 households have 24/7 access to water supply. Furthermore, the Water Tank Scheme programmed to reach an additional 30,000 households with the raising of the income eligibility threshold from Rs25,000 to Rs30,000 is yet another positive measure for the supply of water to households.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government, under the able leadership of our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, has waged a relentless struggle to eradicate the scourge of drug trafficking. It is, therefore, very encouraging to note that additional funds will be provided to ADSU and the Mauritius Revenue Authority to procure modern and scanning devices and specialised tools and equipment to better combat drug traffickers.

We note also the firm determination of Government to address the issue of gender mainstreaming by improving the participation of women in the development process. The funds provided to each Ministry for an awareness and sensitisation campaign and the setting up of a gender cell at ministry level will no doubt pave the way towards enhanced gender balance in the decision-making process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget responds to fundamental needs of people. Decent dwelling and social housing are important pillars to improve living standards and quality of life. That's why Government social policy to build 6,800 new social housing units over the next two years, with a project value of Rs12.7 billion, constitutes a major component of our welfare state and socialistic vision. The improved scheme to widen facilities to families eligible for the casting of roof slabs is indeed a remarkable one; for example, for families

earning up to Rs10,000 monthly, the ceiling which was Rs75,000 has been increased to Rs100,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as an ending note, I would like to salute the capacity of the hon. Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, Ministers, PPSs and MPs for the hard work that is being undertaken to transform Mauritius, to build a better society, to meet the growing challenges lying ahead, in spite of the fact that some have chosen to continue to rock the boat to make us believe that there is a tempest at sea.

But we all know that under the able and competent leadership of the hon. Prime Minister and his team, we can weather through any storm, and we will pursue our transformative journey towards economic progress and prosperity and bring the ship to the right destination.

M. le président, pour conclure permettez-moi de citer un grand syndicaliste s'inspirant du religieux Cardin. Je cite –

«Ne jamais démolir, toujours construire. Ne jamais être négatif, mais toujours positivement être orienté vers l'avenir et surtout ne jamais être pessimiste car seuls les optimistes (comme nous) survivront.”

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(10.34 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, please!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Abbas Mamode, address the Chair!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. First and foremost, I would like to highlight that the PMSD has never opposed any type of development. We have never opposed, hon. Bobby Hurreeram! We have never opposed to any type of development of the country or any kind of initiative to make Mauritius a better place for its citizens. On the contrary, we are for and in support of development. We are always keen to give a helping hand in any endeavour undertaken for the betterment of the nation. A very good example...

(*Interruptions*)

I will reply to you!

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Abbas Mamode: A very good example is in the tourism industry, but not only in the tourism industry. Whenever the PMSD has been, be it in finance, be it in industry, be it in empowerment, we have been excelled...

(*Interruptions*)

...and that has always been *reziltat lor reziltat* !

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry!

(*Interruptions*)

Do you have something to say?

Mr Henry: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hier on a rigolé, on était expulsé de cette Chambre. Aujourd’hui tous ces membres-là sont en train de dire n’importe quoi. Ils sont en train d’insulter, eux ils ont le droit!

(*Interruptions*)

Which is which?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry...

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Thierry Henry, I take note of what you have said. Hon. Abbas Mamode, please carry on!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Thank you. We have always promoted tourism and all the development concerning same, among others. Having said that, I would also like to point out that, we will, like always, take position and defend the nation whenever the need is. So, the well-being of the whole population is of our prime concern. It is noteworthy that many orators...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No crosstalking!

Mr Abbas Mamode: ... on the other side of the House mentioned the PMSD. In his speech yesterday, even the hon. Prime Minister stated that we choose to leave the Government. Yes, we can agree on this point. We choose to leave the Government. We left on the basis of pure patriotism. Why? I say I am proud to have a faith...

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Abbas Mamode: I am addressing you.

(Interruptions)

I am proud to have a faith, but this does not prevent me to deliver...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry, allow me to listen to the speech!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Contrary to some other hon. Members, I am proud to have a culture, to have a belief, but this does not prevent me to look at my constituents in the same level, with the same eyes, with equality. That is what I said.

(Interruptions)

Yes, you can check! You can check! Patriotism guides us Members of the PMSD. The hon. Prime Minister said that we left, but he omitted to say why. Let me remind the House of the reason of our departure. It is because of the introduction of the Prosecution Bill. You,

yourself, are a lawyer, and you know that a Bill is needed to amend the Constitution. They wanted to come up with a law whereby politicians could interfere in law matters. A Bill that has a retroactive effect for political reasons! *Enn vendetta politique!* It is the Mauritians, the ones at the bottom of the ladder who would be disadvantaged. *Paye les pots kase!* We preferred to leave the Government, leave all the privileges because, for us, the population is first. They are our main concern.

Besides, we cannot and should not forget that since the independence, all the Governments that call for the help of the PMSD have had our full support. We should not forget the contribution of Sir Gaëtan Duval in the 1983 elections. And my friend, hon. Benydin, when he stated that now things are going faster, he forgets that the MSM has been in power since independence for more than 23 years. And above all, let me also remind hon. Members on the other side of the House, if you are in Government today, it is with the help of the PMSD. So, better be grateful! Better be grateful, hon. Gayan!

(Interruptions)

Better be grateful to the PMSD! While the MSM have always put their party and family first, we will always put our country first.

Moving on, I would like to share something that caught my attention and confused me. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo stated that she walked in the streets of Port Louis after the Budget, that the people of Port Louis are satisfied. I wonder, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I want to know in which streets she walked for she is also the Minister for Local Government. I am in awe.

Is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister aware of the deterioration in the City Council of Port Louis? I am speaking about deterioration, especially as no new project has been initiated. There are no new ideas. The garden of Plaine Verte, *le jardin de la Plaine Verte* also known as Sir Abdool Razack Mohamed garden, famous *jardin de la Plaine Verte*, and the February Leisure Park project which I, myself, initiated has been in the dark, not for days, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but for months.

We are all well aware of all sorts of social problems our society are plagued with. Some light and proper infrastructure would definitely help making the inhabitants feel secure and indirectly prevent petty problem like theft, for example. Everyone is a taxpayer nowadays, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through VAT. Therefore, I believe, and I think that my

fellow hon. Members of Parliament will not disapprove that everyone should be treated equally.

(Interruptions)

You were not here, Mahen Jhugroo! I already made the point!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Abbas Mamode: And I can make it again and again! I am proud to believe to a faith, but as a parliamentarian I have the duty to look at everyone in Mauritius with the same eye, with the same sense of patriotism.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please! Allow him, please!

Mr Abbas Mamode: I am a proud Member of PMSD who will always put the country first. Promoting the values of my party and doing my duty as a Member of Parliament, I can affirm my proximity with the people of my constituency. I would like to mention the case of a gentleman, a pensioner residing in Cité Roche Bois. He was eligible to get a water tanker and was advised to do an affidavit but later his request was turned down only because his children are running a pre-primary school under his premises. Are we encouraging them, the children of this elderly person?

(Interruptions)

Younger generation to work, to cater...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I know it is very late in the night, but some order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Henry, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Abbas Mamode, please continue.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Roopun, please!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Talking about Roche Bois, which was not mentioned anywhere in the Budget, but still I would like to make...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnahn, first and last warning!

Mr Abbas Mamode: ...a suggestion to hon. Nando Bodha. You are enlarging A1 B1, but there is a region...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, address the Chair!

Mr Abbas Mamode: People in my constituency will appreciate the laughter on the other side of the House, and believe me when they will going for election...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Are we encouraging the children of this elderly person, younger generation to work, to cater? I was talking about Roche Bois Quartier Shell, and I will make a request...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Mr Abbas Mamode: ...so that a pedestrian overhead may be installed near Quartier Shell so that people from Quartier Shell may cross the road and get to school, churches which is found on the other side of Roche Bois.

And instead of laughing, I made a request long ago concerning Quartier Shell. During the Metro Express project, many compulsory acquisitions have been made and are still being

made. Perhaps my friend could go over there because there are no leisure activities at all in Quartier Shell.

(*Interruptions*)

Quartier Shell, in Roche Bois.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode.

Mr Abbas Mamode: I am addressing to you, but...

(*Interruptions*)

I am talking to you.

(*Interruptions*)

On the same line...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, if you want to leave, you can leave, it is the proper time for you.

Mr Abbas Mamode: On the same line, I would like to refer to another serious issue, still in my constituency, Cité Roche Bois. The people living next to the waste transfer station - hon. Sinatambou - I had myself here talked about the poor condition of those people. But, unfortunately, nothing absolutely nothing has been done to improve the situation in which they are living. Which streets and to whom the hon. Prime Minister interacted, I still wonder.

Furthermore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Sawmynaden talked about *continuité*, continuity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Have we not missed '*le depart*'?

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Abbas Mamode: *Bizin faire alcotest ar zot. Mo sire bizin faire alcotest ar zot.* To be a gentleman in this Parliament, you have to listen to the colleagues. Drinking is more important, I suppose.

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Sawmynaden talked about *continuité*, continuity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will not miss le depart. Yes, we missed the beginning, why? Because *le miracle économique n'a eu point. Allez demander aux commerçants de la ville*,

towards whom we are accountable, are they satisfied? Are they benefitting from the works done or are it the foreign investors who are making the most of the developments. *Allez demander aux maraîchers de la foire de Cité Martial.* They are not even able to pay their monthly rent. ‘*La possibilité de rêver*’ was mentioned, how those people can dream of a better future when they are not able to meet the ends today?

The predicament of the inhabitants of Cité Martial, Plaine Verte, Roche Bois to mention but a few, do not end here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The list is long. The desolation of those people on a daily basis is numerous. Municipal service is getting worse and worse. On public holidays, there is no garbage collection, and we are talking of a cleaner Mauritius! There is practically no leisure spaces or activities organised.

We cannot deny the fact that our youngsters are nowadays more exposed to all sorts of delinquencies. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the local Government should invest more into organising leisure activities, provide them with proper infrastructure to practise sports.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Coming to another topic which concerns the health, the medical sector. Unfortunately, the Minister is not here, Today, early in the morning, he was talking about the Leader of the Opposition. May I remind hon. Husnoo que *le leader de l'opposition, il a un rôle constitutionnel*, and it is his duty to come to suggest, to ask questionS, but rather *je demanderai au ministre de la santé de veiller à ce qui se passe dans son ministère. Je vais table certains documents, certaines photos à son attention.*

I will reflect on the 2018-2019 Budget title. While it is titled pursuing our transformative journey, we note with great regret that the transformation has not yet even started. I will have to refer to my last year’s speech on the previous Budget, where I related the case of someone who, unfortunately, passed away due to lack of ambulance. In spite of the fact that the previous Budget made mention of purchasing ambulance, it is only now that the procedures have started.

We cannot turn a blind eye to the difficulties the people of the country, the needy, are facing when calling for an ambulance. Instead of solving the problem, what has been done? The number of ambulances in service at night has been reduced to half. We are all aware that no public transport is available at night, that the number of ambulances in service at night has

been reduced! And, I would table a photograph of an ambulance in 2018. *Jusqu'a l'ambulance pe met lastoplas!*

(Interruptions)

Further, of the weakness in the medical sector, the lack of proper equipment, it is noticeable. There are no portable fans. And everybody is not as fortunate as hon. Mrs Boygah in Constituency No.11 or hon. Hurreeram in Constituency No.12. Nobody is as lucky as them. In Constituency No.4, in your constituency, there are no portable fans, but beds are full of bugs, shortage of water. We are talking about 24/7! Go to the Long Mountain Hospital and see for yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Lack of security when it comes to Police attached to hospital. Once again, the list is very long. And, on the top of all this, the hospital is a 24/7 hospital!

So, you can go there at any time during the day or during the night. But, the pharmacy is closed at 8.00 p.m. So, if you get ill and you go to the Long Mountain Hospital, say at 10.00 at night, you must travel to Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital in the north so that you can get your medicines. It is a pity to witness the plight of cancer patients in the hospital, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A cancer patient who is already going through much pain has to sit on inappropriate chair in the waiting room before the visit to the doctor.

My good friend, hon. Quirin, asked a question some six months ago, but nothing has changed till today. I am sure everyone here will agree they deserve better treatment. In 2018, in a country like Mauritius where we are talking about big projects like Metro Express, we do not have electronic medical record. Does this not sound like a joke? There even had a case whereby an elderly man was mistakenly given his dead wife's dossier medical; instead of curing the patient, the latter is put under further stress while going to the hospital.

It is high time that the Ministry comes up with solutions and not promises or *intention de faire. J'ai là devant moi* un document which I will table. A lady M.P. - not Member of Parliament - the lady's name is M. P. In 2015, which Government was in power? The MSM Government!

(Interruptions)

I was not the Minister of Health! You know who was the Minister of Health!

Listen! In 2015, a lady went to Moka Hospital. She got appointment over, there are dates, only after three years, one week ago. She received a letter to go for operation. She had

been going to the hospital for three years. After the operation, it is not a joke, she lost her eyes. Do you know why? We don't have a system in Mauritius where we have a way for emergency, be it in any hospital.

(*Interruptions*)

I am not doing politics. I am saying what the real population, *les gens qui sont au bas de l'échelle sont en train de subir*. And, we are talking about big projects, big challenges, but still *les gens sont toujours laissés à leur sort*.

(*Interruptions*)

Sa zis pou montrer!

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode...

Mr Abbas Mamode: *Carte rendez-vous avec l'accord du patient!*

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, I don't want to disrupt the course of the flow of your speech, but in view that this concerns patients, persons, confidentiality about health problem, I would advise you to take back those documents.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Abbas Mamode: I have got the authorisation of the patient and yet this is not the medical certificate. This is only the *carte de rendez-vous*.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: May I have a look at same?

(*Interruptions*)

I would advise you to take back those documents and please resume your speech!

(*Interruptions*)

It is a matter of confidentiality and a person's health, a person's name. You cannot disclose without the consent of the person.

Mr Abbas Mamode: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The name of the patient, I can transmit it to the person concerned because you don't...

(*Interruptions*)

...you don't want...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, allow the hon. Member to resume his speech and please do not disrupt...

(*Interruptions*)

...please do not disrupt the proceedings!

Mr Abbas Mamode: So, instead of the critics...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry! Please, allow me to listen to the speech of hon. Abbas Mamode! Yes!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Abbas Mamode: Instead of criticising the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he is doing a marvellous job as Leader of the Opposition and people of this country will appreciate. I would advise the Minister of Health and Quality of Life to look after the situation which is prevailing in hospitals.

Before ending my speech, I will like to ponder on an issue which has initiated some debates among the population. This very morning hon. Duval in his speech talked about it. It seems that we will first offer foreigners the opportunity to obtain Mauritian citizenship and second opportunity to obtain Mauritian passport. So, the questions that the Mauritians and the Parliamentarians are asking themselves: is this really needed for the development of the country? Will they see the cost of living rising or will it be the same?

I would like to know whether Members, on the other side of the House, have thought about the IRS and the ERS schemes. While obtaining a Mauritian residency or Mauritian passport, it means that the foreigners will have the same benefits as us, local people. What about the prices of land? *Ti dimoune la zamais pa pou capav acheter enn boute la terre li.* How and what to dream in this situation, hon. Minister Sawmynaden? *Budget visionnaire, je n'y crois pas.* And I do not think it is really the case among the population either.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Toussaint!

(11.03 p.m.)

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Toussaint) : Merci beaucoup, M. le président, de me donner l'occasion aujourd'hui de faire mon intervention. Avant de commencer, je voudrais rendre hommage à Jason François, qui s'en est allé vendredi dernier. Agé de 34 ans seulement, cet ancien athlète handisport était médaillé au 1500m fauteuil lors des Jeux des îles de 2003. Il était également président de la *Physically Handicapped Persons Sports Federation (PHYSFED)*.

M. le président, permettez-moi de remercier le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, pour toute la confiance placée en moi en me confiant le portefeuille de la Jeunesse et des Sports depuis maintenant un an et demi. Je puis vous dire, M. le président, avec beaucoup de satisfaction personnelle et d'humilité, que j'ai toujours été à l'écoute de nos jeunes et de nos sportifs. Je m'investis à 100% quotidiennement dans cette tâche, avec rigueur, conviction, intégrité et surtout énormément de passion. J'ai été inlassablement présent sur le terrain et dans le champ de l'action pour être proche de nos jeunes et nos sportifs. Ce, afin de mieux les comprendre et de partager leur quotidien.

En même temps, avec la collaboration des officiers de mon ministère, nous avons pris des décisions cruciales pour le développement du sport et de la jeunesse mauricienne. Ainsi, M. le président, en décembre dernier, nous avons dévoilé le nouveau logo de mon ministère. C'est nouvelle identité visuelle porte en elle notre volonté de véhiculer une image plus attrayante pour les jeunes et les sportifs.

Après plus de 48 ans d'existence, il était important de se mettre au diapason du développement afin de mieux répondre aux exigences de notre clientèle et de se rapprocher d'elle. Notre devise « *Youth today, Champions Today* » est très évocateur de notre vision pour que les jeunes soient au centre de nos préoccupations et de notre mission. Nous voulons insuffler un nouveau dynamisme au monde de la jeunesse et des sports et créer ce *winning spirit*. Nous avons ainsi revu notre « *Customer Charter* » établissant nos responsabilités envers la jeunesse. Le but ultime, M. le président, c'est d'atteindre l'excellence.

M. le président, toute l'équipe du ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports se joint à moi pour remercier chaleureusement le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, pour avoir prêté une oreille favorable et bienveillante à la communauté sportive et à la jeunesse mauricienne. Alors que le ministère de la Jeunesse et des Sports

fêtera son jubilé d'or l'année prochaine, pour la toute première fois, sa dotation budgétaire a dépassé la barre symbolique de R 1 milliard.

M. le président, je voudrais exprimer mes remerciements les plus profonds au Premier ministre pour avoir également revu à la hausse le budget à la section Jeunesse de mon ministère. Ce budget, dites-vous bien, est passé de R 9.5 millions à R 28.5 millions, c'est-à-dire une hausse de 200%. Cela démontre l'importance accordée à nos jeunes, qui ont besoin d'encadrement et de soutien pour faire face aux nombreux défis.

M. le président, je vais axer mon discours sur trois volets. Je sais qu'il est un peu tard, mais j'ai beaucoup de choses à dire. Primo - le volet jeunesse ; secondo - le sport, et tertio - ma circonscription, numéro 17.

M. le président, j'ai été très heureux que le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances ait commencé son discours du budget par la jeunesse mauricienne à travers les différentes mesures énoncées pour la soutenir. Cela démontre que notre jeune et dynamique Premier ministre a à cœur la jeunesse de notre pays.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de faire un rapide survol de ce qui a été accompli par mon ministère sur le volet jeunesse afin de montrer à la population que le budget alloué l'année dernière a été utilisé de façon judicieuse.

Mon ministère offre ses services aux jeunes à travers un réseau de 28 centres de jeunesse. Je dois souligner, M. le président, que j'ai eu l'honneur et le privilège d'inaugurer, en septembre dernier, un nouveau centre de jeunesse à Cité la Cure, qui a été un projet démarré par mon collègue et ami, l'honorable Yogida Sawmynaden.

(Interruptions)

Dix ans pe pose premier pierre.

Les jeunes de la localité et des régions avoisinantes telles que Sainte Croix et Vallée des Prêtres peuvent maintenant bénéficier de toutes nos activités et nos formations. De plus, les horaires et les activités de tous les centres de jeunesse à travers l'île, ont été revus l'année dernière. La section Jeunesse a aussi été restructurée pour assurer un service de qualité.

Afin de permettre un travail de concert avec les acteurs de développement dans ces régions, et aussi suite à leurs propositions, nous avons mis sur pied des comités de gestion dans nos centres de jeunesse depuis le début de cette année. Ces comités comprennent, entre

autres, les membres des forces vives et des organisations non-gouvernementales, et des jeunes de différents quartiers desservis par le centre de jeunesse.

Comme nous fêtons cette année-ci le jubilée d'or de notre accession à l'indépendance, mon ministère a marqué cet évènement, en mars dernier, à travers un grand rallye pour les jeunes dans la capitale. Environ 3,000 jeunes et représentants des mouvements associatifs jeunes ont participé à cette marche qui a culminé avec le dévoilement par le Premier ministre de la stèle de l'unité au Champs de Mars.

M. le président, cette stèle est un symbole de l'unité nationale qui est primordiale pour le progrès et l'avancement de notre pays. Si nous gardons aujourd'hui, pour la postérité, un souvenir des 50 ans de notre indépendance, c'est grâce à la stèle de l'unité.

M. le président, nous avons confiance dans notre jeunesse et nous savons que notre jeunesse a beaucoup de talent. Mon ministère a lancé la première édition de '*Zenes Montre To Talan*' en avril de cette année. Ce projet innovateur, basé sur le principe de la téléréalité, donne l'occasion aux jeunes d'exprimer leurs talents, et ceci dans différentes sphères. Ce n'est pas que de la chanson ou de la danse, c'est n'importe quel talent. Environ un millier de jeunes, y compris ceux de Rodrigues, ont participé aux castings régionaux. Les dix meilleures prestations seront qualifiées pour la grande finale qui se tiendra au Centre de Conférence Swami Vivekananda le 11 août 2018 - de cette année, donc. Cet évènement marquera, du coup, la célébration de la journée internationale de la jeunesse qui est célébrée le 12 août.

M. le président, pendant l'année écoulée, mon ministère a aussi revu le mode opératoire du *Duke of Edinburgh's International Award Programme*, destiné aux jeunes de 14 à 24 ans. Ce programme est maintenant disponible dans tous les 28 centres de jeunesse de l'île, et on essaye de vulgariser ce programme à travers tous les collèges du pays.

En 2017, 11,520 jeunes ont participé à ce programme qui leur a permis de développer la confiance en soi, de connaître leur potentiel, de devenir autonome et responsable, de découvrir leurs talents et aptitudes, de se faire de nouveaux amis, et d'apprendre à mieux se comporter en équipe et à travailler en groupe.

A noter, M. le président, que 66 jeunes ont complété le niveau Or l'année dernière, et ils ont été récompensés en novembre dernier à la State House. De plus, 199 jeunes ont fait le déplacement à Rodrigues et 61 sont partis en Malaisie pour entreprendre leur *adventurous journey*.

Mon ministère a sous son égide le programme *Volunteer Mauritius* lancé en décembre 2015, qui a engagé à ce jour quelque 2,300 jeunes. Ce programme a pour mission de promouvoir la culture du volontariat parmi les jeunes. Parmi les réalisations du *Volunteer Mauritius*, nous avons des campagnes de nettoyage, de restauration des plantes endémiques, l'accompagnement des victimes des inondations, les services bénévoles dans les hospices, la célébration de la journée internationale du volontariat et les échanges de livres scolaires avec comme slogan ‘ Un Livre Un Cadeau.’ De plus, dans le but de consolider les capacités des jeunes volontaires en matière d’intervention en cas de catastrophe naturelle ou d’autre état d’urgence, mon ministère a lancé le *Volunteer Mauritius Academy* en avril 2018, pour offrir une variété de formations destinées aux jeunes volontaires comprenant les premiers soins, la natation et la gestion des calamités naturelles, entre autres.

M. le président, pendant l’année écoulée, environ 500 jeunes dans diverses régions de l’île ont été sensibilisés sur la thématique de l’entreprenariat dans le but de les inspirer et de les éduquer au monde des affaires. Ce programme a été mis en place avec l’appui de la CONFEJES. La formation entreprenariat a aussi été dispensée aux jeunes de 18 à 35 ans qui veulent commencer une petite entreprise.

M. le président, dans le souci de mieux encadrer les jeunes, un programme extensif de santé reproductive est en cours avec l’appui technique et financier de l’UNFPA. Ce programme vise à renforcer l’accès des jeunes à l’information en matière de santé et de la propre production. Non moins intéressant, M. le président, les rencontres dites ‘Cafés Parents’ pour les parents d’adolescents, organisées à travers l’île ont permis de renseigner ces derniers sur les meilleures façons d’encadrer les adolescents et de promouvoir des familles unies et épanouies.

M. le président, je ne vais pas prendre trop le temps de la Chambre. Mais je dois dire que nous organisons aussi différentes formations en utilisant les arts, tels que Le slam, le théâtre, l’art créatif, la chanson afin de mieux sensibiliser les jeunes sur les fléaux qui les affectent. De plus, dans un but d’intéresser les jeunes de 14 à 18 ans à la musique, mon ministère, en partenariat avec le Conservatoire François Mitterrand, a lancé cette année un cours d’initiation à la flûte dans 10 centres de jeunesse, ciblant quelque 200 jeunes. Les jeunes sont aussi des adeptes de nouvelles technologies. Ils sont très forts dedans d’ailleurs ; ils ont une maîtrise parfaite des outils informatiques. Mon ministère a de ce fait organisé un concours PS4 l’année dernière. Les préliminaires ont eu lieu simultanément dans différentes

régions de l'île. La finale a regroupé une centaine de jeunes au Caudan Waterfront dans une ambiance électrique en novembre 2007.

De plus, cette année, le concours PS4 va démarrer bientôt et prendra, bien sûr, une dimension spéciale avec la Coupe du Monde. En effet les préliminaires et la finale se tiendront dans le sillage de la finale du mondial sur écran géant respectivement à Bagatelle et au stade Anjalay à Belle Vue, le 14 et 15 juillet prochain. Ce concours bénéficie de l'aide et du support du secteur privé.

M. le président, comme la Chambre le sait, une somme de R 200,000 nous a été allouée l'année dernière pour promouvoir le *gender mainstreaming*, c'est-à-dire, l'intégration des politiques d'égalité entre homme et femme. Ainsi, en collaboration avec le ministère de l'Egalité du Genre, du Développement et l'Enfant et du Bien-être de la Famille, mon ministère a organisé 10 ateliers de travail à travers l'île, ayant pour thème : «Le Renforcement des Capacités des Jeunes comme Ambassadeurs pour la Promotion de la Notion du Genre. »

M. le président, une série d'activités de loisirs pour les jeunes étudiants du cycle secondaire a aussi été organisée. Grâce à ce programme, plus de 18,000 jeunes ont eu l'opportunité de découvrir de nouvelles activités, tels que l'initiation au golf, au échec, le ciné débat et le spectacle jeunesse, entre autres. Les jeunes ont eu aussi l'occasion de participer à plusieurs sorties récréatives et éducatives à travers l'île, notamment Jet Ranch, Mare Longue, l'Aaprapravasi Ghat et l'île aux Bénitiers.

M. le président, pour les vacances d'hiver en août de l'année dernière, neuf activités nationales ont été organisées et nous avons eu plus de 6,000 participants. Pour les vacances d'été en décembre 2007, 104 activités régionales où on a eu une participation de plus de 8,000 jeunes. En avril de cette année 2018, 44 activités ont été organisées où nous avons vu la participation de plus de 4,000 jeunes.

M. le président, nous savons qu'une des préoccupations majeures des jeunes et des parents est de trouver un emploi une fois les études terminées. Il est important de souligner que trouver un emploi ne suffit pas et il est impératif que les jeunes puissent s'épanouir dans ce qu'ils font. Tenant en compte ces défis, mon ministère mettra en place le *National Youth Civic Service* qui répondra aux nombreux besoins des jeunes afin de promouvoir leur employabilité. Donc, ils auront des formations dans divers domaines et j'espère de tout cœur que ces formations les rendront employables.

Je note aussi beaucoup de plaisir, M. le président, qu'une somme de plus d'un milliard de roupies sera consacrée pour l'élaboration de plusieurs programmes, et ce, avec l'aide d'autres ministères pour combattre le chômage parmi les jeunes. Ces différents programmes ont été discutés à plusieurs reprises et récemment par l'honorable Benydin. Donc, je ne vais pas m'attarder dessus. Ce sont des programmes qui toucheront plus de 14,000 jeunes.

Parmi les nouvelles initiatives, mon ministère organisera aussi cette année le programme 'Univers Cité' visant les jeunes en situation de vulnérabilité. Les objectifs sont de soutenir ces jeunes afin de développer leurs aptitudes et talents pour les aider à devenir autonomes. Les jeunes auront leur mot à dire dans la conception du programme et le choix des activités. Ce programme vise environ 300 jeunes de Maurice et de Rodrigues avec l'apport d'une équipe formée et dynamique.

M. le président, le temps passe tellement vite. Les jeunes du secondaire sont actuellement en plein examen et d'ici deux semaines ils seront déjà en vacances d'hiver, et on sera presque arrivé en août. Donc, dans le cadre des vacances d'hiver, le ministère va offrir aux jeunes différentes possibilités, différents loisirs afin qu'ils puissent passer des vacances saines. Les programmes seront régionalisés. Il y aura des affiches. Il y a même une affiche pour le *Upper Plaine Wilhems* où nous avons toute une série de programmes déjà prévus pour les jeunes. Ces affiches iront très vite dans tous les collèges de l'île, dans tous les centres de jeunesse, dans les *CAB offices*, dans les centres communautaires et aussi, bien sûr, sur Facebook.

Pour terminer ce volet jeunesse, M. le président, je dirai que notre gouvernement a à cœur le développement de la jeunesse de la République de Maurice. M. le président, permettez-moi de faire aussi un petit bilan de la section sport de mon ministère toujours pour montrer à la population que le budget alloué l'année dernière a été bien utilisée et que nous méritons amplement d'avoir un très bon budget encore cette année. La section sport a été restructurée en juillet 2017 pour mettre l'emphase sur cinq axes principaux, notamment la planification stratégique, le sport d'élite, l'identification des jeunes talents, le sport pour tous et la formation et le renforcement des capacités. Ce nouveau mode opératoire a pour objectif d'assurer une meilleure efficacité et de répondre aux exigences du sport moderne.

Avec la mise en place de ce nouveau système de gestion, les fédérations nationales de sport ont été appelées à élaborer un plan stratégique sur quatre ans pour la période 2017 à

2021 pour une meilleure planification de leurs activités. Je peux dire, M. le président, qu'à ce jour 37 des 40 fédérations sportives nationales ont soumis leurs plans et je vais m'assurer que les 3 restantes respectent ces mêmes critères.

M. le président, mon ministère a attribué pendant l'année écoulée une somme de R 20 millions aux fédérations pour financer l'organisation et la participation de nos athlètes dans des camps d'entraînement et des compétitions locales et internationales. Une somme additionnelle de R 11.6 millions a été allouée à 121 sportifs de haut niveau durant la même période.

Je dois souligner ici, M. le président, que de juillet 2017 à juin 2018, la République de Maurice a récolté 16 médailles dans la catégorie senior et 47 médailles dans la catégorie junior dans ces compétitions internationales. Une mention spéciale ici aux tireurs qui ont une nouvelle fois brillé le weekend dernier à la *Best fighter WAKO World Cup* de kickboxing en Italie, avec 4 nouvelles médailles d'or et 2 de bronze.

Déjà l'année dernière, Fabrice Bauluck avait fait la fierté de toute la nation mauricienne en remportant le titre de champion du monde de kickboxing en Hongrie.

Un mot aussi sur la médaille d'argent de Roila aux derniers Jeux du Commonwealth en avril dernier. Et, M. le président, permettez-moi de citer rapidement juste pour remettre les pendules à l'heure, je pense que c'est important. Je ne veux absolument pas rentrer dans aucune polémique mais il faut remettre les pendules à l'heure.

Dans son discours, le *Leader* de l'Opposition a dit que le sport – *the sport* est malade

—

“(…) one lady who won, has she been given any consideration? Nothing! She is being treated like dirt.”

Je suis en train de citer Hansard ce que le *Leader* de l'Opposition a dit -

“She is being treated like dirt.”

Parlant de Roila, que rien n'est fait pour elle, elle est partie à Gold Coast, elle a eu sa médaille et elle est venue et comme ça, c'est tout.

M. le président, il est navrant que encore une fois le *Leader* de l'Opposition décide de faire de la démagogie et permettez-moi de dire que Roila est bénéficiaire d'une bourse de mon ministère à hauteur de R 23,000 mensuellement. Elle a aussi reçu un *cash prize* d'un

montant total de R 267,500 pour ses performances aux *Commonwealth Games* et au *Senior African Weightlifting Championships*.

Le *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sport (TFES)*, qui tombe sous l'égide de mon ministère, a également accordé un soutien financier de R 65,000 à Roila pour un camp d'entraînement en Angleterre. Ce, en vue de sa préparation pour les Championnats d'Afrique qui arrive en septembre et le Championnat du Monde en novembre. Comme tous les athlètes présélectionnés pour les Jeux des Iles, un moyen de transport est mis à sa disposition et c'est valable déjà pour tous les autres athlètes, y compris Roila.

Je tiens à préciser que lors de ces entrevues après sa médaille d'argent, Roila m'a toujours remercié personnellement pour toute l'aide et le support que je lui ai accordé. On peut vérifier sur YouTube l'honorable Gayan. A savoir aussi, M. le président que Roila est d'ores et déjà éligible à la *State Recognition Allowance Scheme for Retired Athletes* que nous avons introduit l'année dernière. Mesure historique ! D'ores et déjà avec sa médaille d'argent au Commonwealth si elle décide de prendre sa retraite et à l'âge qui est prescrit, d'ores et déjà elle peut toucher une somme entre R 6000 à R 7000 mensuellement jusqu'à la fin de ses jours. De son côté, le Comité Olympique Mauricien lui accorde une allocation mensuelle de 15,000 roupies pour mener à bien sa préparation dans le cadre des Jeux olympiques de 2020.

Donc, M. le président, on ne fait pas de la politique pour faire de la politique et je suis navré, vraiment navré que quand je relis Hansard avec attention ce n'est que du vent, il n'y a absolument rien de concret dans ce document, dans ce que le Leader de l'opposition a dit : le sport est malade. Moi, je dirais plutôt que c'est le PMSD qui est malade, M. le président.

M. le président, nous restons dans le même domaine de l'haltérophilie. Nos jeunes haltérophiles n'ont pas été en reste avec 9 médailles d'or et 3 d'argent remportées lors des championnats d'Afrique *Youth* et *Junior* d'haltérophilie tenus en Ouganda en Octobre 2017, 9 médailles d'or pour les jeunes.

Nos joueurs de badminton se sont hissés sur la plus haute marche du podium en 2 occasions et ont remporté 2 médailles de bronze aux championnats d'Afrique de badminton et une médaille d'or et une autre de bronze dans la *Thomas and Uber Cup* tenus en Algérie en février dernier.

Je voudrais, comme l'a dit mon cher ami, aussi souligner, M. le président, l'excellente performance de nos jeunes sportifs, et eux ils représentent l'avenir et représentent, ce que je veux dire à la fin, le Paris 2024.

Nos jeunes sportifs ont brillé aux Jeux de la CJSOI à Djibouti en avril. Malgré, bien sûr, des conditions très difficiles, l'Afrique étant l'Afrique. Malgré les conditions difficiles, M. le président, sur les 7 pays participants : Madagascar, Seychelles, Djibouti, Réunion et Mayotte, Maurice s'est classée première au tableau des médailles avec 10 médailles d'or, M. le président, 8 d'argent et 5 de bronze.

Je dois saluer la performance extraordinaire des deux jeunes qui nous ont frappés réellement. Le jeune Ryan qui n'a que 11 ans, joueur de tennis de table et le pauvre il n'arrive même pas à la hauteur de la table. Il a joué contre un Djiboutien, qui, je ne vais pas dire a triché, etc. mais qui ressemblait à un jeune de plus de 17 ans. Parce qu'il faut comprendre que la CJSOI, le maximum c'est 17 ans. Et lui il avait l'air d'avoir plus de 17 ans. Pas grave ! Il a battu le Djiboutien 3 set à zéro, et dans le dernier set, M. le président, comme on dit à Maurice '*lin bat li pisso.*' Final !

M. le président, aussi la performance extraordinaire de notre jeune bouliste, joueur de pétanque, en final il a pris la deuxième place face, s'il vous plaît, au Champion du Monde Malgache. De très près notre jeune bouliste a pris la deuxième place, M. le président. Nous avons espoir et c'est vrai comme l'a dit mon collègue et ami, l'honorable ministre Yogida Sawmynaden –

« Our youth can dream. »

Et nous avons espoir et nous allons mettre tous les fonds nécessaires pour que nos jeunes puissent réaliser leurs rêves.

Il est aussi à noter, M. le président, que l'île Maurice organisera les prochains jeux de la CJSOI en 2021.

M. le président, je faillirais à mon devoir si je ne mentionne pas l'excellente prestation de l'équipe féminine du Quatre Bornes Volley-Ball Club qui a décroché la médaille d'or lors de la Coupe des Clubs Champions de la Zone 7. Et la performance exceptionnelle de nos jeunes footballeurs qui se sont hissés en finale de la COSAFA 2 des moins de 17 ans l'année dernière.

M. le président, au regard de ces performances au plus haut niveau, venir dire que le sport est mort relève tout simplement de la démagogie. M. le président, quelques chiffres encore, j'espère que nos amis n'auront pas le tournis. Sous le *Cash Price Scheme*, mon ministère a alloué une somme de R 7,2 millions pour récompenser les athlètes et entraîneurs qui se sont distingués dans des compétitions internationales de novembre 2017 à avril de cette année. Et là, je fais référence à ce que notre champion du monde a dit à son retour de sa compétition, je cite Fabrice Bauluck. Il avait décroché le gros lot jeudi dernier lors de la *Cash Price Ceremony* avec un chèque de R 675,000. Et Fabrice qui cite –

“Une juste récompense. Je suis heureux que le ministère de la Jeunesse et des sports a reconnu officiellement mon titre de champion du monde.”

Je vous le disais un peu plus tôt, on parlait du *Retired Athletes Allowance Scheme*. Alors, une somme de R 6 millions a été allouée à 105 athlètes retraités à ce jour. 105 athlètes retraités! Et comme vous l'avez dit à vie. Jamais fait! Mesure historique pour nos sportifs, M. le président!

M. le président, l'identification et le développement des jeunes talents constituent un axe majeur de la politique sportive de mon ministère. Et je dois faire ressortir qu'à mon grand étonnement certains osent avancer que rien n'est fait pour la relance du sport à Maurice. *Bien sûr, pars'ki ine fini relancer ! Zot en retard!*

M. le président, un programme a été élaboré pour que les formations des jeunes dans différentes disciplines sportives soient réalisées de façon systématique et scientifique. Des centres de formation et des écoles de sports ont été créées à travers l'île, ainsi qu'à Rodrigues en athlétisme. On avait fait l'ouverture au stade de Rose Belle. Le football, le volleyball, le basketball, le badminton, le handball et d'autres disciplines vont venir encore.

Qui ne se souvient pas, M. le président, du centre national de football de Blaquart qui avait fait bien sûr les heures de gloire de notre football. Notre centre a été ré-ouvert l'année dernière, M. le président. Mon ministère a investi R 8 millions dans la mise en place de ces structures qui accueillent en ce moment même un total d'environ 14,500 jeunes à travers le pays. De plus des tests d'aptitude physique ont été effectués dans les écoles secondaires pour déceler des jeunes talents.

M. le président, mon ministère a organisé pendant l'année les Jeux des Jeunes Talents pour aller faire de la détection. Les Jeux des Jeunes Elites pour la tranche d'âge 12 à 17 ans. Détection encore une fois, M. le président ! Les Jeux des Jeunes Talents ont vu la

participation de 3,876 jeunes, incluant 90 de Rodrigues et 5 d'Agaléga, alors que les Jeux des Jeunes Elites ont réuni 6,295 participants y compris 228 venant de Rodrigues et 10 d'Agaléga, M. le président. *Là aussi pas bon même !* M. le président, c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir et de joie aussi que je dois dire - parce que la compétition a été divisée en districts – que c'est Rodrigues qui a remporté ces jeux. Et pas plus loin...

(*Interruptions*)

Oui, enn ti la main pour nou bann frères Rodrigues !

(*Interruptions*)

Et pas plus loin que la semaine d'avant, on avait fait la remise de coupes de récompense.

Le Département Sports pour Tous, M. le président, a pour mission de promouvoir les bienfaits de l'activité physique et sportive ; de soutenir la participation inclusive entre transgressant les barrières tels que l'âge, le sexe ou un handicap. D'aider les fédérations et d'autres organisations prestataires à promouvoir des activités régionales à travers une assistance technique ou financière et d'organiser des programmes de sports avec la collaboration du *Mauritius Sports Council*. Quelques programmes, M. le président, tels que le *After School Sports Fitness Programme*, le *Sports Camp* pendant les vacances scolaires, et cette année, M. le président, *12-hour National Relay*. Et là, je remercie mes collègues et amis qui sont venus et qui ont participé à cette activité et j'espère vous revoir pour l'année prochaine parce qu'il y aura une deuxième édition. Le *12-hour National Relay* a vu la participation du Premier ministre, lui-même, qui je dois dire grâce à lui, nous avons beaucoup de courage à avancer. Et vous savez, M. le président, contrairement à d'autres, nous ne faisons pas que de blaguer. Pas de bla-bla! Nous donnons l'exemple. L'honorable Premier ministre donne l'exemple. Il a parcouru une distance de 10 kilomètres en une heure. Cela vous fait 25 tours de la piste...

(*Interruptions*)

25 tours de la piste du stade Maryse Justin, M. le président.

(*Interruptions*)

Et 25 fois 400, exactement! Et il y avait aussi la participation de nos amis de Rodrigues dans ce *12-hour National Relay*.

M. le président, notre honorable Premier ministre est un grand marathonien, et un grand coureur de fond, un grand athlète.

(Interruptions)

Oui, ça lot la la ça! Lot coureur là, lot la la ça! Notre Premier ministre est un grand athlète, M. le président et il encourage toujours dans tous ses discours à la population à pratiquer une activité physique et sportive.

Le *AfterSchool Sports Fitness Programme*, M. le président, est un programme destiné aux élèves de grade 4. Et là, je dois remercier ma collègue, la ministre de l'Education, Madame Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun, pour justement permettre à ce que nous puissions faire ces programmes dans diverses écoles primaires. Dites-vous bien, M. le président que ce programme a touché 13,000 enfants. 13,000! Les activités proposées étaient le football, handball, le Kyokushinkai, le Kidsathletics, le tennis et le Minor Games entre autres.

M. le président, nous avons aussi injecté une somme de R 2.6 millions aux fédérations par rapport au renforcement et à la formation des capacités. Formation des entraîneurs officiels, cadres administratifs. Ainsi, 166 entraîneurs, 159 officielles et 34 juges ont été formés durant toute l'année.

M. le président, en outre, l'Université de Technologie, avec la collaboration de mon ministère, a mis sur pied un programme d'étude intitulé le '*Diploma in Sports Training, Coaching and Exercise*' destiné aux entraîneurs, destiné aussi aux anciens athlètes, aux athlètes actifs afin qu'ils puissent avoir un diplôme et éventuellement, après leur carrière trouver bien sûr quelque chose dans le domaine.

Rapidement, M. le président, le *Mauritius Sports Council* a aussi contribué dans le renforcement des capacités en proposant d'autres informations tel *TAFISA International Certified Leadership Course*.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, rapidement de parler des différents mesures annoncées dans le budget 2018-2019.

M. le président, nous sommes déterminés à combattre les maladies telles que le diabète, où malheureusement, on doit le dire, nous sommes un peu champion du monde. 26% de la population, M. le président, par rapport à la moyenne mondiale qui est seulement de 3%. Donc, le Premier ministre a compris cela, et c'est pour cela que, sans hésitation, un budget sans précédent de R 38 millions a été consenti dans le budget, afin que nous puissions mettre sur pied différentes activités pour toute la population à travers le programme « Sport pour Tous ». R 38 millions, M. le président. Et nous n'allons pas tarder, puisque déjà, en septembre - et là, je lance un appel à toute la population ; vous aurez les détails au fur et à

mesure - nous lançons le programme « *Meet the Next Challenge* » qui comprendra d'abord et avant tout le « *One Million Step Challenge* ». Et bien sûr, M. le président, on donnera les détails en temps et lieux.

M. le président, je viens de recevoir mon petit papier. Donc, je vais essayer de *summarise* tout en ne pas me perdre dans mes pages. Je dois rapidement dire quand même, M. le président, que mon ministère a mandaté Portas Consulting Limited, une société de renom internationale, pour développer la politique nationale du sport pour la nation, et très bientôt, d'ici le 20 juillet, l'équipe qui a bien sûr entamé une phase de consultation à l'échelle nationale à travers Maurice et Rodrigues, va remettre ses recommandations. Donc, l'équipe de Portas a eu la tâche de revoir un peu tout le système sportif à Maurice. Je vais vraiment *summarise* là.

M. le président, je ne peux terminer sans parler bien sûr des Jeux des îles qui arrivent l'année prochaine. Et pour lancer les choses, pour lancer la ferveur, le 29 juin, M. le président, la mascotte des jeux sera dévoilée. Retenez cette date, le 29 juin. Et un mois après, le 19 juillet, nous allons déclencher le compte à rebours à un an des jeux, M. le président. Comme vous les savez - à plusieurs reprises j'en ai parlé - pour cette fois-ci, nous n'aurons pas de village des jeux. Les athlètes, les officiels seront hébergés dans des hôtels 5-étoiles.

Parlons chiffres encore une fois par rapport aux Jeux des îles. Donc, un budget de R 195 millions sera alloué pour l'organisation des Jeux des îles et R 75 millions pour la préparation des athlètes, incluant les camps d'entraînement. Et je dois dire, M. le président, que l'année dernière nous avons obtenu un budget de R 18 millions pour la préparation de nos athlètes, et toutes les fédérations sont unanimes à dire que c'est la première fois dans l'histoire qu'un budget aussi important a été alloué à deux ans des Jeux pour que nos athlètes puissent se préparer.

Nous avons aussi, donc, M. le président, sans oublier, une somme de R 375 millions qui sera utilisée pour la rénovation de 17 infrastructures sportives, et cela commence là, très vite, sans oublier, bien sûr, les R 3 milliards pour Côte-d'Or.

Le *Hall of Fame*, M. le président, qui était une mesure dans le budget de l'année dernière, sera une réalité d'ici la fin de cette année. Ce sera un endroit où les Mauriciens pourraient venir découvrir l'histoire ; l'histoire même du sport de notre République, M. le président. Et cela aussi, encore une fois, pour la toute première fois dans l'histoire du pays.

M. le président, je vais parler rapidement d'une mesure qui a été annoncée dans le budget avant de terminer le volet sport. Une somme de R 5 millions a été allouée pour ce que nous appelons le « *Regionalisation Grant* ». Avant, ce n'était que le football qui en bénéficiait, M. le président. Je suis heureux et content, et je remercie le Premier ministre pour cela, de dire qu'une somme de R 150,000 sera octroyée à chaque équipe masculine et féminine de volleyball, de basketball et de handball de la première division. Nous avons entendu les cris de ces clubs de première division, et merci à l'honorable Premier ministre pour cela.

Un budget de 8 millions a aussi été alloué pour la gestion des écoles de sports à travers le pays, et dans ce budget, M. le président, nous avons un budget de 5 millions pour commencer à préparer les Jeux olympiques de 2020 à Tokyo.

Je termine ce volet sport, M. le président, rapidement, avec un projet qui m'est cher, celui de voir nos athlètes briller aux Jeux olympiques de Paris 2024. Les fédérations, M. le président, ont déjà commencé à travailler leurs structures, parce que nous avons besoin de six ans, si ce n'est pas plus, afin de préparer des athlètes pour qu'ils puissent briller aux Jeux olympiques, et nous lançons, M. le président le « *Road to Paris 2024* ».

M. le président, une petite citation pour terminer de George Frederick Will -

“*Sports serve society by providing vivid examples of excellence.*”

M. le président, rapidement, un petit survol de ma circonscription, avec votre indulgence, cher ami *Chief Whip*.

M. le président, lors de l'intervention du PPS l'honorable Aliphon, que je remercie d'ailleurs, qui fait un travail formidable dans la circonscription numéro 17 et qui connaît maintenant toutes les rues par cœur, Curepipe, Midlands, Dubreuil, Seizième Mille, il est regrettable - Dubreuil, *là-bas même ena l'usine du thé* - que l'honorable Adrien Duval, dans une *sitting position* - dommage qu'il ne soit pas là, mais j'espère que l'honorable Baboo lui transmettra le message de ma part - a lancé à mon égard « *Stephan pan faire narien* ». M. le président, quelques petits rappels. Morcellement Belvedere...

(*Interruptions*)

Oui, c'est important ! Et je suis sûr que l'honorable Adrien Duval ne sait même pas où cela se trouve. Enfin, vous allez lui demander, cher ami. Morcellement Belvedere est juste à côté - je

suis sûr que l'honorable Nando Bodha va être d'accord - de la rue Sir Gaëtan Duval, n'est-ce pas honorable Bodha.

Pour la première fois, M. le président, à la rue Sir Gaëtan Duval, un drain de 242 mètres, pour une valeur de R 2.1 millions a été réalisé par la *NDU*. *Et pan faire narien !*

M. le président, La Hausse de Lalouviere *Street* - allez lui demander, honorable Baboo. Je suis sûr qu'il ne saura pas où ça se trouve - est la frontière entre les circonscriptions 16 et 17. C'est le chemin qui passe juste après la Clinique Darné pour aller vers Trou aux Cerfs, à gauche...

(*Interruptions*)

Oui, vous, vous allez le savoir. Je n'ai pas dit vous, cher ami !

A gauche, c'est le No. 17 ; à droite, c'est le No. 16. Et puisque j'ai été PPS des circonscriptions Nos. 16 et 17, cela tombe bien puisque nous avons réalisé en 2016 un drain de 382 mètres pour une valeur de R 3.1 millions. Et les gens de là-bas sont soulagés - Morcellement Rock Parc, qui se trouve dans les environs de la rue Couvent, et juste à côté la rue Anfield. Ces personnes sont venues me voir après mon élection. Donc, un drain de 140 mètres avec 90 m² de *reprofiling of road* pour une valeur de R 2,6 millions, *fini faire*, M. le président. Mardi Lane, 16eme Mille, a été ré-asphalté ce matin. Et ce matin, mercredi, en circulant dans ma circonscription, j'ai rencontré les ingénieurs de la NDU en train de faire leur relevé à la rue Nicolas de Séré. Donc, cette rue sera asphaltée d'ici lundi.

Je préfère m'arrêter là, M. le président, sinon je risque d'avoir un carton rouge. Rapidement un petit mot sur la piscine de Curepipe ! Je remercie énormément le ministre des Terres et du Logement, l'honorable Jhugroo qui a mis un terrain à la disposition du ministère parce que je cherchais un terrain central, accessible, dans la circonscription No. 17, qui desservira aussi la circonscription No. 16.

Je commence par la circonscription No. 16 d'abord - je ne suis pas égoïste moi. Si vous habitez à la Cité Mangalkhan, honorable Baboo, vous n'avez qu'un bus à prendre ! Vous vous arrêtez à la gare, vous marchez un peu et vous aurez votre piscine. Si vous habitez à Dubreuil, un bus, vous vous arrêtez à la gare et vous avez votre piscine. Si vous habitez à la Cité la Brasserie, un bus, et vous avez votre piscine.

M. le président...

(*Interruptions*)

Nouvelle France, Rose Belle, Mahebourg, Port Louis, Rose Hill, you never know ! Un bus ! M. le président, vous vous arrêtez à la gare et vous avez votre piscine. Le terrain en question se trouve là où nous avons le *Open University*. Je remercie aussi ma collègue, l'honorable ministre de l'Education qui a accepté de nous donner ce terrain. Les procédures sont lancées pour le *design* de notre piscine.

(*Interruptions*)

Oui, c'est juste à côté de l'honorable Dr. Boolell !

M. le président, je termine en vous remerciant de m'avoir écouté à une heure aussi tardive. Je remercie les conseillers MSM et ML de la municipalité de Curepipe qui font un travail formidable. Faute de temps, je n'ai pas pu parler de l'hôtel de ville. Tout cela viendra, forum et autres. Je remercie les officiers de mon ministère, la NDU et les CAB *officers* pour tout leur soutien.

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire à la jeunesse mauricienne et à nos amis sportifs de ne pas se tracasser, *touzour mo pe la pou suport zott*.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Selvon!

(11.58 p.m.)

Mrs D. Selvon (Second Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Merci, M. le président. Le XXI^e siècle n'a pas été de tout repos jusqu'ici pour l'économie mauricienne et c'est toujours le cas pour un bon bout de temps encore et nos budgets reflètent ce contexte qui reste tourmenté.

En 2014 et 2015 le gouvernement et ses ministres successifs avaient promis aux mauriciens, à plusieurs reprises, et de la manière la plus solennelle, un retour à de fortes croissances d'au moins 5% à monter par ce qu'ils appelaient un nouveau miracle économique, ainsi que plus d'une douzaine de *smart cities* créés par le gouvernement à travers tout le pays, et aussi la fin du chômage et des inégalités entre les familles mauriciennes.

Aujourd'hui, arrivé à son quatrième budget, le gouvernement n'a obtenu dans son bilan ni forte croissance, laquelle reste en-dessous de 4 %, ni miracle économique, mais a

offert, encore et toujours, des promesses à la veille des prochaines élections, qui seront suivies d'un nouveau gouvernement qui sera lié par ces promesses et les énormes dettes de centaines de milliards d'un pays, qui, selon l'économiste Philippe Koch, dans la revue, économie mauricienne et conjoncture, de mai-juin 2018, écrit, et je cite –

“It can be argued that the financial sector has almost accidentally found a solution to the fact that Mauritius is living above its means; cheap financing of consumption through financial inflows from abroad. In 2018, the Mauritian economy still resembles structurally the economy of the 1990s but superimposed by a financial sector that channels unprecedented amounts of foreign currency into the country.”

Un rapport de mars 2018 de la Banque mondiale, intitulée « *Addressing inequality through more equitable labour markets* », publié, qui est accompagné d'un communiqué de presse, souligne la persistance de l'inégalité dans les revenus des familles à Maurice. Je cite ce document dans sa version française ici –

« Alors qu'il semblait voué à l'échec sur le plan économique à la suite de son indépendance, en raison de son taux de pauvreté élevé, et d'autres vulnérabilités, dont une forte croissance démographique, des tensions ethniques, un taux de chômage élevé et une économie fortement tributaire de l'exportation de sucre sur les marchés internationaux, ce petit pays insulaire a su faire face en diversifiant son économie et en réalisant une transition structurelle sans précédent des secteurs agricole et textile vers celui des services, notamment la finance, l'immobilier et les services professionnels. »

La Banque mondiale ajoute ceci –

« Cependant, bien que ces dix dernières années aient été caractérisées par une remarquable croissance économique, elles ont également été marquées par une faible redistribution des revenus de la croissance dès que le modèle économique du pays a commencé à rencontrer des difficultés et que les inégalités se sont accentuées. De 2001 à 2005 l'écart entre les revenus des 10 % des ménages les plus pauvres et les plus riches s'est creusé de 37 %. »

Au sujet de la crise qui frappa Maurice au début du présent siècle, la Banque mondiale explique « *the government reacted promptly by implementing a series of liberal economic reforms that temporarily brought the Mauritian economy back on track. However, economic growth began to slow again in 2010.* »

Le communiqué de la Banque mondiale explique les causes de l'inégalité persistante comme suit –

« Selon les conclusions du rapport (...), cette hausse des inégalités de salaires est essentiellement imputable aux revenus du travail des ménages, qui représentent 98 % de cette augmentation. Cela peut essentiellement s'expliquer par deux facteurs, d'une part, les facteurs démographiques, tels que la composition, la diversité et les caractéristiques des ménages ainsi la tendance des individus à se marier dans un groupe socioprofessionnel identique.

D'autre part, les facteurs liés au marché du travail, tels que la participation de la main-d'œuvre et l'inégalité de revenus du travail.

L'expansion relative de la part des ménages monoparentaux et l'augmentation disproportionnée de la part de la main-d'œuvre féminine dans les ménages les plus aisés ont joué un rôle dans la hausse de ces inégalités. Cependant, le facteur le plus important est l'augmentation des inégalités de revenus individuels, notamment chez les hommes. Le communiqué constate ceci, je cite encore –

« Sur une note positive, les efforts du gouvernement visant à redistribuer les bénéfices de cette croissance, par le biais d'un système de protection sociale, ont réussi à compenser la forte hausse des inégalités de revenus du travail des ménages. Les inégalités de revenus des ménages ont augmenté, notamment les revenus du travail. »

Le rapport souligne que Maurice souffre de cette inégalité croissante de revenus des familles parce que le pays restructure son économie sans arriver à procurer une main-d'œuvre réorientée par des formations appropriées des travailleurs aux nouveaux secteurs émergeants. Enfin, on a eu, au contraire, un moment à des universités marrons et autres institutions du même acabit. La leçon à tirer pour tout gouvernement, quel qu'il soit, est de ne rien négliger pour combattre les inégalités des revenus dus au fameux *mismatch between skills and jobs*. Dans ce contexte, j'aurai souhaité que la classe syndicale se concentre plus sur les moyens de résoudre cette cause fondamentale d'inégalité et moins sur les gains à court terme. Les syndicats devraient réclamer un droit au recyclage de leurs membres pour pouvoir se former et se préparer à la réorientation de l'économie nationale.

Sur les nouvelles technologies, le budget en ignore plusieurs en prétendant soi-disant solutionner la question d'inégalité salariale. Parlant de nouvelles technologies, pour citer des exemples concrets auxquels nos politiciens tournent le dos, on a commencé à bâtir des

maisons en les imprimant en 3D en Europe et en Chine, et en demandant aux architectes de faire sur ordinateur les plans détaillés en trois dimensions. Il suffit seulement d'en assembler des pièces détachées. Il y a un vaste choix de matériaux modernes qu'on peut choisir pour ces maisons individuelles qui ne coûtent que R 200,000 l'unité et n'ont rien à envier à celles qui nous construisons aujourd'hui à coût de milliards surtout pour les familles modestes. On peut aujourd'hui aller voir sur place la qualité exceptionnelle de ces maisons pour lesquelles une nouvelle main-d'œuvre est formée pour s'y adapter dans les pays concernés.

Par ailleurs, alors que l'énergie solaire photovoltaïque est dépassée et jugée trop faible par rapport à l'énergie solaire thermique, dont une seule centrale alimente 27,000 maisons en Espagne et ne couvre chacune que 4 arpents comme je le plaide dans cette Chambre depuis 3 ans dans mes commentaires sur les budgets successifs de 2015 et 2016. Personne ne semble avoir compris quoique ce soit de ce projet de nouvelle société composé de *smart villages* gérés sur le modèle coopératif sur les 20,000 arpents de terre abandonnés de canne à sucre et récupérés pour un vrai miracle économique. D'une capacité de 11 mégawatts et ces générateurs thermaux solaires, ont été conçus pour produire chacun 23 gigawatts/heure d'électricité par an. Il est certain que Maurice devra s'adapter à des centaines de technologies émergentes comme celle-là et y préparer sa main-d'œuvre. Des dizaines de milliers de nouveaux jobs, donc des jobs pour des nouvelles techniques et technologies agro-industrielles devront se créer dans ce secteur, surtout dans le lancement de plantations de plantes à fibre pour les marchés textiles internationaux.

A Maurice on a voulu créer une révolution verte, rien ne s'est passé, M. le président. Même la bio culture n'a pas vraiment démarré à l'échelle souhaitée au niveau national. On ose maintenant parler de révolution bleue alors que nos lagons regorgent le plastique qui détruit et tue la biodiversité aquatique. Et nous n'avons même pas une flotte de pêche industrielle d'une taille comparable à celle de pays ayant moins de zone océanique que nous. Nous n'essayons même pas de retirer de nos lagons des milliers de tonnes de déchets plastiques, comme cela se fait en France sur ces plus belles zones côtières.

Toujours sur le plan des nouvelles technologies, et à lire le discours du budget, nous semblons ignorer aussi au plus haut niveau de l'Etat qu'il y a des micro-organismes qui dévorent avec voracité, et très rapidement, le plastique et le fais disparaître.

C'est une bio technologie employée en Europe en ce moment. Soit on devient enfin un pays à la gouvernance informée et éclairée sur les nouvelles technologies émergentes, soit

nous avons un pays d'ignares, voire de dinosaures politiques qui ne suivent pas la rapide évolution des technologies. Ou bien l'âge, souvent, très avancée de certains décideurs, font qu'ils ne savent même pas, M. le président, que l'huile médicale de Cannabis, non-toxique et si puissante, est un des plus puissants antioxydants et rajeunissants de la planète, qui pourrait rajeunir de 15 ans certains de ceux qui nous gouvernent et qui applaudissent béatement *in their blissful world of ignorance*, aux arrestations à Plaisance d'étrangers ayant sur eux des dérivés médicaux et non toxique du Cannabis médical. Un marché médical mondial en explosion qui pèse des centaines de milliards de dollars sur lequel se jette les agriculteurs et investisseurs dans des dizaines de pays africains en ce moment, comme la Zambie et le Zimbabwe, entre autres, pour revitaliser leur agro-industrie.

Pour ceux qui nous gouvernent, j'attire l'attention sur le fait qu'il y a quelques jours, les autorités anglaises ont été forcées de rendre, selon la presse britannique, son huile de Cannabis, un jeune garçon Irlandais de 12 ans, Billy Caldwell, le sauvant d'une mort certaine car c'est ce médicament anti épileptique, saisi le 6 juin 2018 à Heathrow, qui le maintenait en vie. Je demande ici au gouvernement et à tous ces membres d'assumer, comme le gouvernement anglais l'a fait; finalement la responsabilité de toute mortalité qui peut avoir été causé par les nombreuses saisies à Plaisance, ou ailleurs à Maurice, de l'huile de Cannabis utilisé comme médicament. Je réclame une enquête par le ministre Mauricien de la santé pour savoir si vraiment, comme certains l'affirment, paraît-il un jeune homme est mort à Maurice, privé par les autorités de son médicament à base de Cannabis. J'espère que ce n'est qu'une rumeur non-fondée mais il faut savoir sortir, M. le président, du monde de l'ignorance et de la stupidité criminelle car le Cannabis est à la base de multiples médicaments pour assister des patients à traiter la douleur insoutenable, à guérir d'une grande variété de pathologies.

Je parlerai maintenant du secteur financier *off-shore* mauricien qui a reçu un coup de massue en favorisant la venue de capitaux illicites, volés dans des pays étrangers. Un scandale qui aurait persisté s'il n'y avait pas eu la presse et l'Opposition parlementaire. Et si cela n'avait pas entraîné la chute du premier personnage de l'Etat mauricien, associé intime de Sobrinho, qui a échoué par la minceur d'un cheveu dans sa recherche d'un passeport mauricien et de la nationalité mauricienne.

Aujourd'hui, le gouvernement relance son commerce du passeport mauricien et de notre nationalité sur le marché international, sans même exiger des bénéficiaires d'investir dans un secteur productif et d'introduire ou transférer à Maurice de nouvelles technologies avec la création d'un minimum d'emploi pour chaque passeport vendu.

Il était important de rappeler que cela donna lieu à un énorme scandale dans les années 80 avec des agents étrangers engagés dans un trafic illégal de passeport mauricien à Taïwan. Rien dans l'annonce de la relance de ce commerce par le gouvernement ne mentionne les limites de cette vente de notre passeport et de notre nationalité. Notre sectaire *offshore* est depuis l'affaire Sobrinho sous la haute surveillance de tous les organismes anticorruption y compris l'OCDE et l'ONU entre autres. C'est un secteur qui fait entrer des sommes phénoménales dans l'économie domestique, comme le souligne l'économiste, Philippe Koch, dans la revue du PluriConseil Conjoncture en date de May-Juin 2018. Parlant de la balance des paiements, il écrit, et je cite –

« Why and likely at the current junction any cracks in that link can spell unprecedented havoc for the Mauritian Economy. This has been already subtly pointed out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and any cracks will be intrinsically related to governance and financial situation of the public sector.»

Il donne aussi l'avertissement qui suit, et je cite –

« The saga of the controversial Angolan businessman, Alvaro Sobrinho, is an example that some of the flaws, entering the country through the GBC channel, are apparently not transitional, but rather

designed to find a provisional home in Mauritius. The regular Saber-Rattling by the European Union and the OECD regarding tax transparency is no coincidence in that regards and the repeating of the mantra that Mauritius is a clean jurisdiction by industry leaders and politicians at international conferences is often creating the opposite perception amongst international observers. Offshore centres, such as in Mauritius, are under increased scrutiny from Governments and Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). As an example, if an NGO manages to unearth a major scandal involving large scale tax evasion by European residents through the Mauritian Offshore sector, in turn forcing the Government to take decisive actions, (...) stock of foreign direct investments held in JBCs could flee country for a safer home.”

Son collègue et ancien conseiller du gouvernement, Eric Ng Ping Cheun, écrit ceci au sujet de la rigueur budgétaire et je cite –

« On fut, donc, agréablement surpris que le Premier ministre mauricien ait terminé son meeting du 1er mai en faisant appel aux «sacrifices, efforts, disciplines et responsabilités», bref au sens de la rigueur. »

Il ajoute ceci et je cite -

« Déjà, le gouvernement actuel n'a fait preuve ni de sacrifices ni d'efforts budgétaires quoique les trois premières années d'un mandat législatif soient propices à la discipline et la responsabilité fiscales. Premièrement, les dépenses publiques n'ont cessé de croître allègrement. Après avoir stagné à R 92 milliards, en 2014 (même niveau qu'en 2013), elles augmentèrent à R 103 milliards en 2015-2016 et à R 111 milliards en 2016-2017 et elles sont estimées à R 128 milliards pour 2017-2018, selon les *Statements of Government Operations* publiés par le ministère des Finances. Par rapport au produit intérieur brut (PIB), elles passeraient de 23,9% en 2014 à 26,7% en 2017-2018!

Deuxièmement, le gouvernement a laissé filer le déficit budgétaire. De 3,2% du PIB, en 2014, ce dernier grimpa à 3,5% en 2015-2016 et y resta en 2016-2017. Nul doute qu'il demeurera au-dessus de 3,0%, seuil fixé par les institutions internationales pour une bonne gestion des finances publiques.

Troisièmement, la dette du secteur public a grossi en poids absolu et relatif. Elle était de R 238 milliards en 2014, de R 261 milliards en 2015, de R 280 milliards en 2016 et de R 291 milliards en 2017. En pourcentage du PIB, elle est demeurée supérieure à 60%, un seuil internationalement acceptable, passant de 61,6% en décembre 2014 à 64,4% en décembre 2016, avant de reculer légèrement à 63,4% en décembre 2017. La situation ne s'est guère améliorée sous la présente législature et encore que des milliards de roupies empruntés du gouvernement indien ne soient techniquement pas comptabilisés dans la dette publique.

Et puis, contrairement à ce que prétend le chef de gouvernement, la dette nationale par tête d'habitant a continué d'augmenter : R 188 000 en 2014, R 206,000 en 2015, R 222,000 en 2016 et R 230,000 en 2017, soit une hausse de 22% en trois ans! Nos petits-enfants paieront très cher les folles dépenses et la folie des grandeurs de nos gouvernants. »

Nous n'aurons pas d'avenir si ceux qu'ils font nos budgets ne présentent pas se faisant un projet associé de société. Enfin, Maurice a un problème de chef et sous-chef qui s'amuse à défier la politique gouvernementale. Entre autres, la politique pour '*Make Mauritius Greener*', pour illustrer cela, je vous cite ici le cas de certains douaniers ce jours-ci qui se sont autorisés - dans le dos de leur ministre et Premier ministre, Pravind Jugnauth, qui pourtant plaide pour l'environnement - a décréter arbitrairement une nouvelle taxe qui bloque déjà l'entrée à Maurice de voitures électriques américaines et en font, à leur grande fierté, exploser les prix avec un modèle passant de R 4 millions à R 6 millions, ces jours-ci.

Ces chefs douaniers entrent-ils dans la guerre commerciale mondiale déclenchée par l'USA qui, selon les économistes mauriciens, risquent de faire beaucoup de tort à l'économie mauricienne. Or, ce budget ne fait aucune mention de ce risque grave alors que cette guerre s'étend avec l'Inde qui annonce, après l'Union Européenne, la Chine et après nos intelligents douaniers, leur décision d'attaquer la puissante Amérique par des mesures fiscales douanières contre les importations de produits américains.

Le discours du budget fait l'impasse sur le fait que le commerce mondial, qui nourrit Maurice par le libre-échange, est en train de se retourner sans dessous dessus, en ce moment même, et de revenir au protectionnisme sauvage. Savez-vous combien d'emplois nouveaux dans les technologiques mécaniques d'avenir ? C'est deux douaniers détruisent d'avance en bloquant le développement des véhicules électriques. Combien de mécaniciens auraient pu être formés aux nouvelles technologies qui sont associées et nous aider à résoudre justement la non-préparation de notre main-d'œuvre aux nouvelles orientations économiques, environnementales de notre pays.

Pour terminer, je souhaiterais au-delà des critiques et de toutes partisanneries que nous, les membres de cette Chambre, mettions nos têtes ensemble d'une manière ou d'une autre, et que nous trouvions une formule idéale pour cela, et pour travailler dans le seul intérêt de notre nation et de notre petit pays que nous tous, dans cette auguste Assemblée Nationale, aimons tous d'un grand amour patriotique. Je dirais que le pays doit passer avant les parties et les individus. Le peuple mauricien comprendra cela plus que certains ne l'imaginent.

Enfin, je remercie la Chambre de m'avoir écouté.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramkaun!

(00.23 a.m.)

Mr S. Ramkaun (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the Prime Minister, Minister for Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has on 14 June 2018 presented a Budget on the seven main pathways on the transformative journey to a high income economy.

Indeed, this is a daring budget which touches all classes of people of this island.

My congratulations to the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development as well as the whole team who worked together, day and night, to present such a wonderful Budget.

Prior to the presentation of the Budget for period 2018/2019, the hon. Prime Minister made it a point to meet almost all sections and cross-sections of the Mauritian society inclusive of those living in Rodrigues and Outer Islands. It goes without saying that he had a series of consultations with, *inter alia*, the common people, entrepreneurs, manufacturers, consumers, retired senior citizens, representatives of a myriad of public and private sectors involved in economic and social activities, the NGOs, civil society, self-employed and trade unions. This has resulted in the presentation of a 2018/2019 Budget as the Budget of the people, for the people, and by the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having been in touch with the people of my constituency, Pamplemousses/Triolet, I must say that my mandates are all convinced that this Budget is for the people, the needy ones, and for all those who have one thing in common: *la flamme de servir le pays*.

Coming to the Budget itself, I would surely take a whole day or maybe longer to elaborate on all the positive points of the Budget. Measures mentioned in the Budget like drainage of rainwater from flood prone areas, reduction of rate of income tax on the earnings of Rs50,000 per month, the review of the threshold of taxable income, no imposition of new or additional tax on sundry commodities mostly used by Mauritians, rebate in the price of 12kg cylinder LPG gas, diesel and Mogas, have all contributed to lighten the burden of a multitude of families in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the water sector has known an improvement *qui faisait défaut dans le passé*, but since this Government has been in office, many daring measures have been taken to help the most inaccessible places to get drinking water throughout the day.

In Constituencies No. 5, 6 and 7, which are under my responsibility as Parliamentary Private Secretary, the villages of Rivière du Rempart, Plaines des Roches, Roches Noires in Constituency No.7 and Morcellement Swan in Constituency No. 6 had practically no water in the pipelines. These areas having been serviced by water tankers by more than 10 years now, with the personal intervention of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, these projects are already under implementation, and shortly the contract of the replacement of pipes in all these regions shall be completed.

Finish shall be those days where our mandates had to phone to get water through water tankers. In this context, a 24/7 water supply across the country, 227,400 households have a 24/7 access to water as compared to 166,750 households in 2014. Thank you, hon. Deputy Prime Minister for such a radical change.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, le prolongement du Water Tank Scheme pour encore 3 ans et amener le seuil à R 30,000 est une autre preuve de ce côté caring que ce gouvernement veut montrer à la population, tout en assurant la population que le gouvernement will not increase water tariff except for those domestic customers having swimming pools.

The Opposition, which is devoid of positive notions, is uselessly shouting on rooftops on certain announced budgetary measures, the main one being the grant of Mauritian citizenship and Mauritian passport to foreigners against payment of a non-refundable contribution of USD 1 million and USD 500,000 respectively to Mauritius Sovereign Fund.

The EDB will naturally manage these two schemes to attract high-net-worth individuals who satisfy, of course, defined criteria and after due diligence. Are Members on the other side of the House aware that actually there are over 40,000 expatriates working in Mauritius and several thousands of foreigners staying in Mauritius? If we want the country to achieve sustained economic development, brains and capital to further boost up the economy, then we must not create imaginary impediments regarding the grant of Mauritian passport to some hundreds of well-intentioned and potential foreigners.

Many big and small countries have thrived on the adoption of this measure. So, why should Members on the other side of the House be shaken by fear? The Government believes in bringing development to the doorstep of every citizen, and in this context, is supporting some 1,178 new NDU projects for this financial year, with project values of Rs5.6 billion across Mauritius. For this urban development, a budget of Rs1.2 billion has been earmarked

for NDU projects for the construction and upgrading of drains, secondary roads, sports facilities across the island.

We had earmarked for the previous financial year 2017/2018 some 118 projects, out of which 76 resurfacing roads, 36 new roads, 42 drain projects and 34 amenities in three constituencies. Most road works have been completed, whereas the work orders for outstanding road works are being awarded. The drain works and amenities, which require land survey, are being designed for eventual award to zonal contractors. It will take me a long time to go through the list of projects, but, however, I wish to state that out of 14 villages and 188 projects for the constituency, we will see what the ex-Government has been doing in the constituency. Not even a single project has been done initially. If we see the list, we see all the 14 villages having projects still to be done. What was the then Prime Minister doing with his two Ministers of the constituency? Were they playing *djembe* in Floreal or dancing at Albion, or Roches Noires? So, we see even though there was a Minister of Youth and Sports in the constituency, they could not even construct a youth centre for the region. There was a plot of land of 10 hectares, which the then team gave to *bane ti copains*. So, it's the *copains* who inherited the land for construction of a youth centre.

So, we move back to the fiscal and financial year 2018/2019. Some 270 projects, out of which 75 resurfacing of roads, 77 new roads, 104 drain projects and 14 amenities for three constituencies are being surveyed.

Over and above the Rs1.2 m. given to the NDU, a budget of Rs1.2 billion has been earmarked for local government projects, amongst which are the following -

- construction of multipurpose complexes at Abercrombie, Camp Levieux and Petit Verger;
- 9 additional funeral incinerators shall be installed;
- upgrading of Pamplemousses market;
- 40 new scavenging lorries for municipal and district councils;
- construction of new fire stations at Goodlands, Montagne Blanche, Quatre Bornes and Mahebourg.

We all know the effects of climatic change on most of our flood-prone areas such as Camp Carol, Grand'Baie, Pereybère, Piton, Gokoola, l'Amitié, Amaury, Terre Rouge, Pamplemousses, Bois Rouge and several other regions, including Fond du Sac, Grand Bois, Flacq, Argy and Clemencia.

The inhabitants of these regions have suffered much in the past due to the non-caring attitude of the previous Government. The residents had their houses flooded on several occasions. The hon. Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, had personally been on sites to see the extent of damages caused, and more so, to ensure the inhabitants that urgent action is being initiated.

Some of the projects are already under executions. Several others are under design by consultants. It has, however, been observed that the floodings have occurred primarily due to climatic change which is not within our control, but there are several other factors, mostly human intervention that contributed in these floodings. The construction of structures along the drainage lines, the Derocking Scheme by sugar estates have contributed to the flooding of built-up areas. The change in methodology of sugarcane plantation resulting from lack of manual labour has led to mechanisation of the fields, be it for harvesting, irrigation or plantation. This Government is neither against development nor mechanisation, but consideration has to be given to the post-construction consequences. This has resulted basically in no retention of rainwater in the fields thus enhancing the rapid flow of water from the fields to the nearby residential areas.

Another concrete example is the recent developments in the northern areas through the construction of real estates. The run-off from the real estate is channelled to absorption pits which usually cannot cater for heavily rainfall. Villages of Piton, Pamplemousses and d'Epinay have been flooded several times by run-off from sugarcane fields and real estates.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is being discussed at the level of the Land Drainage Authority and Morcellement Board to come with a policy paper such that water run-off, be it either from sugarcane fields or real estate developments, be channelled through appropriate drains or canals towards a safe outlet and the owners or promoters have to take on board the financing of these projects.

Concerning the sports sector, I must say that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development *a montré la vision de son approche à ce secteur*. Our athletes are our pride. *Ils allument dans notre cœur cette flamme patriotique chaque fois qu'ils aillent défendre notre quadricolore au niveau mondial*. I must say that the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports, hon. Stephan Toussaint has been very attentive to the sportsmen and sportswomen community. And among others, the hon. Minister is putting all efforts to see the

project for the state-of-art multipurpose sport complex at Triolet put at the disposal of our mandate at the earliest possible.

A tender for the appointment of a consultant is ready and same is going to be launched shortly. I must here reiterate the willingness of this Government to prepare the youth for new heights and new challenges. I would like to state here that the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval has been stating that these propositions in the Bill are communication only. It would be appreciated that he goes back to the Budget presented by him as Minister of Finance of the previous Government and verify how many of his proposals were mere paper work. The construction of a multipurpose sports complex provided by him in the 2014 Budget is, up to now, still a project on the sign board.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the investment of Rs38 m. to provide sports and physical activity programmes that will motivate and encourage regular participation of our children, young, adults, senior citizens, this Government and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development have shown that *ils ont à cœur l'intérêt de nos jeunes et qu'ils feront tout leur possible pour que nos jeunes ne deviennent pas des proies faciles à la drogue et autres fléaux qui rongent notre société.* *Avec l'avènement des jeux des îles 2019*, our athletes have to give the best of themselves. Thus, provisions have been made for Rs75 m. to support their training and a further Rs95 m. for the organisation of the games without, of course, forgetting investment of the Cote d'Or sports complex.

Another amount of Rs375 m. is being provided for the upgrading of 17 sports facilities, including 2 in Rodrigues. I wish that the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports consider uplifting the sports infrastructures in Pamplemousses and Triolet. These will be of great help for the people of this part of the island, knowing quite well that this Constituency is also having Division 1 players in volleyball, football and beach volley as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has not forgotten, of course, those vulnerable persons living in small houses made of cast iron sheets and who have to run to the nearest police station after each heavy rainfall to claim some financials assistance. These persons include those of Longère Blanc and Longère Tôle. The new sun is now visible for these vulnerable families after those dark nights since Hollanda in 1994. This Government has made it possible. Temporary shelters are being constructed for these people so as to cause these small existing *longères* to be demolished.

The NHDC shall be awarding the contract for the construction of new concrete houses for these people. This has been possible through the will of our ex-Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Showkutally Soodhun; the actual Minister of Housing and Lands, hon. Mahen Jhugroo, with the blessing, of course, of our hon. Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth. As I have said before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, only sincere and true patriots will see the positive signs of this Budget. Only the enlightened minds can imagine the efforts made by the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development to bring such a masterpiece. We have seen how in the past, those who have been Ministers of Finance forgot that those who govern and those who are governed are the same.

They cater for tailor-made projects for only a category of people whereas hon. Pravind Jugnauth has eyes for all those who want to contribute in the progress and development of the country. We just have to look with an open mind the numerous facilities he has given to the Small and Medium Enterprises; never before a Government has given such opportunities to people to come forward to contribute in the economic development. We cannot just sit idle and wait. And together, *la main dans la main*, we are toiling hard in this Government to bring prosperity in every Mauritian home.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would say that there could not have been a better Budget any other Government could have proposed in the present context. This Budget has considered all the aspects of life for citizens of this island, Rodrigues, Chagos and Agalega.

All the projects as stated in the Budget could not have been possible without proper planification. The Government team has seasoned politicians, mature Members, and positively thinking people who are toiling for the advancement of the nation. When we are speaking of the nation '*lepep mauricien*', we see beyond the horizons and the vast expands of the blue economy. Let's pray God to endow us with black gold in our fatherless blue as well as other ores and minerals. Our determination to make Mauritius become a high income economy is stoic and heading towards realisation.

The Metro Express is a testimony of our Prime Minister's futuristic vision coupled with modernity and wise discernment investment. Let us face together our future slowly, but surely with serenity.

Thank you, hon. Members.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

Mr Callichurn: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it has been a long night. Let us call it a day. I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Hurreeram rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 21 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 00.45 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 21 June 2018 at 11.30 a.m.