

**SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY****PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)****FIRST SESSION****WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE 2017**

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 11 of 2017

Sitting of Wednesday 14 June 2017

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 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

MR ALVARO SOBRINHO & GROUP COMPANIES – OPERATIONAL LICENCES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms whether, in regard to Mr Alvaro Sobrinho and his Group of companies, he will –

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Financial Services Commission, information as to where matters stand regarding the suspension of the operation licences thereof, indicating whether –
 - (i) a Board meeting thereof was held recently in relation thereto and, if so, indicate who were the members present thereat, and
 - (ii) the Vice Chairperson and three other Board Members thereof have resigned therefrom, and
- (b) state whether he will arrange for an inquiry to be carried out into instances where Government has borne expenses for Mr Alvaro Sobrinho and for his Group of companies and vice versa.

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, the Financial Services Commission is a body Corporate which is administered and managed by a Board. Pursuant to Section 4(2) of the Financial Services Act, the Board consists of -

- (a) A Chairperson, suitably qualified and experienced in the field of business, finance or law, appointed by the Prime Minister on such terms and conditions as the Prime Minister may determine, and
- (b) A Vice-Chairperson, and not more than five other members, suitably qualified and experienced in the field of business, finance or law, appointed by the Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms on such terms and conditions as he may determine.

Further to section 8(4) of the said Act, at any meeting of the Board, four members shall constitute a quorum.

Madam Speaker, on 01 June 2017, the Vice-Chairperson resigned. On 05 June 2017, three Board members resigned. On 02 June 2017, Mr Y. Googoolye was appointed as Vice-Chairperson. However, Mr Googoolye is currently abroad and as such there is no quorum.

Madam Speaker, section 83 1(b) of the said Act provides that –

- (1) Every member of the Board, the technical committee, the Enforcement Committee, the Chief Executive, and every employee of the Commission shall –
- (b) maintain during or after his relationship with the Commission, the confidentiality of any matter relating to the relevant Acts which comes to his knowledge.

Further subsection (2) of the said Act provides –

- (2) Subject to subsection (3) and except for the purposes of administering the relevant Act or where it is authorised to do so by the Commission, no person referred to in subsection (1) shall communicate to any unauthorised person any matter relating to the relevant Act.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (a)(i) of the question, given that members of the Board are bound by confidentiality and that the authorisation of the Board cannot be sought and obtained (due to the lack of quorum), it is not possible for the Board of the Commission to authorise disclosure regarding any matter relating to the relevant Acts.

With regard to part (a)(ii) of the question, I have already indicated that the Vice-chairperson and three other Board Members have resigned.

Madam Speaker, as per the reply of the hon. Prime Minister to the PNQ of 04 April 2017, it is important to note that the operational licences of Alvaro and his Group of Companies have not been suspended...

(Interruptions)

... but the licensees have been requested not to start operations without the prior clearance of the Chief Executive. This has been clearly spelt out in the Press Communiqué of the FSC dated 02 March 2017.

With regard to part (b) of the question again apart from the fact that Mr Alvaro Sobrinho and his close associates were allowed VIP facilities at SSR International Airport on arrival and departure, I am not aware of any other expenses borne by Government. For the

benefit of Members of the House, with regard to VIP facilities at the SSR International Airport, Government pays ATOL a fixed monthly amount of USD 2000.

Mr X. L. Duval: This is a surprising answer, Madam Speaker. I am not clear whether the operations of the company have been authorised to restart or not. Can the hon. Minister clear this point?

Mr Sesungkur: I have just answered, Madam Speaker, that the Director of Board is bound by a duty of confidentiality and there is a communiqué of the FSC which is clear that the licences of the Alvaro Group were not suspended. They had to take authorisation from the Chief Executive before they start operation.

Mr X. L. Duval: I am going to be very patient, Madam Speaker. Has the Chief Executive given now his authorisation for the group to restart its activities? Do you want me to put it in Creole for you or is it okay?

(Interruptions)

Attan to pou coner là!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: The answer is yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: So, they have restarted their activities.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I want to ask the hon. Minister ...

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: ... and I have the answer, so he should be very careful before he answers it – whether he was at all involved in the decision of the Board, not of the Chief Executive, to authorise the restart of operations of Alvaro Group, whether he himself personally was involved in that decision.

Mr Sesungkur: As a matter of principle, I do not interfere in the affairs of the FSC and I was not involved in the Board decision.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, on 25 May 2017, one Mr R. Sok Appadu, whom we all know very well from the Ministry of Financial Services, wrote to you with a draft letter to be sent out – I have the draft letter. The hon. Minister says yes now – a draft communiqué. Please, be careful when you answer!

(Interruptions)

He sent that to the Minister and he said: “Please - he is begging the Minister – find attached letters which FSC proposes to issue for your consideration and views”. What have you got to answer now that this is being quoted?

Mr Sesungkur: I am happy that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has put this question. Madam Speaker, can I prevent somebody to send me an email! If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has got an answer from me, then I will be prepared to see the answer.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, is the Minister going to take any disciplinary action against this person, who, without authorisation...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr X. L. Duval:...without authorisation.

(Interruptions)

No, we will come...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr X. L. Duval: Why does the Deputy Prime Minister feel obliged to respond? Why does he feel obliged to respond...

Madam Speaker: Non!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...whenever we mention Alvaro Sobrinho?

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your question is to the hon. Minister!

Mr X. L. Duval: Is he going to...

Madam Speaker: Your question is to the hon. Minister. Your question is not to the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, your question is to the hon. Minister.

Mr X. L. Duval: Okay!

Madam Speaker: No, you are not allowed to reply!

Mr X. L. Duval: So, Madam Speaker, the first point that is being established is that one Mr Sok Appadu, a respected and very experienced member, who has been for 30 years at the Ministry of Financial Services, has sent this to the hon. Minister without authorisation, of his own volition and he did not reply. This is what he said, but he accepts that he has been sent this email, therefore, I will table it in due course, Madam Speaker.

Mr Sesungkur: What is the question?

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I will help him...

Madam Speaker: Order! Do not make provocations on Government side!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, there is a lot of merit in having the Assembly in Creole, but still, does he accept that he received this email? This is the question.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

Mr Sesungkur: I just answered. I do not know if the hon. Leader of the Opposition is having some problem to understand what I am saying. I received the email. There is no problem on that.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will now table a copy of the signed – signed, would you believe - Board Resolution of the FSC which is dated 30 May, that is one day before the resignation of the Solicitor General from the Financial Services Commission. And this Board Resolution, Madam Speaker, which I understand, the Solicitor General refused to sign because a Board Resolution has to be a circular Board Resolution, as you will know, has to be signed by 100% of the people to be valid and this resolution did not in any way get unanimity. This Board Resolution quotes a paragraph, damning paragraph of the Kroll Report, even to say that his reputation, whatever problems - he had a long list - represent a notable adverse feature of Sobrinho's reputational profile. I will table this, Madam Speaker. I

will ask the hon. Minister, now that we know that he was contacted before, how can he explain that despite such an adverse report, the Financial Services Commission sought to circulate a Board Resolution lifting of restrictions not to start operations on the whole Alvaro Group?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has been a Minister for a very, very long time. It is not the responsibility of a Minister to take operational decisions at the level of the FSC. They are independent, they operate independently in their own capacity. So, does the hon. Leader of the Opposition mean that I should have intervened in the process? With regard to the so-called damning report of Kroll, I have a copy here.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, no! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please! Not from a sitting position!

Mr Sesungkur: I will just refer the hon. Leader of the Opposition to page 16 –

“No reference to A.S. Alvaro Sobrinho and Pinto were found on sanctions list, watch list of companies and individuals involved in improper or illegal business practices such as money laundering, terrorism financing and corruption or fraud.”

So, this is the conclusion of Kroll Even if we look at the Executive Summary, right from the start, the Kroll Report makes mention of mere allegations - allegations.

(Interruptions)

Yes! “Alvaro Sobrinho, public profile is extensive...”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Sesungkur: “...and is characterised by the connection to several investigations into alleged money laundering – alleged - while the exact extent and current status of these matters is unclear. Many of these allegations against him relate to the only case of Banco Espírito Santo. So, the Kroll Report goes on to say –

“We note that comments from our network of sources in Angola on occasion directly challenged the credibility of allegations.”

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I see that the Minister of Financial Services is very proud of Mr Sobrinho’s reputation in Angola which stands on the rank of 164 under

Transparency Index of 176 countries worldwide. Madam Speaker, I am not going to quote extensively. But it is clear, Madam Speaker, that this gentleman has the reputation of an international crook, as I have said before. If you will allow me to get the Minister's opinion on this because he has, in fact, quoted very selectively as to the reputation of Mr Sobrinho in Angola which the report says clearly is in stark contrast to negative commentary source from outside Angola and this is the situation. In Portugal, Madam Speaker, Sobrinho suspected having misappropriated Rs5 billion, and this is not the Kroll Report. Madam Speaker, the Swiss Attorney General has, at the moment, frozen Rs6.4 billion of Mr Sobrinho himself, his own assets in Switzerland.

(Interruptions)

Rupees, not dollars, not that rich! It is reported that Mr Sobrinho has 150 bank accounts spread over six Portuguese banks. Whatever the situation is, the Government will try to protect him, same as he is getting protection in Angola. This is clear. But, Madam Speaker, the reputation...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question! Time is going!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...of our financial services industry is worth more than the billions of Mr Sobrinho. Now, that this time we are being faced, Madam Speaker, with the OCDE, their multi-lateral instrument initiative, we are being faced by attacks from the EU concerning our unfavourable tax treatment. This is not the time. Does the Minister not agree...

Madam Speaker: Ask your question! Hon. Leader of the Opposition, time is going because you will not have sufficient time to ask all your questions.

Mr X. L. Duval: At what time did we start?

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: ...this is not the time for us to play around with the reputation of the Financial Services sector in Mauritius.

Madam Speaker: Is there a question?

Mr X. L. Duval: This is again a problem.

Madam Speaker: What is your question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Another problem, I am sorry!

(Interruptions)

This is quite ridiculous. I am asking whether he does not agree that this is not the time to play around with the reputation of our financial services industry as Government is doing right now?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I am quite saddened because various Governments have taken years to build, to develop our financial services sector but, since a few months, not to say weeks, there are regularly attacks on our jurisdiction and those attacks come from our own people. Regularly, they shed doubts on investors who have wilfully come here to invest in our country. We all know the contribution of the financial services sector and if we go on like this by pinpointing, by damaging the reputation of our country, by damaging the reputation of our jurisdiction, by damaging the reputation of our financial services sector, we will pay a heavy price for that. In all fairness, this whole case of Alvaro was blown out of proportion. So, I will make a request to the Members of the Opposition, to the media, to be careful because the FSC is not an investigative body. If they have evidence of any money laundering or any fraud which have been committed by any specific person, they have to report to the relevant institution. So, for the sake of our country, I will make a request not to go...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, through Government interference...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, on this side, please! Enough, time is running!

Mr X. L. Duval: Through Government interference, through his own interference, four respected members of the Financial Services Commission have resigned because of Sobrinho affair and he puts it on the Opposition. Shame on him! Madam Speaker, I want to know whether Mr Googoolye was appointed on a Saturday at 12:45 p.m. and did Mr Googoolye have time to swear his oath of secrecy before the Master and Registrar.

Mr Sesungkur: As far as I can gather from the record...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud, please!

(Interruptions)

Don't provoke because time is running! Hon. Mrs Perraud, please!

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, at least from the letters which we have received from the former directors, it is not mentioned that they have resigned in relation to this particular case. In fact, they have stated they have resigned for personal commitment.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, this is how the situation went, all four resigned because of Sobrinho. On a Saturday, they appointed Mr Googoolye at 12:45 p.m. and he cannot say whether he took the oath of allegiance. Mr Googoolye was the fourth person. They needed four people for the quorum for the Board meeting on the afternoon. Madam Speaker, would you be surprised to see that all four people are, in fact, civil servants. Not one! Shame on the Minister! Not one independent member on the Financial Services Commission of Mauritius! Not one independent member!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah, please! Order, on this side!

(Interruptions)

Allow the Minister to reply! Hon. Soodhun, please allow the Minister to reply! Hon. Collendavelloo, allow the Minister to reply!

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I understand that a director is a director. Whether he is a civil servant or whoever, he operates in his capacity as director and if there was a quorum, then there is no problem on that.

Mr X. L. Duval: The appointment of Mr Googoolye was made on the same day to get the quorum in the afternoon. And the public will judge, Madam Speaker, whether these four

members - all the four members are civil servants. Madam Speaker, I am so ashamed of them and I will tell who they are. I will say who they are.

Madam Speaker: Do not mention names!

Mr X. L. Duval: Mr Manraj, Mr Ramloll, Mr Soondram..

Madam Speaker: Do not mention names!

Mr X. L. Duval: No, I will tell. Mr Googoolye.

Madam Speaker: They are not in the House to defend themselves! Don't mention names!

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will ask another question on this one, the core report - as he knows it by heart, I am sure – says, in fact, and it is very important, that they should deepen the enquiry in Portugal. You know that bit. I can quote it. Now the core report is on 21 April, Madam Speaker. It is on 25 May, that the Financial Services Commission gives the go-ahead for Kroll to deepen its investigation. When is the Board meeting? The Board resolution is five days later, on 30th. So, they wait more than one month before giving the go-ahead and suddenly we don't know who put pressure. I can imagine! Five days later, without waiting for the deepening. Madam Speaker, therefore, I am going to ask the hon. Minister what has happened to this deepening enquiry in Portugal.

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: I have the judgment of the Lisbon Court of Appeal.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, don't make provocation!

Mr Sesungkur: But before I refer to what is mentioned in the Judgment, I would like to just draw the attention of the Leader of the Opposition that there was a lot of information which was flooded on the Alvaro Group. The FSC tried to analyse all the information, took whatever decision was taken.

(Interruptions)

Let me clarify!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Allow the hon. Minister to reply! If he is too long, I will ...

(*Interruptions*)

Please proceed!

(*Interruptions*)

No provocation, please! Allow the Minister to reply!

Mr Sesungkur: In all fairness to any applicant for a licence, we cannot hold the licence indefinitely. We have to take a decision. Let us say we have ten more enquiries to carry on, can we hold the licence for years? We have to take a decision. Let me quote the judgment from the Lisbon Court of Appeal.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, please!

Mr Sesungkur: The prosecution has twisted, re-twisted, inflated and change the essence of the justification invoked in the 6,000 page order for the repeated attachment of the appellant's assets which has surpassed the strict necessity of executing the probative due diligence capable of identifying the source of the money that enabled its acquisition. For the broadest scope of curtailing the right of the defendant to dispose of such assets and to prevent while pending crimes identical to that which is now being investigated from being committed with the use of assets that were within the reach of the authority.

(*Interruptions*)

So, the stubbornness, the kind of *acharnement* that is being made again.

(*Interruptions*)

No, against any applicant to FSC! I will say, against any applicant, because Mr Alvaro is like any other applicant.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: He is the worst Minister of Financial Services I have ever seen, Madam Speaker. Shame on us! Madam Speaker, currently Rs5 billion of assets are seized at the moment in Portugal and why, if he was so happy with the decision of the Judge, did he not ask for another core report on Portugal?

Now is it a Freudian slip, Madam Speaker, that he used the word ‘we’, when he talks about ...

(*Interruptions*)

Is it a Freudian slip?

Madam Speaker, I will come to another very important issue, that is, the expenses....

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Time is running!

Mr X. L. Duval: But you have to give a little bit of time!

Madam Speaker: Time is running!

Mr X. L. Duval: This is a major fraud after all, not just a few million - billions, Madam Speaker! Because there is an invoice sent à *l’Ambassade de la République de l’île Maurice, 127 Rue de Tocqueville, Paris*. He is very quiet now! Do you know how much, Madam Speaker? 13,016 euros - Rs522,000 for car services. I will give it to the hon. Minister. He can have it. It deals with hire of VIP cars; two Mercedes, namely one S-Class and one van for bodyguards, and it was in Rome. And this was for a private mission for Planet Earth Institute!

(*Interruptions*)

I will go further, Madam Speaker. These cars were used for 16 hours a day on the Friday...

Madam Speaker: Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition want to ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware of this?

Mr X. L. Duval: No, I am going to tell him...

Madam Speaker: Please, ask your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me finish, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: You have got only two minutes!

Mr X. L. Duval: No, I will finish my...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Ask your question and do not make a statement, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, you have only two minutes. So, ask your question!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: He is aware of everything! He is the Minister of Good Governance!

Bad governance, yes!

Madam Speaker: Ask the question to the hon. Minister!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I am going to ask. You will give me one last question?

Madam Speaker: Yes, because we are running out of time!

Mr X. L. Duval: All right! I am going to ask him whether he will not have an enquiry as to why a car which costs Rs123,000 a day, with the bodyguards sitting at the back in the car, has been billed to *l'Ambassade de Maurice à Paris* for Rome. Will he do this bit for me?

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, I would like to know whether this invoice has been paid and who approved it before I enquire.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Minister will enquire!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, your last question!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: In view of his shameful interference in this Alvaro affair, as Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, I am asking for his resignation.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Sesungkur: I have never intervened in this and I am repeating it, I have left the institution to function independently...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not say *menteur!* *Menteur* is unparliamentary!

Mr Sesungkur: ... and I leave it to the judgement of Mr...

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

(Interruptions)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2017-2018) BILL 2017

(No. VII of 2017)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill 2017 (No. VII of 2017).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungkur!

(12.07 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms

(Mr D. Sesungkur): Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to intervene on the Budget. Right from the start...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Do not use unparliamentary words! Hon. Adrien Duval!

(Interruptions)

Do not use unparliamentary words!

(Interruptions)

Please, calm down!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Prime Minister, please calm down!

(Interruptions)

Please calm down!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

If the hon. Members are leaving, leave in silence!

(Interruptions)

No provocation on this side, please!

(Interruptions)

No provocation!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Sesungkur, please, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: Yes, Madam...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Please, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sesungkur: Madam Speaker, it gives me pleasure to comment the Budget, and right from the outset, I must say that every time hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth has presented a Budget, he has given special attention to the poor and the needy. The Minister has been greatly successful in the ways he has balanced various stakeholders' demands. There are a series of measures announced in his Budget which will help our economy to grow, to develop in the coming months and years.

Coming from a financial background, I will focus my intervention on the economic aspect, on the economic measures announced in the Budget. I will also cover the BAI chapter and the measures announced for the further development of our financial services sector.

But, before I dive into the subject matter, I would like to address the issue of expectation gap in the public whenever a Budget is presented. Oftentimes, we hear from the public that not much has been done for them, not much has been done to improve their lots. To illustrate this gap, I would like to take two cases how a Budget can impact the life of citizens. Many of us will recall the 1982 general elections, which was for the first time that in Mauritius got a 60-0 victory, and there was a lot of hope in the population. At that time, most of the Mauritian people were from a poor background and there was a lot of expectation from Government.

But, in fact, what happened? The first Budget which was passed came up with massive sales tax on the poor, which made their life more difficult. There was a threat to remove subsidy on rice and flour. There was also pressure on the Government at that time to

abolish free education. But the then Prime Minister resisted to a number of these pressures. So, it is for the Government to decide how they want to manage the public finance, what strategy they would adopt to progress the economic agenda of our country.

I would like to take a second case to illustrate how, if public finance is not managed properly, if we do not have a responsible Government, if we do not have a Minister of Finance who has at heart the plight of the people, this can turn against the population. The second case that I am going to mention is the case of Greece in the post-financial crisis period.

In Greece, the Government managed its public finance so badly, they lived so much beyond their means that they had to suddenly apply a number of austerity measures which were very difficult for the population to cope with. There was increase in the VAT. There were cuts in the 13th and 14th month pay for all public sector employees. There were reduced allowances by 20% for all public sector employees. There was a freeze on all public sector salaries, and Government was forced to review the lawful termination notice from 24 months to one month because there were so many people who were being laid off.

So, these two cases give us an idea of how if public finance and budgets are not managed properly, we can have very difficult times and we are fortunate that this Government, since December 2014 with a good management of the public finance, with a good budget, has, despite our very limited means, despite difficult circumstances, difficult conditions, not only nationally but internationally, this Government has maintained the welfare system, has maintained subsidy on rice and flour, has maintained free health services, has maintained free transport and has ensured that the Mauritian public gets the basic necessities such as rice, flour, oil, utilities, electricity supply, water supply, gas and petrol without interruption. Not only that, we have increased the pension of the elderly, the widows, the orphans; we paid the PRB in full not in *tranches* as in the past. We embarked on a vast programme to build low-cost houses for the poor and needy, have saved the depositors of ex-MPCB from bankruptcy, have maintained alive the DBM and key flagship companies like Air Mauritius, MBC and *Casino de Maurice*. I can go on like this.

The points which were made by the Opposition are misleading, demagogical and relates to intellectual dishonesty. I would refer to a point which was made by the Leader of the Opposition, and I quote, he said that –

“As far as employment is concerned, Statistics Mauritius, which is still - and I believe, fairly independent - has calculated that only 300 jobs have been created in 2016.”

This is untrue. Because what can be logically derived from the Report of Statistics Mauritius is probably the net employment, not the total employment of 300 jobs. So, they deliberately tend to mislead the public that only 300 jobs were created in 2016. And if we are not careful, these information tend to distort what Government is achieving in terms of employment creation, in terms of reduction of unemployment. In the Civil Service itself, we have created thousands of jobs. I think there have been more than 300 Policemen who have been recruited only in the Police Force.

In the days of the Labour Party/PMSD Government, they were talking about jobless growth, they were downsizing the public sector, whereas we decided, as a matter of policy, to rebuild the public sector, to empower, to build capacity and we have been gradually filling the vacancies so that we have a good Public Service, which can provide good services to the public.

Again, another misleading statement made by hon. Reza Uteem, and I will quote, he says –

“Now, Madam Speaker, if someone earns Rs10,000 a month and 66% of that salary, Rs6,600 goes into paying his debt, what will he do?”

Everybody knows, everybody has a loan. If we take, let's say, equivalent to Rs1 m. of loan, we do not pay it at once. We pay it by way of instalments. So, this statement tends to create doubt in the mind of people that we will have to spend, we will have to take 66% of our GDP to reimburse the debts that the country has, and this is simply not true because we will have to pay on the basis of what has been decided, what has been agreed, and it is only when the term comes that we will pay those debts. So, this logic simply does not apply, cannot be relied upon, to say that the Opposition has always tended to mislead people, has always tended to create doubts in the mind of people and paint a doom and disaster picture all the time. And despite all these, we are happy that the economic indicators which are there tend to prove the contrary and we have an economy which is definitely on the move.

By looking at certain key indicators, we know that for a very long time, we have not had a growth rate of around 4%, be it 3.9%, but we are happy that our GDP, *our gateau*

national, is becoming bigger and bigger, and this allows us to give a bigger share to our people. Our Forex reserves stand at Rs180 billion, which represents 9.5 months of our import. Unemployment rate is on a downward trend. Business confidence index is at an all-time high. The construction sector will grow by 7% in the coming year. Construction and tourism is giving us encouraging results, so is the financial services sector. We are having more and more large groups which are coming to Mauritius, which are choosing to invest in Mauritius. We have the SANNE Group, which recently acquired IFS for Rs4.4 billion. We have the SGG, which recently acquired CIM Finance for Rs3.1 billion, and there are many, many other groups which are coming to Mauritius, which are interested in using Mauritius as their regional headquarters.

Madam Speaker, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future, about the economy. We cannot achieve the target which you have fixed for a 5-6% annual GDP growth overnight. It requires efforts, it requires a number of actions to set the foundation of a robust economy, and we are investing massively in infrastructure, and the Ministry of Finance announced that we will invest over Rs35 billion in the next coming years to set up those infrastructures which will not only improve our national productivity, but also help to boost up exports.

Madam Speaker, I will now come to another important issue which was canvassed by the Opposition, that is, the public debt. It is important to understand the structure of our debt. A Government can borrow internally and it can borrow externally. Over the years, what we have done is we have mitigated our risk. We do not have recourse to external borrowing. Most of our borrowings are internal. Out of the total debt, 80% of the debt is internal and regularly since 2013, we have been reducing our servicing ratio. The debt service ratio fell to 3.9% in 2015 after a high of 5.5% in 2013. So, all these actions prove that we are managing our debt situation in a very professional manner without exposing the country and certain debts, which are expensive. We are repaying those debts by anticipation so that the future generation do not have to bear a much higher weight.

When we talk about debts, it is important also to know what other countries have got as debt level. Practically all countries, if not all, have got a debt amount, for instance –

- USA, the debt level amounts to 13.6 trillion US dollar, which represents 104% of the GDP;

- UK debt represents 1.7 trillion Pound Sterling, which is equivalent to 90% of its GDP;
- Japan has got 10.4 trillion US dollar of debt, which represents 218% of its GDP;
- Singapore has got 339 billion US dollar of debt, which represents 106% of the GDP;
- Greece has got 404 billion US dollar, which represents 213.7% of the GDP, and
- Ours is only 8 billion US dollar.

So, I cannot understand the argument. On one side, the Opposition will ask us to create more jobs. How do we create more jobs? By investing, by making capital expenditure, by implementing projects, we expect that those capital projects will generate future productivity, future value added, which will allow us to grow our economy and which will allow us to repay those debts in the future.

Madam Speaker, with regard to the financial services sector, I must say that there has been certain apprehension regarding the Multilateral Instrument (MLI), which we had to sign. In line with our international commitment, in line with our strategy to be a law-abiding nation and to play an active role in the international economy, we cannot afford to take a hit at our reputation. So, it is true that international context is becoming more and more difficult. We have to compete with much larger players at international levels, but we cannot stop a train. We have to make the extra mile to make our country prepare for future challenges. Not signing the MLI was not an option because this would have put us in a difficult context internationally. There are pressures if Mauritius does not comply then we might be blacklisted as well. So, we have to be very careful not to jeopardise our economy, not to jeopardise the sector because this sector is contributing a lot to our GDP and we have to be very careful in whatever decision we take.

I am very optimistic about the financial services sector, its future development, especially in terms of the role which the Mauritius International Financial Sector can play in the development of the African continent. We are all hopeful that, with growing development on the African continent, Mauritius will benefit a lot in terms of inflows and outflows of FDI and in terms of the critical mass of business of financial transaction which it will create for the country. So, we have to pull our effort together. We have to put our heads together. We

have to rethink the strategy and I have engaged in discussion with the whole sector, with the private operators to adopt what is more appropriate for our sector. So, there is continuous dialogue with the sector to anticipate any adverse situation. We are also carrying out a number of internal impact assessments; how the agreements that we are signing can impact the financial services sector and we will cross the bridge when we come to it.

With regard to the comments which were made regarding the BAI.

Madame la présidente, je dois dire que la BAI était une fraude colossale de dimension historique. *Everybody knew that BAI was a huge Ponzi except hon. Xavier Duval.* En novembre 2013, à l'Assemblée nationale, Paul Bérenger, alors leader de l'opposition posait une question par le biais d'une *Private Notice Question* sur le conglomérat, et je cite –

« J'avais souligné qu'en 1999 ou 2000 la même chose s'était produite aux Caraïbes. Xavier Luc Duval avait répondu qu'il n'était pas au courant de la situation et il n'a pas pris en compte l'avertissement. »

Avait expliqué le leader de l'opposition d'alors.

Le groupe financier était montré du doigt depuis 2012. Le Fonds monétaire international avait alerté les autorités locales sur l'agissement du conglomérat. Ce problème pouvait avoir un impact négatif sur la réputation du pays. Le FMI avait fait ressortir qu'il ne respectait pas les normes financières. Plus loin, KPMG avait tiré la sonnette d'alarme en décembre 2012. La *British American Investment* avait un trou de R 11 milliards dans son bilan financier au niveau de *CLAD Investment Corporation* domicilié aux Bahamas. La banqueroute du groupe BAI dès décembre 2009 était confirmée. Marc Hein, qui était le président de la FSC à un moment donné, avait déclaré lors d'une entrevue –

« Lorsque j'ai été nommé à la présidence de la FSC en mars 2012, le problème de la BAI était déjà à l'agenda. Il perdurait depuis des années »

Le rapport NTan confirme que la BAI opérait comme un Ponzi. Un système de Ponzi est un montage financier frauduleux et que le groupe BAI avait essuyé des pertes de R 14,7 milliards à 2013. Le rapport explique que la BAI a généré R 45 milliards en termes de primes d'assurance dont 80 % principalement de la *Super Cash Back Gold*. L'argent du *Super Cash Back Gold* a été utilisé par la BAI pour maintenir à flot ses filiales à Maurice et ailleurs. De la *Bramer Bank* en passant par le concessionnaire *Iframac* et l'hôpital *Apollo Bramwell*, tous les

chiffres ont été gonflés dans une tentative de donner une marge surfaite à l'empire de Dawood Rawat. La banque Bramer, par exemple, ne valait que R 2 milliards alors qu'elle a été surévaluée de R 8 milliards au nez et à la barbe des autorités concernées.

Madam Speaker, regarding this sad episode, our Government could have closed our eyes and allow the BAI to operate. It could have operated for a few months more, but for sure, it would have died a natural death. In that circumstance, imagine a doomsday scenario, we had 160,000 policyholders at the BAI, we had thousands of retired persons having their money in Super Cash Back Gold, we had thousands of depositors at Bramer Bank, assuming that Government would have closed its eyes and would have allowed BAI to operate. After a few months, the BAI would have collapsed. Around 200,000 to 300,000 people would have come on the street and still the Government would have to stand there to bail out these institutions. People should understand that as a responsible Government, we acted promptly to prevent other depositors, other policyholders, other members of the public to get trapped in this Ponzi. So, Government acted in the best interest of the population. Government acted in the best interest of the country. We could not have afforded to let this Ponzi to go on and absorb mass of money from the public. If we would have allowed this, then it would have been tantamount to be an irresponsible Government.

We have done what was proper at that time to protect our people, to protect our financial system and to protect financial stability. I am sure that whatever decision we took we took it without fear and favour to protect the interest of the nation. Madam Speaker, I will end by quoting Theodore Roosevelt -

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

(12.40 p.m.)

Mr S. Abbas Mamode (Fourth Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Madam Speaker. On a entendu beaucoup de qualificatifs concernant le budget. Certains l'ont qualifié de *menti menti*, d'autres sans vision, *but I think the best is a non-event Budget*. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il n'y a pas eu d'effervescence dans la population ; la population a compris que, dans ce budget, on a eu que des procès d'intention. *Rising to the challenge of our ambitions; this statement is void when we look at the cosmetic proposals in the Budget.*

On this side of the House, Madam Speaker, we have been constantly drawing the attention of the Government about issues affecting the population, yet nothing seems to have been done. I am very happy hon. Dr Husnoo, Minister of Health, is present today. I am very happy. Let us look at the health sector, great Minister! It is good to build and recruit, but what about the system?

Je vais raconter quelque chose qui s'est passé hier, Madame la présidente. Hier, j'étais à l'hôpital Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. *A lady phoned at the hospital at 6 p.m. We want to build Metro Express, Metro léger*. Madame Beekhun a téléphoné à l'hôpital Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam à 6 p.m. C'est vérifiable. Quelqu'un a répondu qu'il n'y a pas d'ambulance et la dame a essayé d'avoir l'aide de ses voisins. Il est arrivé à l'hôpital dans sa propre voiture dans les environs de 7 p.m. There was no transport at the hospital.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Minister should listen. This is a very serious issue. Somebody stated at the hospital that no ambulance was available at this moment in time.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Dr Husnoo, you will have the opportunity to reply.

Mr Abbas Mamode: When the lady arrived at the hospital, *on a constaté qu'à 8 p.m. Mr Beekhun passed away*. This is not a joke, Madam Speaker. Perhaps it is a joke for the Minister. Mr Beekhun passed away because there was a lack of ambulance in Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital. When this country wants to build Metro Express, wants to modernise the country, there is a lack of ambulance in Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam Hospital and somebody passed away.

The burial of Mr Beekhun was this very morning. *Mes condoléances à la famille Beekhun.* So many times patients complain that they have to queue up for long hours despite being on appointment. Documents and results of analysis are not found. The Budget should have addressed these issues.

A healthy nation is a wealthy one, but what have we recently seen while the country was facing the threat of an epidemic of H1N1? The outlets for vaccine were closed for one whole day. *Prévenir, c'est guérir, et gouverner, c'est prévoir.* We are talking of modernisation. Ask the poor people of this country! These are pictures from Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital. Leakage of water! Members are laughing! We are talking about H1N1. These are bins, at night, which have not been disposed. Medical!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, your comments are not warranted!

(Interruptions)

Yes, they are not!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Pictures speak louder than words!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If you continue, then I will have to take action. You cannot confront the Chair all the time!

(Interruptions)

You cannot confront the Chair all the time!

Mr Abbas Mamode: It is good to announce the construction of Area Health Centres. Do you know, Madam Speaker, how I was warmly welcomed at the Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital? By two stray dogs! Two stray dogs at the reception of the Sir Seewoosagur...

(Interruptions)

This is not a joke! This is your constituency, my good friend. This is not a joke! It is good to announce the construction of Area Health Centres and Community Health Centres, but the

population should have been informed when these would be operational as there is an urgent need for information.

En passant, il y a un manque aigu...

(Interruptions)

C'est l'honorable Anil Gayan qui était responsable de la Santé avant l'honorable Dr Husnoo. Allez faire un petit tour à l'hôpital Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam ...

(Interruptions)

What about e-Health? Our hospitals' Record Section must be computerised and thus become paperless and more efficient.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, do not interrupt him!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Does the Budget cater for? A visit to the Record Section of various hospitals will give an idea of what a mess prevails. For mediclinics, there are five, and when we will look at appendix 3, what we note is that even by 2020 these mediclinics will not be completed. For example, Bel Air, project value Rs87.2 m.; 2017-2018, sum budgeted: Rs1 m.; 2019, sum planned: Rs20 m.; 2019-2020, sum planned: Rs45 m.; total: Rs66 m. with a deficit of Rs21.2 m. This is what we consider as *effet d'annonce!* We must be clear in our proposal and provide the population with real information.

For local government, City Council, Municipal Council, District Council have a prominent role to play as they are the mirror of our country. They reflect the state of health of Mauritius. This Budget makes very little for this sector - only eight lines. This Budget provides for writing off unpaid claims that have already been issued in respect of years up to 2015-2016. This can be a laudable move, but the Ministry must analyse the flows in debt recovery, and if need be, the staffing must be looked into. The staffing!

Once upon a time, hon. Rajesh Bhagwan was Mayor, hon. Jean-Claude Barbier was Mayor, Sir Gaëtan Duval was Lord Mayor and Mayor. *J'ai été lord-maire de la cité de Port-Louis.* Look at the situation now! It is as if municipalities do not exist. For checking of lighting system, no overtime is being paid, as if people will know which bulb to change at

daytime. I do not know how! *Ramassage des ordures, zéro!* La municipalité de 2017, c'est comme si ce sont des autorités locales qui n'existent même pas.

Mauritius is undergoing great development and, along, basic services must be provided. I do believe that local authorities must reinvent themselves to be in line with Mauritius 2017. I would like to draw the attention of the Government upon the fact that fees to place banners cost Rs1,000, and thus this is unfair to social voluntary organisations as a banner costs for Rs400 to Rs700 and they have to pay Rs1,000 for even religious and social events. I would request the hon. Minister to amend the Schedule concerned to exempt them from this payment.

Agalega, the talk of the day! We are for the development of Agalega, but not as it is being done now. As a National Assembly Member of Constituency No. 3, like hon. Shakeel Mohamed, to which Agalega is part and our mandates are there, I do strongly believe, Madam Speaker, that we should have been party to the decision concerning Agalega. Help from India as a friendly country is most welcome and we are deeply grateful to India, but our concern is that we need not become dependent and no rope attached. The Mauritian identity must prevail *et nous sommes pour des relations privilégiées avec l'Inde ! L'ancien Premier ministre, l'honorable Roshi Bhadain et l'honorable leader de l'opposition ont exprimé leur souci, Madame la présidente. Mais que voyons-nous ? Des esprits tordus ! Ils sont en train d'entrainer ces soucis dans un carnet communal. N'oubliez pas le sort réservé à ces politiciens ! Rappelez-vous de l'épisode 'démon' et ses conséquences ; cuisante défaite aux élections tout de suite après. Et n'oublions pas l'épisode de mettre une certaine communauté au rancart.*

We are talking about e-Health. Comment ne pas mentionner cette politique ! Ça change, c'est toujours la même ! Suite au départ forcé de la présidente du *Trust Fund for Special Medical Care*, protégée de l'honorable Anil Gayan, que voyons-nous ? Un autre proche du ministre qui était son *adviser*, et qui est d'ailleurs toujours son *adviser*, est aujourd'hui président de cette institution.

Donc, Madame la présidente, je terminerai en parlant de ma propre circonscription : Cité Martial, Plaine Verte, Roche Bois, Camp Yoloff.

In this very Assembly, I made an appeal to hon. Sinatambou concerning Priest's Peak. Plaine Verte is a very small region.

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down, hon. Sinatambou!

Mr Abbas Mamode: Very small region. We do not have so much space. Some time back this project was started by hon. Bhagwan. But, really, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval did a marvelous job at Cité Martial concerning the *promenade de santé*. I made an appeal to you. Most unfortunately, today, the grass is higher than people doing exercise on the hill.

Je comprends que La Plaine Verte n'intéresse pas à beaucoup de ministres. Je comprends !

(*Interruptions*)

Je comprends !

Madame la présidente, nous sommes dans un pays multiculturel et les gens de ce pays doivent avoir ce sentiment d'être des enfants de cette nation. Allez à l'école Emmanuel Anquetil de Roche Bois. *We are talking about Nine-Year Schooling.* Ces enfants à l'école Emmanuel Anquetil de Roche Bois, *leakage of water in the classroom. And we are talking about equality in this country!*

Je terminerai en faisant un appel à mes amis de l'autre côté de la Chambre : *do not play with communal arguments. We are talking about money.* Nous aurons, dans quelques années, une nation endettée. Nous ne sommes pas réfractaires à aucune nation. Maurice a beaucoup des amis, l'Angleterre, la France, l'Inde, mais cet argument communal aura des conséquences fatales, Madame la présidente. Et, je ferai un appel à mes amis. Il y a beaucoup d'arguments politiques, il y a beaucoup d'argumentation qu'on peut faire. Laissez ce pays, l'île Maurice, vivre en paix, comme cela a été le cas pendant plusieurs décennies et regardons en face l'avenir de l'île Maurice en pratiquant une égalité des chances à l'encontre des Mauriciens et Mauriciennes.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

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

At 12.58 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bholah!

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr S. Bholah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you very much. At the outset, I would like to refer to the

intervention of hon. Abbas Mamode, particularly to the plea he made to hon. Members to abstain or to refrain from using communal words in this very House, and I fully subscribe to his call. But, at the same time, I would ask him to set the example himself, whereas in his own speech he used a word which is not correct at this moment, a word which was uttered by someone, by a politician some 22 years ago; otherwise, we will have mutual accusations and this will not be good for anybody.

Having said that, I would also refer to his own speech, where I expected him to come up or to describe his particular output when he was PPS when he was in Government and to use his output as benchmark for those existing PPSs so that they can perform.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no country, no Government and even more no Minister of Finance can come up with a national Budget in 2017 without having a clear understanding of the prevailing global economic situation. The hon. Prime Minister has come up with the Budget 2017-2018 when the world economy faces considerable uncertainty in the aftermath of major economic and political developments during the last one year or so. Major issues like the growing tension between globalisation and nationalism, uncertain general elections in the major economies of the world and economic pressures from OCDE and European Union or resulting from climatic change or terror of threats cannot be overlooked when indulging such an exercise.

M. le président, l'année 2016 a été marquée par des évènements de taille qui ont bouleversé toutes les données politiques et économiques et qui sont des exemples flagrants d'une remise en question de la globalisation. Il y a eu tout d'abord le vote en faveur du retrait de l'Angleterre de l'Union européenne et toutes les conséquences néfastes qui s'ensuivent pour l'île Maurice en tant que nation exportatrice. Même si le parti Conservateur a perdu sa majorité absolue au Parlement britannique à l'issue des élections législatives anticipées du 08 juin 2017, Theresa May persiste et signe pour former un gouvernement qui, en ses propres mots, guidera l'Angleterre dans les discussions cruciales sur le Brexit et répondra aux souhaits des Britanniques en menant à bien la sortie de l'Union européenne justifiant ainsi, M. le président, les appréhensions de la partie mauricienne.

D'autre part, il y a eu l'élection inattendue de Donald Trump aux Etats-Unis qui se démarque avec sa politique protectionniste, son hostilité au libre-échange, ses menaces incessantes de rompre avec la politique de ses prédécesseurs, et sa volte-face sur la COP21. Il est clair que nous sommes arrivés à une période charnière dans le monde globalisé et dans l'ère du libre-échange avec une montée en puissance du nationalisme parmi les pays qui sont

les principaux partenaires commerciaux des pays en voie de développement. Nous assisterons ainsi à l'émergence d'un nouvel ordre économique mondial, et nous devons tirer des leçons de ces contrepieds à la globalisation.

M. le président, ces secousses ne changent cependant en rien le fait que nous vivons tout de même dans une économie globalisée. Le paradoxe cependant est que les solutions aux défis économiques posés par la globalisation doivent être trouvées dans le cadre de politiques nationales. Comment espérer que les politiques nationales puissent influer sur l'état global des choses ?

Quand nous nous adonnons à un examen profond du budget, nous nous rendons compte qu'il concorde avec le contexte global ambiant. Ceci est une indication évidente que le Premier ministre a pris en compte tous les éléments que je viens d'énumérer afin de nous présenter le budget le plus apte à soutenir l'économie mauricienne, notamment en affichant la prudence dans une optique de stabilisation et de consolidation des secteurs qui ont fait leurs preuves jusqu'à présent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel we must not paint the situation darker than it actually is. The International Monetary Fund estimates that World GPD will grow by 3.4% in 2017 and to 3.6% in 2018. The advanced economies are expected to increase their growth from 1.6% to 1.9%, and the emerging economies from 4.1% to 4.5%. These are positive signs that point to an optimistic outlook for next year.

There are, however, three major challenges for emerging economies like Mauritius. First, the current monetary policy stance of the US Federal Reserve, to increase the policy rates more than once in 2017, may lead to lower capital inflows and higher outflows from the emerging economies.

Second, the uncertainty around commodity prices, especially that of crude oil, has implications for the fiscal situation of emerging economies.

Third, as I said earlier in several parts of the world, there are signs of increasing retreat from globalisation of goods, services and people, as pressures for protectionism are building up. These developments obviously have the potential of affecting exports of emerging markets like Mauritius.

The consequences of such challenges are incidentally being felt on the African continent, where growth in the Sub-Saharan region has slumped to 1.4% last year as per latest

figures from IMF. Economies slowed in two-thirds of countries south of the Sahara, notably due to the fall in crude oil prices. Such ill fortune has been exacerbated by Government policies that have hobbled growth in Africa's biggest economies, namely Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, Tanzania and Cameroon. It is thus obvious that, against this backdrop, economic policies have a crucial role to play in staving off downside risks and securing the recovery. The World Economic Outlook of IMF as at April 2017 advocates domestic policies that should, *inter alia*, aim to support demand and repair balance sheets, boost productivity, labour supply and investment through structural reforms and supply-friendly fiscal measures, and to upgrade public infrastructure. At the same time, credible strategies are needed to place public debt on a sustainable path.

The encouraging point is that, on the one hand, the key figures of the 2017-2018 Budget demonstrate Government's commitment to such macro-economic rigour, notably by targeting a fall in budget deficit from 3.5% to 3.2% of GDP and a decrease of consolidated debts from 66% to 63% of GDP.

On the other hand, this Budget is articulated around five key challenges which are accompanied by a wide-ranging set of measures to boost productivity, labour supply and investment through structural reforms and supply-friendly fiscal measures, to massively upgrade public infrastructure, and to consolidate macro-economic fundamentals, as recommended by IMF when it comes to the stance to be adopted in the current context.

After setting off for 'A New Era of Development', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we now need to 'Rise Up to the Challenges of Our Ambitions'. There are, in fact, key recurring themes in the Budget that will support and accelerate the transition of the Mauritian economy to one driven by efficiency and innovation, allowing us to further build our resilience against global uncertainties and impulsive movements of markets. They also purport a clear sense of direction that will position Mauritius as an economy for the future through the creation of a dynamic ecosystem for innovation-based activities.

The central questions are where the opportunities lie, how we position ourselves to seize them, and what we can do to deal with short term challenges. These involve policy decisions, reforms and trade-offs. I would like to share my point of view with the House on this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a nutshell, the measures enunciated are grafted on those announced in last year's Budget, reflecting a continuation of the Government's vision to ward off the middle-income trap through sustainable actions aimed at improving our productive

capacity. The overall approach has been to spend more in infrastructure and poverty alleviation and yet maintain the best standards of fiscal prudence. At the same time, Government has kept in mind the need to continue with economic reforms, promote higher investments and accelerate growth. Priorities have been well identified and practical solutions have been brought forward to act upon them.

This Budget reflects a choice - a bold one. It is not an easy choice, but it is the right choice. And when you think about it, the only choice - the choice to take the responsible, prudent path to fiscal stability, economic growth and opportunity while making a strong social parti pris.

In the first instance, a budget is mostly about figures and figures clearly disavow prevailing reviews – it is a fact that despite the volatile global economic context, the Mauritian economy has performed well to markedly improve the GDP growth rate, which increased from 3.0% in 2015 to 3.5% in 2016. According to Statistics Mauritius, GDP growth is expected to rise to 3.8% in 2017 and is projected at 4.1% in 2017/2018, thus exceeding the psychological threshold of a 4% economic growth – this is a prelude to heightened prosperity for our country.

Investment grew at a rate of 3.4% and all sectors, except manufacturing, had positive growth rates ranging from 0.5% to 9.2% and private investment, which was negative in 2012, has gone up to a rate of 5.7%. Unemployment has fallen to 7.3% compared to 7.9% in 2015 while headline inflation remained at 1% in 2016, its lowest point for three decades.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these figures speak for themselves. The thrust of last year's Budget has allowed us to build a strong framework for economic revival and economic resurgence is already underway since last year. Now is, in fact, the time to build on the foundation already put into place, and this is exactly what Budget 2017-2018 intends to focus on.

To rise up to the challenge of our ambitions, this Budget contains a wide range of packages and incentives addressed to keep productive sectors, including the agro-industry, bio farming, ocean economy, tourism, financial services, biotechnology, manufacturing and the digital economy so as to attract more investment in those sectors. *Et on se donne les moyens de nos ambitions, M. le président.*

We should, indeed, welcome the innovative effort of introducing a three-year strategic plan which, on top of demonstrating the vision of the Government when it comes to the

country's economic trajectory, provides enhanced, forward visibility on the announced budgetary measures to be acted upon.

Last year's Budget pointed out the need for a paradigm shift in our structure and Budget 2017-2018 walks the talk by a major overhaul at institutional level with the creation of the Economic Development Board (EDB). Through this measure, Government is sending the clear message that it has become essential to have one strong signal entity to oversee our future development model. This institution will be endowed with the necessary firepower to promote economic growth, create jobs, and will make appropriate policy recommendations to ensure the implementation of a coherent approach with regard to the economic affairs of the country.

The mandate of the EDB has been meticulously defined for it to be an effective instrument in operationalizing Government's vision and ensuring swift implementation of policies. This is a milestone, as the advent of this institution will mark a most welcome return to long-term economic planning. The EDB will also further strengthen the business facilitation agenda following the Business Facilitation Act promulgated last May by focusing on offering one-stop shop facilities for licensing, which is a positive signal being sent to investors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a Budget also has to be an expression of our values and aspirations as a nation. Transcending mere figures, the Budget shows Government's persistent will to reach out to most vulnerable citizens, bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, rehabilitate water access, eradicate drug trafficking, promote sports and leisure, nurture our creative industry and improve the quality of life of all Mauritians. The ambition of Government is that Mauritius becomes a high-income economy by 2023. In addition to the negative income tax system, another strong measure is the solidarity levy to be introduced on high-income earners, thus showing the clear social penchant of this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to comment on measures having to do with my Ministerial portfolio. Consistent with the previous two Budgets presented by this Government, the SME sector was again in the spotlight with several measures to accompany and help them grow. It is a revenue and employment-generating sector that accounts for 40% of our GDP growth and a bit more than half of total employment. They are the key engines of our future growth and integral to the competitiveness of our economic clusters.

However, to effect transformation in our economy, our SMEs and cooperatives have to embrace change and be change agents themselves although they individually lack the skills to make the investment necessary to cope with the changes taking place and to benefit fully from resulting opportunities. Since my assuming office as Minister, I have launched numerous projects to pedal the spirit of entrepreneurship among entrepreneurs and members of cooperative movements.

Several key measures have been initiated, the major ones being as follows -

- four business development and facilitation centres set up in 2016 followed by two others for training in 2017;
- business diagnostic services introduced as a grant to SMEs for the services of business consultants to conduct a diagnostic of the business in identified areas;
- two MoUs signed with ACCA Mauritius and Microsoft respectively to provide support to SMEs in terms of training and consultancy services;
- a handicraft training academy set up to promote the development of handicraft as a viable and sustainable business;
- several key workshops are organised on export readiness and opportunities, and
- the SME innovation award recently launched to reward SMEs that stand out in product and process innovation.

Such actions are, however, not enough to give the impetus necessary for the sector to be the driver of economic growth. A more in-depth intervention was highly needed, which came in the form of a 10-Year Master Plan for the SME sector earlier this year. It was, indeed, neither logical nor productive to make substantial budgetary allocation to SMEs without, however, providing entrepreneurs and other stakeholders with a clear strategic direction so as to make wise use of these allocations. The Master Plan makes several pertinent recommendations and I am particularly thankful to the hon. Prime Minister as those recommendations as well as those made by my Ministry and by many entrepreneurs have not fallen on deaf ears. A key action recommended by the SME Master Plan is a change in direction in terms of the institutional framework for SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to be able to propel this sector to the forefront of the economic landscape, we need the most adapted and dynamic institutions which are composed of technical and specialist competencies with previous hands-on industry experiences to

provide proactive and quality support services to SMEs. My Ministry has been, up to now, endowed with a single entirety, the SMEDA, to materialise and implement all actions to be taken within this framework.

As per the SMEDA Act 2009 this institution is supposed, *inter alia*, to provide a service delivery network which increases the contribution of SMEs in the national economy, devise and implement development support programmes and schemes for SMEs, facilitate, assist and provide the necessary support to SMEs to gain market access and business opportunities and to compete successfully in the national and international markets.

However, SMEDA is paradoxically the Achilles heel of the SME sector today. With more than hundred employees, SMEDA is, in fact, an ailing organisation mired in a deep state of apathy and paralysed by its own bulkiness. This is mainly due to the result of the merger in 2005 of the then Small and Medium Industries Development Organisation - we all know about SMIDO – and the National Handicraft Promotion Agency (NHPA) into the Small Enterprises and Handicraft Development Authority (SEHDA) - not even SMEDA but SEHDA - which was later renamed as SMEDA. Prior to the merger, SMIDO had 45 employees and NHPA had 67.

SEHDA was set up with all these employees without any attempt to propose a conducive structure for the organisation to deliver according to its redefined mandate, as provided in the Act. A reduction of 48 employees was recommended following the merger in 2005, but had not been acted upon. A new Act was proposed in 2009 to set up the SMEDA and, once again, the relevant authorities failed to address severe institutional capacity weaknesses.

The cruellest of ironies is that despite its considerable size, SMEDA desperately lacks the necessary skills in-house to allow it to deliver according to its mandate. As a general rule, an organisation should be staffed in such a way that two third or more of its workforce are directly involved in the core functions of the organisation. Staff involved in supporting and administrative services should be at the minimum. SMEDA is a prominent exception to this rule.

As frontline staff at SMEDA, there has been, till recently, only 12 business development officers and seven extension officers to service the MSMEs across the island. Only 1% of SMEDA's staff is on the field to service SMEs, which is complete nonsense.

What about the remaining staff that adds up to 100? Well, they perform office work and other cognate administrative duties. The conclusions of a report of the OPSG (Office of Public Sector Governance) in 2013 about SMEDA are scathing. As many as 35 posts were already no longer required and needed to be made redundant since then. Certain grades like general workers, office attendants and drivers are in oversupply.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can the transformational recommendations of the SME Master Plan be implemented in such preposterous conditions? For the past two and a half years, I have personally involved myself regarding this difficult issue of SMEDA by regularly holding meetings and workshops with the staff so as to nurture a new mindset and work culture, and to tell them what I really expect from them. I have been urging the staff to go on the field and move closer to entrepreneurs. *Cela n'a cependant pas eu l'effet escompté.* I still recall the numerous PQs addressed to me. All throughout I have been consistent about my views and opinion regarding SMEDA, and also all the Press interviews that I have given, be it on radio or newspapers, I have been consistent regarding my opinion on SMEDA.

Since the beginning of 2015, we have been devoting a lot of time and resources trying to deal with several serious flaws that exacerbate the difficult situation at SMEDA, while at the same time energy should have been directed to SME community. This was to no avail. It seems that the apathy prevailing at SMEDA for years and years is beyond repair.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was obvious from the very outset that an organisation in such a wretched condition would never be able to provide the support and services expected by entrepreneurs, as well as to effectively implement the economic agenda of the Government. It is, in fact, understandable that SMEDA is often the subject of outcry on behalf of entrepreneurs, who unanimously believe that this institution is “*complètement dépassée.*”

Budget 2017-2018 marks a new dawn for the SME sector at the institutional level. The consequences of the ‘*laisser-aller*’ at SMEDA were inevitable and the cleaver has now come down, with the strong measure to replace SMEDA with SME Mauritius as part of a fundamental institutional reform to better support SMEs.

Let me assure hon. Uteem, as well as other Members of the House, entrepreneurs and the general public, that this restructuring measure does not imply a mere change of name. It is much more than a simple rehabilitation of SMEDA. SME Mauritius, which is a key

recommendation of the 10-year Master Plan for the SME sector, implies the inception of a new high-powered multi-capabilities institution that will henceforth be in charge of all SME support programmes to circumvent the current situation of inefficiency, information asymmetry and lack of synergies between different support institutions and Ministries responsible for the development of SMEs.

Based on lessons learned from past mistakes, this new institution will be incorporated as a company and will have a clear mandate of providing targeted and differentiated support to SMEs. It will have sufficient and adapted resources to focus on its core objectives above all, it will be professionally managed, in line with private sector good governance principles and practices.

As per recommendations made by the SME Master Plan, SME Mauritius ought to be a business intelligence resources repository of international standard. Its core team will be predominantly composed of a pool of sectoral and thematic experts, having in-depth industry working knowledge, and a more on-field approach. It is also recommended that rather than having a large pool of in-house experts, SME Mauritius should rather concentrate on developing strategies, plans and schemes based on specific enterprise, sector or industry needs.

I also wish to point out that a key feature of the SME Mauritius structure will be the setting up of an SME observatory. Before the SME Master Plan, there was no real visibility and monitoring of the main indicators relevant to the sector, while I believe it is vital to take its pulse in a systematic manner so as to make marked decisions. The SME observatory will precisely coordinate with relevant parties to gather, analyse and disseminate data through reports, periodicals and newsletters about SMEs and entrepreneurship. It will also be responsible for the setting up of an effective mechanism to monitor and evaluate the impact of policies and feed the strategic team of SME Mauritius with relevant data for evidence-based policy reviews.

It must be pointed out that a holistic business intelligence component of such magnitude is an innovative service which has never been provided to date to the local SME community and that its relevance is beyond doubt. As such, a mechanism will enable us to continuously adapt our policy and improve outcomes for the benefit of the sector.

From this brief exposé of the broad lines of our plans with regard to this new institution, I think it is quite clear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that SME Mauritius is neither a rebranding nor a change of name exercise. SMEDA, in its current form, is being phased out to leave place to SME Mauritius. And SME Mauritius is going to be a new blood, a new vision, new methods built on a new rock solid foundation and devised to give a new impetus to the SME sector.

I would like to talk about the 10-year SME Master Plan launched in March 2017. This Master Plan, which was commissioned since the end of 2016, makes comprehensive recommendations that contribute significantly in giving substance and direction to the reforms agenda enrolled since last year's Budget.

In the light of limited outcomes achieved by past and current SME development strategies, the Master Plan advocates a wholly new archetype to design, execute, monitor fresh policies, strategies and action plans. It is meant to be a game changer in the economic development scenario of Mauritius, advocating a much needed structural transformation of the SME sector based on the following objectives -

- (i) improve SME competitiveness and growth;
- (ii) foster high growth potential SMEs;
- (iii) upgrade skills and job opportunities by addressing skilled mismatch and upgrading human capital;
- (iv) improve design and value addition by supporting research, and
- (v) develop innovation and increase market access and exports.

Recommendations have been made for the SME sector to achieve a quantum against ambitious, yet attainable targets, such as –

- raise SMEs' contribution to GDP, currently from 40% to 52% by 2026;
- raise SMEs' share of total national employment presently from 55% to 64%;
- increase current exports from less than 3% to about 18%, and
- increase the value addition from Rs175 billion to Rs388 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, very often, governments are criticised for their keenness to launch master plans and other such strategic documents without however doing whatever it takes to materialise their recommendations. People are always sceptical, as they know in their heart that such documents will remain on the shelf.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can hereby assure the House and entrepreneurs that this is definitely not going to be the case with the SME Master Plan, which comprises a comprehensive Action Plan which integrates a series of 86 recommendations, including 46 key actions and six Quick Wins.

Such actions will include, *inter alia*, the adaptation of dispute mechanisms to SMEs, which is something already in the pipeline, the organisation of an annual National Entrepreneurship Week, impairing entrepreneurship training to High Growth Potential SMEs, encouraging public research to focus on national socio-economic priorities, the establishment of an integrated communication visibility strategy for SMEs, building product quality to meet international standards and developing an Africa strategy for SMEs through a clustered approach.

Another example is the high-profile recommendation of the Master Plan to set up an IT enabler e-platform for SMEs for visibility and access to markets. The materialisation of this recommendation is now being accelerated with Budget 2017/2018, including the setting up of an e-platform in its measures in favour of SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the e-platform as recommended by the SME Master Plan and the Budget will be designed as a knowledge portal which will assist in establishing an integrated communication and visibility strategy for MSMEs including, *inter alia* –

- an online help-desk for mentoring and coaching;
- a registration and match making platform;
- peer to peer networking;
- a learning centre – provision of online tutorials
- catalogue of SME products and services, and
- mobile applications for businesses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a brief mention of the handicraft sector, which has been neglected since the NHPA/SMIDO merger in 2005. 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.

We managed to open the Handicraft Training Academy and CraftLab in July 2016 so as to provide intensive and specialised training programmes for *artisans* to develop their

skills and expertise. We also signed a MoU with the Mauritius Duty-Free Paradise in January 2017 so that artisans get a dedicated stall space in the main duty-free shops for their handicraft items. Not later than in May 2017, that is, last month, together with the MCCI, we launched ‘Creative Mauritius’, an unprecedented initiative which promotes the local ‘*savoir-faire*’ and showcases operators for the handicraft industry on the Chamber’s Tax Free shopping website. With this initiative, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, craft operators from Mauritius and Rodrigues now have a webpage of their own with a description of their products, a photo gallery, their contact details as well as a geo-tracking feature which will enable tourists to find their way to them.

Milestones have thus been achieved. I am particularly grateful that this Budget is providing a further boost to the sector, for example, by giving a discount voucher to tourists purchasing Mauritian handicraft products.

It is simply unacceptable that more than 90% of handicraft products sold in our prime tourist areas are imported mainly from Asian countries such as India, China, Malaysia and Madagascar. This anomaly is being duly tackled by this Budget which provides for the amendment of the Commodities (Indication of Origin) Regulation 1981 to ensure that all products mandatorily display their country of origin as from October 2017. This will allow consumers, including tourists to make an informed choice when making a purchase while protecting our local craftsmen. SME Mauritius will also be given the responsibility of introducing a hologram to be affixed on all locally made handicraft products so as to differentiate them from imported ones.

By dealing with such a sensitive issue, this Budget is clearly repositioning crafts as an economic activity ‘*à part entière*’. It is yet another milestone for the Mauritian handicraft sector, which has hereby been given due recognition at national level.

On another note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the success of Mauritius is to a large extent the result of its export-oriented strategy since the 1970s. Our SMEs particularly are bound to enter a virtuous circle in which trade allows them to expand output and achieve economies of scale which can be passed on to customers in price sensitive markets.

The global trade landscape is nowadays conducive for such internationalisation. Global trade growth is expected to rebound to 4% in 2017. This unforeseen recovery is supported by stronger import demand from major advanced economies, increased trade flows

to and from China, and a diminished drag from weak import demand from commodity exporting emerging markets and developing economies.

However, the smaller the business, the bigger the barriers can seem. SMEs have largely been absent from the broad trade debate despite the emergence of new opportunities for them to connect to world markets. In Mauritius, net exports of goods and services as a percentage of GDP receded by 9.4% in 2016, and is expected to decline by 10% in 2017. Exports from SMEs currently account for less than 3% of the total exports and the number of export-oriented enterprises have been decreasing over the years for a variety of reasons, including the under exploitation of trade agreements, difficulties to tap in the emerging middle-class population in Africa and developing African markets, and the absence of grouped services or central warehousing facilities in selected African countries, among others.

Given the current global economic climate with black swans such as Brexit and Trump's election or foreign policies, the exports sector is fraught with hurdles. While it is obvious that the negative impact of Brexit on the Mauritian economy is inevitable, we should, however, not blind ourselves to new avenues. It is, in fact, in such situations that we have to think big by finding ways to incentivise our exporters, diversify our markets, sharpen our economic diplomacy strategy and explore promising sectors.

Mauritius needs to move from being a Euro-centric exporter to a more diversified export economy. Already, was increasingly diversified trade and investment ties with the United States (through AGOA and the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement), China, India as well as various African, Middle Eastern, and other Asian countries, our country is progressively paving the way for it to be less economically dependent on its historical European partners.

Budget 2017/2018 loses no time to build on this positive trend, notably by pursuing negotiations on Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with China and the European Free Trade Association (a trade organisation operating in parallel with the EU composed of four member States namely Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

Stepping up efforts to finalise the CECPA with India will spur investment and the exchange of goods and will be beneficial for the services sector, with enhanced opportunities

for Mauritian entrepreneurs and professionals in the fields of finance, law, ICT-BPO, medicine and logistics.

The potential of Africa as a reliable partner is being given due consideration. The African market is a hard nut to crack. We are members of SADC and COMESA and figures from 2010 to 2015 show that there has been a notable increase in domestic exports to SADC and COMESA member States from 12% to 18%. However, South Africa and Madagascar together make up for 84% of total domestic exports and this pinpoints the untapped potential in the SADC and COMESA region.

More targeted work has to be done and the 2017/1918 Budget precisely advocates to set a model of economic partnership for creating growth corridors with targeted African States, notably through the setting up of joint commissions with countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar and Zambia. One of the most meaningful measures for exporters eyeing the African market is the forthcoming inauguration of the first special economic zone in Senegal, which will Mauritian companies access to warehouse and office spaces.

Allow me to put in a word regarding the manufacturing sector. Accounting for around 12% of SMEs, this sector is one of the main economic pillars of our country, contributing to 13.9% of GDP in June 2016 and employing approximately 111,700 workers.

The contribution of the manufacturing sector to the country's GDP has, however, been on a declining trend for the past years: 15.3% in 2014, 14.7% in 2015 and 13.9% in 2016. However, as per Vision 2030, the contribution of the sector to GDP has to be increased to 25% for Mauritius to fully benefit from opportunities of a healthy industrial base.

I have had the opportunity to meet several groups of manufacturers in December last year who have deplored major issues that threaten the sector in the near future. The main issues identified are the survival of local production in the phase of globalisation, that is, the surge in imports; limited access to markets; lack of technology transfer; the recruitment of foreign workers, and the need to develop a strategy for export in Africa.

For manufacturers, there needs to be the political will to take bold actions to tackle these issues at the highest level as Mauritius is dangerously drifting away from a production nation to an import nation.

Measures announced in this Budget show that Government has heard *le cri du cœur* from Mauritian manufacturers. It shows that the expansion of the manufacturing sector and the creation of additional industrial hubs to diversify the national industrial base are viewed by Government as one of the key strategies to foster economic growth and improve the country's competitiveness.

Various measures indeed address the constraints mentioned earlier and translate Government's aim increase the potential for further investment in the sector -

- the acceleration of the processes to employ foreign labour;
- the extension of the 8-year work permit policy to all manufacturing activities;
- Government's contribution towards the costs of membership in the 'Made in Moris' label;
- the Introduction of an 8-year income tax-holiday for manufacturers of pharmaceuticals, medical devices and high-tech products incorporated after 08 June 2017, and
- tax incentives to companies investing or spending on R&D to innovate, improve or develop processes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, my only concern about what has been announced in the Budget with regard to the manufacturing sector is the customs duty exemption which will be granted on Knock Down furniture imported in the context of a Smart City project on the condition that a 20% local value addition is incorporated therein. I hereby come back to my previous point, which is the imperative to prevent our country from becoming '*un pays d'importateurs*', bearing in mind that there are many Mauritian furniture makers who manufacture everything from scratch in their own factories, who have already incurred investment worth millions of rupees in various design and tailor-made projects or who have invested in state-of-the-art facilities for manufacturing rather than simply processing and assembly. I would thus urge the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to exert caution upon the application of this measure at the implementation stage. Some manufacturers have even met me after the Budget Speech to request the Prime Minister to look again at this measure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I cannot conclude without making a brief overview of the cooperative sector, which is now '*sur les rails*' since this Government has taken over. Cooperatives in Mauritius are indeed nowadays playing a significant role in the socio-

economic development of the country. We have around 1,200 cooperative societies with a membership of some 100,000 engaged in about forty different activities, representing an annual turnover of about Rs5.8 billion.

The strategies of the Cooperatives division of my Ministry geared towards consolidating and empowering the cooperative movement, and of cooperatives and co-operators are as follows -

- ensuring a legal framework conducive to the development of the cooperative sector;
- adherence to the cooperative legislation;
- empowerment of cooperatives through capacity building;
- Human Resource Development Programmes for cooperatives, etc.

During the past 2½ years, the Cooperatives Division of my Ministry has taken a series of measures to ensure that the legal and institutional framework within which cooperatives operate are conducive for development and enhanced growth and to empower cooperatives to embark on new activities.

The Cooperatives legislation has been reviewed in November last year and the new Cooperatives Act 2016 has been promulgated to provide for a modern and appropriate legislative framework for the cooperative sector in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Cooperatives Act 2016 was hereby proclaimed to come into operation on 02 May 2017.

The implementation of the Cooperatives Division e-Registration Project is ongoing to enable potential promoters of a cooperative society to submit their applications for registration and payment of application fees online. It will also provide for cooperative societies to submit their financial statements online.

Moreover, it is also interesting to note that the Cooperatives Division has been certified since September 2016 and we are in the process of transition to MS ISO 9001:2015.

The main office of the *National Institute for Cooperative Entrepreneurship (NICE)* will be upgraded to become the National Cooperative College (NCC), which is meant to become a *centre d'excellence* in cooperative education for both cooperatives and co-operators of Mauritius and Rodrigues.

The objectives of this project are to make effective and efficient use of Government infrastructural facilities; facilitate the development of human resources in the cooperative sector; devise and dispense relevant training programmes which will cater for the needs of the cooperative movement; promote the use of ICT and modern technology by cooperatives, and

improve the skills of co-operators, directors and staff of cooperatives in Mauritius and in the region.

A ‘Top 100 Cooperatives’ magazine has been launched since last year by recognising the contribution and performance of cooperatives, adhering cooperatives to business excellence while adhering to cooperative principles and values at a continual improvement for the emergence of sustainable cooperative organisations.

In addition, in a bid to give visibility, information and access to markets to cooperatives, the Cooperatives Division also published a Directory of Cooperative Products and Services for Cooperatives in Mauritius and Rodrigues.

A survey has carried out to obtain relevant information and data on land occupied or abandoned by sugarcane planters in cooperative societies. The survey has been completed and the information and data are presently being compiled for the preparation of a report.

Since last year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a cooperative society/federation is entitled for a solar PV installation not exceeding 5 kilowatt peak(kWp) and a one-off grant of Rs10,000 per kWp PV installed up to a maximum of 5 kWp. Eight cooperative societies from Mauritius and one cooperative from Rodrigues submitted their application with respect to this scheme and one society, namely the Long Mountain Cooperative Credit Union Ltd, has already completed the PV installation.

Sensitisation campaigns are being carried out for the establishment of Co-operative Credit Unions in poverty areas following the recommendation of the Truth and Justice Commission. The Cooperatives Division, through the Cooperative Development Fund, finances the payment of registration fees amounting to Rs500 and the first annual fee amounting to Rs200 as an incentive in this perspective. To date, eight Cooperative Credit Unions have been registered in poverty regions.

Following a request made by my Ministry in 2016, the African-Asian Rural Development Organisation (AARDO) has provided a grant of \$40,000 equivalent to Rs1.4 m. for the purchase of a refrigerated vehicle for collection, transportation and distribution of milk by the Mauritius Livestock Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd. On the purchase of the refrigerated vehicle, the Mauritius Livestock Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd will be in a position to engage in the collection of milk, increase production of pasteurized milk, engage in dairy value-added and marketing of the pasteurized milk and value-added dairy products. In addition, Budget 2017/2018 provides for a one-off grant of Rs500,000 for this dairy project, which will be used for investment in the project and payment of salaries.

The main objective of the project is to empower the Mauritius Livestock Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd so that it could provide to the cow-breeding community a wide range of services essential for cow breeders. Also, this project will give a boost to the cooperative dairy sector in Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I think I have made a brief exposé. I could have spoken much more on the realisation of my Ministry, but I prefer to stop here and allow others Members of this House to resume the debate.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(3.24 p.m.)

Mr Bhagwan: Merci M. le président. M. le président, faut-il s'étonner qu'il y ait autant d'indifférence dans le pays par rapport à ce présent exercice budgétaire ? Faut-il être surpris que la population se sent arnaquée, estimant qu'elle a été belle et bien roulée dans la farine à une roupie de moins maintenant ?

M. le président, la population constate avec une énorme déception que depuis les dernières élections générales, la météo politique et économique n'annonce rien de rassurant, et qu'au contraire, indéniablement, le gouvernement *Lepep* - soit disant lepep- a dilapidé en quelques mois tout son capital de confiance, et une immense désillusion s'est installée dans le pays. Personne, du moins la grosse majorité de la population, n'attend plus rien sauf une chose : le départ de ce gouvernement, MSM-ML et transfuges, et de mettre une équipe intègre, compétente, patriotique à la tête du pays.

M. le président, il n'est point nécessaire de chercher midi à quatorze heures pour connaître les raisons de cette dépréciation accélérée, de la crédibilité de cette présente équipe qui se prétend pompeusement gouvernementale. Ce n'est pas la faute aux partis de l'opposition, ni à la presse et encore moins l'œuvre des groupes de pression citoyens. *It's their own doing !*

M. le président, nous sommes tous d'accord sur un point : il n'y a pas de miracle, ni économique, ni budgétaire. Le progrès d'un état est le résultat d'une vision claire et explicite, d'une stratégie rodée et bien articulée, d'une mise en œuvre rigoureuse et planifiée et finalement d'un leadership éclairé et inspirant. Effectivement, c'est le rôle du capitaine de l'équipe *to lead, motivate and inspire*.

Ici, à Maurice, chez nous, le capitaine, issue des urnes, a confié la timonerie à son fils, le fameux *deal ‘papa-piti’*. Celui qui a été choisi pour le remplacer n'a ni les qualités de leadership, ni l'expérience, et encore moins la poigne et la légitimité. Bien sûr, les cireurs de pompes et autres courtisans et conseillers grassement payés à ses côtés lui trouvent toujours et encore toutes les qualités imaginables et continuent à l'encenser, comme nous écoutons ici dans les discours.

M. le président, outre d'avoir toujours une épée de Damoclès, l'affaire Medpoint suspendue au-dessus de sa tête, il ne veut pas accepter, le nouveau timonier a amplement démontré son incapacité à tenir efficacement la barre. Les circonstances entourant le limogeage de l'ancien CEO d'Air Mauritius, M. Meg Pillay, le rocambolesque comité disciplinaire et les ingérences systématiques de la cuisine dans la prise de décision confirme que le timonier tient plutôt un manche à balai à la place de la barre. Une posture risible mais combien dramatique.

Ce n'est, malheureusement pas, M. le président, une exception. Les inepties de ses super conseillers, grassement payés des millions par mois sur des projets pharaoniques, dont *Heritage City*, *Metro Express* et les frasques de la courtière de l'ICTA, le pillage au *Mauritius Duty Free Paradise*, pour ne citer que quelques-uns, M. le président.

L'absence d'un leadership éclairé et inspirant se fait cruellement sentir dans toutes les sphères de notre société, à commencer au niveau de la gouvernance économique. Toutes les mesures visant à relancer l'investissement, la création d'emplois et la croissance buteront sur ce facteur crucial : leadership ! D'ailleurs, de nombreux observateurs s'interrogent sur ce cumul de *Prime Ministership* et des finances. Si le Premier ministre ne trouve aucune personne digne de sa confiance pour assumer ce poste à plein temps parmi ces ministres, comment les capitaines de l'industrie pourront-ils faire confiance à cette équipe ?

On le sait, M. le président, pour les investisseurs, la confiance en l'avenir, une bonne visibilité sur l'environnement des affaires, un *level playing field*, une transparence dans l'attribution des marchés et un respect scrupuleux de l'État de droit sont nettement plus rassurants que les propos mielleux des ministres. La gestion de l'affaire Bramer-BAI, de Betamax, y compris les commentaires irréfléchis sur l'arbitrage du CT Power et certaines attributions des marchés ont empoisonné le climat des affaires, et on se demande, M. le président, comment ce gouvernement parviendra à renverser la vapeur d'autant plus que des

bandes très sonores - je le dis, très sonores - après celle de '*bal kuler*', de nouveaux scandales et les abus de pouvoir continuer à éclabousser l'image de ce gouvernement en chute libre.

M. le président, je vous disais que le capitaine doit *lead, motivate and inspire* pas que son équipe, mais également la population, parce que si miracle il y en aura, ce sont des Mauriciennes et les Mauriciens qui le réaliseront à l'école, à l'usine, sur les chantiers, dans les bureaux, sur les bateaux de pêche et dans les champs. Nos ressources humaines représentent notre plus grand atout et c'est notre population, par son assiduité au travail, sa discipline et sa productivité qui fera progresser le pays. Mais cette population, M. le président, doit être encadrée, soutenue et motivée. Et il n'y a pas de meilleure motivation pour une population que de voir ses dirigeants sérieusement à l'œuvre, faisant preuve de probité et d'intégrité dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions et surtout prouvant par leurs actes que l'exemple doit venir d'en haut. Ce qui n'est pas le cas au sein de ce gouvernement MSM-ML et transfuges.

Or, que constate-t-elle, M. le président ? D'abord un amateurisme des plus déconcertants dans la gestion des affaires du pays, entraînant des dépenses supplémentaires exagérées. Une ardoise de plusieurs milliards dans le sillage de l'affaire BAI, des milliards de compensation à être payés suite aux décisions précipitées de ce gouvernement. Le *write-off* des dettes de plusieurs centaines de millions de M. Gooljaury, R 800 millions additionnelles pour l'achat des moteurs du CEB, une centaine de millions engloutis dans le projet fantoche de Heritage City. *Pé faire fête avek la monnaie lepep*, M. le président.

Il faut surtout bien se rappeler que la population paye toujours son essence, son diesel et son électricité injustement plus chère, et que cela représente une taxe supplémentaire sur chaque ménage mauricien. Plumer la population pour ensuite gaspiller ces précieux fonds publics. Le gouvernement se met le doigt dans l'œil s'il pense que la baisse de 10 sous sur les pains maison suffira à changer le jugement de la population.

Nous savons, M. le président, que les ménages mauriciens, particulièrement ceux au bas de l'échelle mais aussi ceux de la classe moyenne, rencontrent, malgré le faible taux d'inflation, d'énormes difficultés à boucler le budget familial. Tandis que le salaire minimal promis se fait toujours attendre, le salaire maximal est légion pour une poignée de potentats.

M. le président, allez expliquer à la population pourquoi le Premier ministre, aussi *Minister of Home Affairs, External Communication, National Development Unit, Minister of*

Finance and Economic Development, a un salaire de base de R 290,000 mensuellement et que le Chef Juge dispose de R 206,000 par mois, alors que les nominés politiques, les potentats perçoivent des salaires de plus de R 500,000 par mois.

M. le président, j'ai dit que c'est un budget sans âme. Je le redis : sans âme et vide. Je le répète. Quel constat dressons-nous ? Prenons le chapitre de la lutte contre la fraude et la corruption. Pas un mot dans le budget pour combattre ce fléau qui ronge la société à tous les nouveaux. Comble de la situation, il n'y a pas un seul *Pran Kash* qui sévit dans les couloirs de l'Hôtel du gouvernement. C'est dans le domaine de la fraude et de la corruption que le miracle et la croissance sont opérés. Le silence du budget à ce chapitre est éloquent et bien sonore, si j'ose m'exprimer ainsi.

Doit-on rafraîchir la mémoire du Premier ministre et ministre des Finances à l'épisode de l'entremetteuse d'affaires, avec des commissions de 10% facturées aux promoteurs des projets et qui a été forcée, contre son gré, à prendre la porte de sortie ? Je cite le cas de Youshreen Choomka qui a usurpé le poste du numéro un à l'IBA. C'est le dernier en date, mais elle est partie avec une *golden handshake*.

Doit-on rafraîchir la mémoire du Premier ministre et ministre des Finances et le gouvernement aussi sur l'affaire Vijaya Sumputh, très proche des dirigeants de ce *corner of Government*, pour parodier une expression dont la paternité revient à celui qui se reconnaîtra. Malheureusement il n'est pas là. Le cas de Vijaya Sumputh se résume à la cour du roi Pétaud. Chacun décide ce qu'il veut et passe outre des décisions d'en haut. Heureusement que ce qui reste de la démocratie en cette Chambre a permis de les démasquer au tournant à travers une question parlementaire de moi-même et aux autres questions supplémentaires des membres de l'opposition. Le pot aux roses fut découvert et la copine fut mise KO. Nous attendons de prendre connaissance des conclusions du *Fact-Finding Committee* sur cette sinistre affaire, un exemple classique du copinage au plus haut sommet du pouvoir politique.

Doit-on rafraîchir la mémoire du chef du gouvernement, Premier ministre, ministre des Finances, des frasques avec des salaires de plus de R 500,000 par mois, des chevaliers sans peur et sans reproche, chevauchant sans aucune impunité au ministère des Finances ? Et on a osé me qualifier : «*Li pas pareil comme sa Meter Reader là.*» Et moi, je suis fier d'avoir été un *Meter Reader*, pas un fossoyeur de la démocratie, un dilapideur des fonds publics.

Mais il y a d'autres, qui se croient plus rusés, qui opèrent dans 'la cuisine' de l'Hôtel du gouvernement et ailleurs, dans les hautes Plaines Wilhems, et qui refusent par tous les

moyens de jouer le jeu de la transparence. Ils se cachent derrière ceux qu'ils ont combattus politiquement pour refuser de rendre public leurs millions des fonds publics.

M. le président, mon rôle de parlementaire - et je suis ici depuis bientôt 35 ans - est de réclamer des comptes au nom de la population. Ce n'est pas M. Sherry Singh et ses *chamchas* médiatiques qui m'intimideront. Avec votre permission, M. le président, je vais vous citer quelques chiffres de ce monsieur. Il est allé à la radio, il nous a traités de tous les noms, surtout moi-même. Et voilà, M. le président, je cite un des mois où il a touché son salaire.

Salaire (Je dis par an)	R 6,600,000
Treizième mois	R 550,000
Bonus de 40%	R 2,640,000
<i>End of Contract 25%</i>	R 1,650,000
<i>Refund of leave</i> (Il travaille tout le temps, 24 sur 24 heures, même au bureau et dans la cuisine)	R 550,000
Total	R 11,990,000

Sans compter les subsidiaires où il représente le *Mauritius Telecom* et sans compter les *overseas missions* et les *per diems*, les billets de première classe, faisant le tour du monde.

M. le président – *ena pou gagne faiblesse ; tan sa la* – hier, pendant le *Question Time*, j'avais posé une question sur le *Chairman* d'*Air Mauritius*, qui, a part d'être *Chairman*, est au *Research Council*, il siège dans tous ses subsidiaires, il siège dans les sous-comités d'*Air Mauritius*. C'est une des raisons pour lesquelles ils ont fait partir M. Megh Pillay, pour pouvoir monopoliser et diriger *Air Mauritius*, dont onalue la persévérance des employés à quelques jours du centenaire d'*Air Mauritius*. M. le président, au total, plus de R 700,000/750,000 pour M. Arjoon Suddhoo.

M. le président, le chapelet de scandales de ce gouvernement est tel qu'il y a de gros risques d'oublier quelques-uns. Je ne vais pas rentrer dans les réponses qu'on a eues ici sur les hommes de loi qui sont payés 19 millions ; certains au IICTA, à la *Beach Authority*, dans

les autres corps paraétatiques. Mais l'affaire d'Alvaro Sobrinho, avec sa connexion au plus haut niveau de l'État, est encore loin, M. le président, de livrer tous ses secrets. Une question simple : quel est l'intérêt de M. Alvaro Sobrinho de se cacher derrière qui on sait, alors qu'il prétend être un mécène ? Qui est son interprète inavouable ? Qui a été son agent pour qu'il puisse obtenir un *banking licence* ? M. le président, *the answers to these questions are pregnant with meaning.*

Les récentes démissions à la FSC - ce matin on en a parlé lors de la PNQ - ont permis de démasquer la supercherie. Le rapport Kroll a établi qu'Alvaro Sobrinho est loin, bien loin lui-même, d'être un cas au-dessus de tout soupçon au chapitre du blanchiment de fonds. Le *Deputy Prime Minister*, leader d'un parti, s'est permis de dire qu'il a regardé M. Alvaro Sobrinho les yeux dans les yeux et qu'il n'a rien à lui reprocher quant à ses '*sources of funds*'...

(Interruptions)

On a tous lu ! Voilà ce qui se passe ! Ce monsieur...

(Interruptions)

Je ne sais pas moi ! C'est un ange ce M. Sobrinho ! Mais le temps va nous donner raison, et la vérité va toujours sortir, M. le président. Ça c'est le plus gros scandale du siècle, au sommet de l'État. Pire que Medpoint !

M. le président, la population éprouve un ressenti certain par rapport à ce double langage, à cette politique deux poids deux mesures et ce double jeu. Et la colère gronde. Eux, ils n'entendent rien ; ils sont protégés par les VIPSU et les motards.

C'est sur cette toile de fond que ce présent exercice se fait, et naturellement la population se montre extrêmement prudente et ne se laissera pas berner une fois de plus. Elle a entièrement raison et ces débats télévisés que nous avons, *le live coverage*, vont permettre à la population de vivre cette réalité.

M. le président, à l'instar de mes collègues de ce côté de la Chambre, après avoir situé le contexte budgétaire, je voudrais maintenant aborder certaines questions de fond. Je faisais remarquer au début de mon intervention que le progrès d'un État est le résultat d'une vision claire et explicite d'une stratégie bien rodée et bien articulée, d'une mise en œuvre rigoureuse et planifiée, et finalement d'un leadership éclairé et inspirant.

J'ai déjà évoqué la question du leadership et le peu d'inspiration que cela suscite au sein de la population, malgré la propagande de la MBC et leur sentiment de s'être fait rouler dans la farine.

Le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a lu pendant presque deux heures les 366 paragraphes de son discours pour tenter de convaincre la population de la justesse de sa démarche et d'annoncer que son gouvernement va relever les défis de notre ambition. Peine perdue, M. le président ! La population ne croit pas, malgré toute la propagande avant le budget, pendant la préparation du budget, après le budget, tous ces maquillages, c'est juste pour la MCB/TV.

Le premier obstacle, M. le président, auquel il s'est heurté est sans conteste celui de la crédibilité. Ce gouvernement n'a pas de crédibilité. Semaine après semaine, depuis leur installation, ils ont commencé à perdre leur crédibilité. Semaine après semaine ! Aujourd'hui, on n'entend plus certains *passer du beurre* à la radio les dimanches et les autres jours. Il y a très, très peu. Et certains ont des cachets du Sun Trust pour venir à la radio. On ne les entend plus.

En effet, M. le président, en se basant sur le nombre d'annonces faites l'année dernière et restées sans suite, la population se demande, avec raison, combien de ces nouvelles promesses seront effectivement réalisées au cours des prochains mois ; l'exécution de ces projets.

Idem pour les projets de développement dont presque un tiers de la dotation n'a pas été utilisé pendant l'année financière 2016-2017, soit presque R 3 milliards. Pour se dédouaner, le gouvernement évoque souvent les longues procédures du *Central Procurement Board*, alors que dans les faits, c'est le manque de planification et de suivi qui provoquent ces retards.

Le deuxième obstacle est le pessimisme latent qui s'est durablement installé dans le pays en raison, d'une part, de l'absence d'une stratégie rodée, claire et bien articulée, et surtout comprise, entraînant ainsi une adhésion de la population, et de l'autre, une façon de faire qui parfois fait frémir en raison de l'amateurisme qui est affligeant et qui caractérise ce gouvernement. La priorité pour la population reste l'indispensable relance de la machinerie économique afin d'offrir une nouvelle palette d'opportunités aux salariés, aux demandeurs d'emplois, aux jeunes et aux femmes.

Ce sont ces réponses qu'attend la population. Les foyers mauriciens veulent retrouver un nouveau souffle afin de pouvoir juguler avec leurs dépenses courantes, les mensualités, les leçons devenues si particulières, alors que pour le gouvernement l'unique priorité semble, après la chasse aux coffres-forts, le démantèlement du conglomérat BAI et le projet avorté de *Heritage City*, le Metro en mode express est devenu retro express.

M. le président, tout le monde souhaite une solution durable aux couteux et stressants problèmes de congestion routière mais, paradoxalement, ce projet ne suscite, avec raison, que méfiance et scepticisme au sein de la population.

Et c'est tout à fait compréhensible. En effet, après avoir vilipendé ce même projet, ne voilà-t-il pas que le gouvernement veut maintenant en faire son porte drapeau. Et cela dans l'opacité la plus totale. Lors des débats sur la *Motion of Disallowance* sur le *delisting* de cette activité, j'ai eu l'occasion de souligner comment le gouvernement, en raison de sa gestion catastrophique, est sur le point de faire ce Metro Express, qu'il aurait dit un Retro Express.

M. le président, je ne vais certainement pas revenir là-dessus aujourd'hui, mais je souhaite vivement que le gouvernement se ressaisisse et que le bon sens prime dans l'intérêt national. Le peuple, les contribuables ont le droit de savoir exactement le coût de ce projet, exactement. Le *running cost*, le montant des subventions requises, et aussi les autres détails pertinents. Les habitants des villes veulent savoir où vont se situer les utilités qui vont être bougées, les marchés, les foires, les terrains des jeux, les promenades de santé. C'est cela que le ministre responsable à la responsabilité.

On a la nette impression, M. le président, qu'en raison de cette posture douteuse et inquiétante du gouvernement, c'est un projet prestige très onéreux pour les finances publiques.

M. le président, puisqu'on est au chapitre des infrastructures publiques, permettez-moi d'y ajouter quelques commentaires, d'autant plus que le budget fait état de *investing massively in the infrastructure of the future* - le ministère dont l'honorable Bodha à la responsabilité. Hier, en mon absence, il a fait mention de maître - Maître Bhagwan. *Perhaps he is confusing me with his brother-in-law.*

(Interruptions)

Maître Trilochun who pocketed Rs19 m. from the coffers of State, for a two days' work. So, you can't compare me. I am master in politics. I master all, not like your brother-in-law.

M. le président, tout en étant d'accord sur la nécessité de moderniser le réseau routier non seulement pour accroître la fluidité du trafic...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *donne le dos pas normal. Pas normal ça.* You should apologise. If you do not want to listen to me, you can go out.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, dommage, vous allez me dire que vous n'avez pas remarqué.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, tout en étant d'accord sur la nécessité de moderniser le réseau routier non seulement pour accroître la fluidité du trafic mais aussi et surtout pour améliorer drastiquement la sécurité sur nos routes, il est plus que nécessaire de tirer les leçons qui s'imposent par rapport aux précédents projets exécutés.

Intervenant ici même lors du *Land Drainage Authority Bill*, j'avais évoqué quelques aspects que je permets de reprendre, puisque cela concerne directement les infrastructures ; c'est *capacity building*. Sinon vous n'allez pas réussir.

Transparent procurement exercise for award of contracts. Vous avez passé beaucoup de temps à critiquer. Mais ce qui se passe, c'est troublant les informations qu'on a sur le *procurement*. La RDA n'a pas été modernisée jusqu'à maintenant, malgré tous les effets. Il y a eu quelqu'un qu'on a importé - Mauricien. Mais on doit avoir les réponses sur le *staffing*, sur le système qui a été mis en marche, en chantier pour moderniser la RDA qui va être responsable pour les projets des milliards.

Quality assurance. Le ministre a fait état d'un nouveau type de produit qu'on est en train d'utiliser. Il faut aller voir *the quality of work which is being done these days. Even by Grade A contractors.* Le *quality assurance* laisse à désirer. C'est ça la responsabilité. C'est l'argent public, et des milliards je vous dis. Le ministre a même lancé, suite à mon intervention à l'ajournement sur l'état des routes à Coromandel et à Beau Bassin. Et il a commencé le projet chez nous, à Coromandel, très bien. Il faut voir la qualité du travail. Je ne dis pas c'est mal fait, mais il faut voir globalement aussi. Vous avez critiqué pour ce qui a été fait dans le passé, mais il faut voir maintenant.

En ce qui concerne l'*enforcement and maintenance*, mon collègue, l'honorable Quirin, a fait état des *road markings* l'autre jour. Mais moi je l'ai dit ici à plusieurs reprises depuis des années ; la qualité des *road markings*. Lors des débats du budget l'année dernière, on avait fait ressortir la qualité des *road markings*.

On met des *road marking*, après deux semaines il n'y en a plus. Par exemple, sur la route de La Vigie, c'est un endroit qui est *accident prone area*. C'est un élément important le *road marking*, surtout le soir, et même le jour, pour l'*enforcement* et le *maintenance*.

M. le président, avant de clore sur ce chapitre, il est de mon devoir de soulever la question de sécurité routière. Les semaines se suivent et se ressemblent par rapport au nombre des victimes. Tous les jours il y en a ! C'est en augmentation et c'est très alarmant. Le ministère a fait une campagne de sensibilisation, on a recruté un consultant de la Réunion. Je ne suis pas contre l'idée de recruter de la Réunion, mais c'est un peu drôle de prendre des leçons de quelqu'un de la Réunion. Je me sens un peu mal à l'aise, et la personne est grassement payée. Depuis qu'il a été nommé, la courbe va en augmentant ! Il est vrai qu'il y a eu quelques initiatives, mais force est de constater, M. le président, qu'il n'y a pas eu de résultats probants.

Dans certains cas, il faut le reconnaître, l'état des routes est en partie responsable. Par manque de fonds, la RDA et les collectivités locales se retrouvent dans l'incapacité d'assurer un entretien régulier des routes. On voit ces jours-ci sur l'autoroute M1 des travaux de *road mending* et dans certains cas cela requiert un asphaltage complet au lieu d'un *road mending*. Les travaux qui se font au Pont Mattur n'a pas été suffisamment *advertised*. Pont Mattur est un endroit dangereux...

(Interruptions)

Ce n'est pas terminé ? Il faut expliquer à la population mon ami. Au lieu de me traiter de maître, j'aurais pu vous aider à faire votre PR là-dessus !

M. le président, je présume que ce sont des mesures d'économie, mais nous risquons de le payer plus cher autrement. Allez revoir ce système de *road mending*.

Il nous faut aussi, M. le président, changer de culture sur nos routes. L'éducation dès le préscolaire est cruciale. Il nous faut aussi légiférer et accroître les contrôles routiers. Ce n'est pas en faisant des *spot checks* ou des trucs *haphazard* ; il faut qu'il y ait une campagne

soutenue, utilisant la radio, la télévision, et les moyens ne manquent pas. Aujourd’hui, on peut même utiliser des cellulaires pour passer le message au niveau du *road safety*.

J'estime qu'il est grand temps, M. le président, de considérer la possibilité d'introduire une surveillance routière par des motards et des policiers en civil. Je crois qu'il faut passer à une autre étape de faire la surveillance routière par des motards en civil et des policiers en civil, *with plain clothes, and traffic wardens*, pas nécessairement pour verbaliser, mais surtout pour conscientiser, éduquer et combattre les mauvaises habitudes, parce que nous sommes devenus une population de mauvaises habitudes - et l'exemple est donné par le gouvernement - qui sont ancrées chez certains conducteurs depuis trop longtemps.

M. le président, je sais l'occasion pour attirer l'attention sur une scène épouvantable devenue même une boucherie quotidienne. La présence des animaux sur nos routes représente un danger particulièrement pour les motocyclistes alors que les propriétaires de ces animaux agissent en criminels en laissant leurs animaux domestiques flâner dans les rues à leurs risques et périls. Chaque citoyen doit assumer sa part de responsabilité afin de mettre un terme à ce massacre - il y a un massacre épouvantable. M. le président, j'ai terminé avec le ministère de maître Bodha.

Puisqu'on a parlé de l'environnement sur nos routes, je voudrais aborder un volet qu'est la gestion environnementale. L'intention du gouvernement de réduire nos émissions de gaz à effet de serre de 30% vers 2030 par rapport au *business as usual* scénario est certainement louable. Nous savons tous que le changement climatique impose de nouveaux défis sur la planète toute entière même si les petits Etats insulaires demeurent plus responsables. Nous sommes fiers - le MMM avec l'honorable Paul Bérenger qui était le Premier Ministre, nous étions au gouvernement - d'avoir tenu le Sommet des petits Etats insulaires à l'île Maurice, avec la présence du Secrétaire général des Nations unies, et il y a eu le *Mauritian declaration*. Dommage qu'il n'y ait pas eu de suivi, et je crois que l'île Maurice doit être en avant sur le problème des petits Etats insulaires qui demeurent plus vulnérables.

Il ne suffit pas de coucher un objectif sur papier seulement. Il faut identifier précisément les secteurs concernés par cette réduction, les projets à être exécutés et établir un calendrier rigoureux pour y parvenir. Nous souhaitons donc l'établissement d'un *roadmap* pour nous permettre d'atteindre cet objectif et de le rendre publique. Certes, un

investissement plus soutenu dans le secteur des énergies renouvelables nous permettra d'avancer plus vite sur ce dossier.

La bombe à retardement, je le redis, M. le président, environnementale demeure la gestion des déchets. Déjà la collecte, l'opération du site d'enfouissement technique et des stations de transfert engloutit des centaines de millions de roupies que nous sommes appelés à voter chaque année, mais qui n'est guère une pratique durable. Ce système n'est plus durable. Sur le plan institutionnel, il n'est pas normal que le ministère de l'Environnement soit à la fois juge et partie. En effet, la gestion des déchets est placée sous l'ombrelle de ce ministère alors que c'est ce même ministère qui a la responsabilité d'établir les normes relatives à la gestion des déchets.

Nous devons introduire le tri des déchets et la collecte sélective afin de pouvoir valoriser ces déchets. Nous perdons inutilement du temps précieux et de l'argent en maintenant un système dépassé. Ce système est dépassé, archaïque et surtout va à l'encontre des principes du développement durable. L'introduction du tri au foyer responsabilisera davantage les citoyens. Nos drains, nos rivières et plages seront moins sales. Par conséquent, l'État fera des économies substantielles au niveau de ce poste de dépense.

Déjà la distribution de bacs de compostage connaît un certain succès mais il faudra en faire une évaluation de ce projet afin d'identifier les faiblesses et le rendre encore plus efficace. Des investissements sont prévus pour améliorer l'infrastructure sur les plages les plus fréquentées. C'est certes une mesure, mais la fréquentation de ces plages dépasse souvent leur capacité d'accueil. Il faut aussi aménager les plages qui sont actuellement moins fréquentées afin de les rendre plus attrayantes pour le public. On ne peut remporter la bataille de l'environnement sans la participation du public. J'estime qu'il est grand temps que l'éducation à l'environnement soit *mainstreamed* afin que chaque citoyen comprenne ses droits par rapport à un environnement de qualité mais aussi ses responsabilités.

M. le président, j'ai deux choses à soulever. Premièrement, je vais faire le porte-parole des planteurs. Le ministre de l'Agriculture a pris la parole hier et j'ai lu tout ce qu'il a dit. Il y a un sentiment de frustration, et il le sait. Je me pose la question pourquoi la grande majorité des planteurs ne se sont pas rendus aux réunions de consultation qu'il y a eu avec le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances. On m'a fait comprendre qu'il y a eu une grande absence de représentants des planteurs. Le ministre sait qu'il y a un problème.

Je me fais premièrement le porte-parole parce que, dans nos circonscriptions numéros 19 et 20, nous avons les planteurs de La Chaumière. La Chaumière a toujours été une région de planteurs de légumes. La région de La Chaumière a toujours été considérée comme un grenier pour l'île Maurice. Il y a un effort à faire. Je sais que le ministre des Coopératives a déjà rendu visite à ces planteurs qui ont pas mal de problèmes. Il y a un problème d'irrigation. Il y a un problème de terrains additionnels. Il y a un problème de sécurité. Il y a un problème de fonds et aussi un problème d'infrastructure.

J'espère que dans ce budget, les planteurs de La Chaumière qui sont des planteurs reconnus et respectés au sein d'une coopérative qui date de plus de 50 ans, voire 100 ans - qu'il y ait une réunion, une concertation, un plan d'action avec le ministre de l'Agriculture et le ministre des Coopératives. Il ne faut pas qu'il ait un problème. Il faut un plan d'action ; un plan d'action pour régler tous ces problèmes qui sont en suspens.

Parallèlement, je vois M. Sungoon qui dit que les planteurs de légumes n'ont rien reçu dans ce projet. D'autres planteurs de légumes m'ont approché. Il y a pas mal d'*incentives*, et ces planteurs de légumes ont fait des demandes auprès du ministère pour qu'il y ait une certaine coordination, pour qu'il ait quand même une suite à leurs doléances.

M. le président, ce qu'on m'a fait comprendre, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de planteurs qui ont abandonné - *abandonned sugar land. The saga will continue to be ongoing and there will not be any small planters.*

I know that the Minister has also provided some assistance and has come up with initiatives. I think it is a national problem, the reduction in terms of small planters. There also there are problems concerning irrigation, infrastructure. There is a problem of labourers, manpower, the ageing of labourers, planters have been facing shortage of labourers, little have been done to modernise and mechanise their sector and certain fields were even left unharvested. They have applied for foreign labourers and I do not know where matters stand. There also, I think, the Minister is working on that. So, I appeal to him that he, at least, meet these people.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I know! But it is my duty to raise the issue because they have come to me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government invests – the Budget Speech has announced the duty on CCTV cameras with video surveillance system. There also, much has been said concerning how those small planters – whether they will be provided with electricity and so on and whether they can use solar power. There also, they have raised the issue with me. They have raised the issue of Small Farmers Welfare Fund. One point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue of Macademia. I think, this an interesting project which can be done in our forest areas. I think FAREI must work on that, because this project is interesting for the forestering of our ever-reducing forest areas. I do not know if the Minister is working on that. I think FAREI needs to be given clear and targeted mission.

What I can appeal to the Minister is to meet these people and see how he can, with dialogue, discuss their problems and see what help he can give to the small planters and other planters. For example, they have told me, removing VAT on lorries; they do not have funds. So many small planters are not capable to even take a loan. So, if the Minister could, at least, explain to them with what scheme he is coming forward and reassure these workers.

One last point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning my constituency and that of hon. Quirin. Last year, in the Budget, mention was made about the petroleum project at Albion. The project for which land was given, and Minister Soodhun replied one question where land was given to one promoter to have a big thing on the sea, and this project has disappeared. I hope the Minister of Housing and Lands who has replied there will take back the land. If there is no project, the land must remain the property of the State. Last year, we have been informed, and during the year also, about a project of petroleum hub and another project, port and jetty at Albion. We note that no mention of this petroleum hub project has been made in this Budget. So, the public of Albion and in the surrounding region wish to have more details on the project, instead of hiding information. So, if the Minister of Industry could meet the public and give a description of the project, because the people are asking whether feasibility, sociological and environmental studies will be carried out. They want to know whether *une étude du sol et des fonds sous-marins* would be done, - because we know the Albion area - whether there would be an EIA certificate, the expected environmental damages, whether there will be public consultations. This is what is being asked by the public of Albion. I hope that Government, before going ahead full swing with the project, will explain to the public, give maximum information to reassure the inhabitants of the region of Albion and its surrounding of the new project of petroleum hub in Albion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that was what I had to say on the Budget. This Government has its majority in this House. It has a Parliamentary majority with the MSM/ML and *transfuges*. I call it an MSM/ML and *transfuges* Government. The Government is in majority in the House, numerically, but outside the House, *bagasses*. Only in front of - I called it now, Pravind Broadcasting Corporation - their *passeur sirop*. But, outside, it is very hot for the Government. Writings on the walls - *arête faire l'arrogance! Aretez ek politique petits copains! Aretez coquina!* This is what the people are saying: *arretez l'arrogance, arretez demi million, R 500,000, R 600,000, R 700,000*. Their days are counted, as at today, I can say, not only years, months are remaining for them. And I pray some of my good friends on other side who have been elected for the first time can be elected a second time. If not, I will ask them: Please run and take your duty before it is too late because what the people of Mauritius are asking is for *ene vrai changement*, a change.

There is need for general election, there is need to remove all these arrogant people at the head of this Government. We have a Prime Minister who has not been elected as Prime Minister. He was not presented as Prime Minister. If he wants to fight elections as Prime Minister, he should have the courage and fight elections as Prime Minister and then we will see the results. That is what I had to say on this Budget.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(4.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands: (Mr P. Jhugroo): Merci, M. le président. Quand j'ai entendu le précédent orateur, ça m'a fait me rappeler le même scenario qu'en 2014, après l'épisode de *on/off*, le remake, l'hypocrisie de faire manger le gâteau et négocier l'alliance.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Avec l'ancien Premier ministre ! Il croyait être déjà ministre. Il y a beaucoup d'entre eux qui ont déjà passé leur commande de voitures. Ils sont allés voir le tailleur pour avoir de nouveaux costumes, de belles robes et de nouvelles chemises. Il y avait des problèmes ! Qui va prendre tel ou tel ministère. Gardez espoir mes amis du MMM !

Regardez vos députés ! Vous n'avez que six députés. C'est historique ! Le MMM avec six députés, et il se croit encore plus fort ! Bonne chance ! Les élections, ce n'est pas pour demain. Nous sommes à mi-mandat. Messieurs les députés de l'opposition, il y a cinq partis. Il y a le MMM, le Parti travailliste, le MP, le PMSD, le *Parti Tonquain*. Cinq partis, cinq leaders ! Un mandat de cinq ans ? Bonne chance ! Une année pour chaque leader de parti pour être Premier ministre. Très bonne alliance ! Jamais je n'aurais cru - je suis la politique depuis combien d'années - le MMM ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Allow the hon. Minister to make his speech!

Mr Jhugroo: ... et le PMSD ensemble ! Et le leader du MMM n'est même pas leader de l'opposition. Pas drôle ! Et hier, il a traité l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth de voleur ! Allez dire cela en dehors ! Qu'est-ce qu'il a volé ? L'épouse de Showkutally Soodhun ? Est-ce qu'il a volé l'épouse de Mahen Seeruttun ? Qu'est-ce qu'il a volé ? Pourquoi le traiter de voleur ? Mais je vais leur dire : « Rêver *mam*, les élections seront dans deux ans et demi, minimum. Continuez à rêver ! »

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when this Government took power in December 2014, the country was desperate; uncertainty was ruling; unemployment was raging; fraud and corruption was the talk of the day, and the economy was in agony.

We, therefore, took up the challenge of redressing the economy, of bringing trust and confidence in our institutions and bring the country back on the track of development.

I wish to join the previous orators, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from this side of the House, to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, whom we voted from this House. We are elected Members. We have chosen Pravind Jugnauth to become the Prime Minister of this country. This is only his first mandate. He has more than three to four more mandates to go ! This is our Prime Minister ! I thank him for the Budget. Just to mention that the Budget of last year was a first step in this undertaking and, indeed, we have succeeded.

After having listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Xavier Luc Duval, I can confirm now that he really suffers from the syndrome, like other Members of the Opposition, '*narien pas bon*'; *Zotte qui ti faire tout bon. Dan zotte pas ti ena scandale*. It is clear that there has been no outcome during the 12 years that PMSD was in Government. I totally agree

with my friend, hon. Bhagwan, who has gone out, that PMSD is born to *jouir*. Are you are aware, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Xavier Luc Duval, had spent Rs40 m. for a rebranding exercise? Rs40 m.! *Maurice, c'est un plaisir !* I am sure that if he was still in the post of Minister of Tourism, he would have spent, at least, Rs100 m. for another rebranding exercise; '*Maurice, c'est un fantasme !*'

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: Let me remind the Leader of the Opposition that we have succeeded both at national macro levels and also at local and regional micro levels. At macro levels, indications such as growth rate, unemployment rate and inflation rate speak for themselves and provide comfort that we have started on the right track, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while we, on this side of the House, have been fully appreciative and supportive of the Budget, how many criticisms have we not heard from Members of the Opposition side.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to say that criticism is easy. In armchair comfortability of the Opposition, it is still easier. Let us not forget that the hon. Prime Minister has throughout the last decades consistently and thoughtfully been providing a lot of reliefs to the sufferings of the poor and to improve the conditions of living of the entire population.

When the Prime Minister was assigned the portfolio of the Ministry of Agriculture, he had introduced the relevant Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS), the magical formula for workers of the sugar sector.

He had also introduced Duty-Free Tax Scheme for the benefit of small planters. Later on, in his capacity of Minister of Finance, he has abolished the National Residential Property Tax known as the Navin Ramgoolam property tax. Taxation on interest was also removed. He has also reintroduced free SC/HSC examination fees.

Tout ceci démontre, M. le président, que le Premier ministre est profondément habité par des principes d'une société juste et égalitaire. Je suis sûr, M. le président, que plus de 60% présents dans cette Chambre seront d'accord avec ce point de vue. Les autres vous diraient un mensonge.

In this Budget, the hon. Prime Minister has introduced a number of measures unthought of previously and which will bring us a long way towards providing further relief to the vulnerable groups. He has, for the first time in history, introduced the Negative Income Tax scheme.

Can we imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the MRA not only receives contributions from taxpayers, but also provides assistance to those vulnerable groups. Those very persons who cannot afford to earn a decent living. This alone speaks books of the good intention of the hon. Prime Minister *de venir au secours des âmes affligées*.

The hon. Prime Minister has last year reduced the price of cooking gas and this year it is the price of flour and, by extension, that of bread which have gone down.

(Interruptions)

Even 10 cents but, never mind. Maybe he is not an accountant, but he is a very good lawyer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at regional and local levels, we have started the implementation of a number of projects all intended to improve the lives of our local communities, enhance and rehabilitate our physical and social infrastructure to assist the most vulnerable groups of the community in obtaining *un toit sur leur tête*. Government has removed registration fees on secured housing loans of up to Rs2 million. All this is but a glimpse of all the excellent measures taken in the Budget and yet, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are criticisms. And Members of the other side of the House are at daggers drawn with this Government.

Allow me to mention briefly a few of the projects that we have just undertaken so that Members in this House and among our fellow citizens it may be known that our intention is to bring about an inclusive society, is taking shape. Following the flood of February 2016, funds were allocated in last year's Budget for the local authorities based on areas affected by the flood. In this respect, the local authorities have been constructing drains and bridges in those flood prone areas and other localities.

Through the setting up of the Land Drainage Authority by my hon. friend, Minister Nando Bodha, we would work out the flood risk map and a National Land Drainage Plan which would guide all bodies involved in construction of drains that is the Road Development Authority, the NDU and the local authority.

Thus, there would be information faring and coordination of projects which have been lacking for so many years. We have also been implementing other community-based projects, such as upgrading of social halls, sports amenities and children's playgrounds. I am glad to inform the inhabitants of Bois Cheri, Trois Boutiques, Ville Noire, Camp Carol and New Grove that they will soon have at their disposal a modern village hall.

Moreover, a one-stop shop will be opening at Centre de Flacq by the end of this year with several officers to better serve the inhabitants in terms of payment of fees to the District Council of Flacq, Central Water Authority, cash office for Accountant General and also Civil Status Office of Flacq would be accommodated there.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, although a significant number of projects have been undertaken, a lot remains to be done, many public facilities established different locations across Mauritius in the 1980s to improve the living conditions of the people are today in a deplorable state and have been left to decay.

There is a strong need for concrete and prompt actions to address this problem. There is backlog which has been accumulated over decades and this backlog must be urgently attended to. Funds will be made available, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the next Budget and will be used to improve the daily lives of our people; it will be used for the resurfacing of existing internal roads and construction of new ones. New drains will be constructed, and existing ones will be improved and rehabilitated. New amenities will be provided such as children's playgrounds, leisure parks, health tracks and other such basic sports infrastructure.

New traffic centres will be constructed at Piton, Ébène and Pointe aux Sables. A swimming pool will be set up at Curepipe, Phoenix, Vacoas and Rivière des Anguilles, and a leisure park at Quartier Militaire. It is significant that the hon. Prime Minister has announced in this Budget that local authorities will be provided with an exceptional grant of half a million rupees in order to execute minor infrastructural works which are long lacking in our local communities. I have already asked the Lord Mayor, Mayors and the chairpersons of local authorities to provide me with a list of the minor projects so that the allocation of funds to each of them may be made.

I will personally chair a steering committee with all the local authorities to ensure that projects, once known and approved, are executed without delay. I will also be meeting regularly all the PPSs, the representatives of the NDU and the local authorities to establish

and agree upon a priority list of projects. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the local Government Act was amended in the year 2011 and provided, *inter alia*, the splitting of three District Councils. Without any planification, without constructing any headquarters, without buying any lorries, without any recruitment. They have repealed the local Government Act of MSM/MMM of year 2003 of my hon. friend G. Lesjongard, where we were supposed to have three new municipalities.

And then they have split the District Council sans *planification, sans bâtiment, sans réflexion, c'est ça le gouvernement du Parti travailliste. C'est ça le parti que le MMM a trouvé pour faire alliance et où ils se trouvent aujourd'hui.* Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin!

Mr Jhugroo: You will have your turn to speak, you can come, no worry, no worry! No consideration was given to the staff working in the newly created District Councils. No consideration was also given to the population that are served by the new District Councils.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, this House may not be known to many of us; it may not be known to all members of the public, but allow me to inform the House that the staff and councillors working in the District Councils of Pamplemousses, Flacq and Savanne are performing in an unacceptable condition.

They have no headquarters, I have just mentioned, they have to work in squeezed space in a multi-purpose complex. I have personally visited them in their premises and I have seen that their working conditions are poor to such an extent that toilets have been converted for office use. Can you believe this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as mentioned by my hon. friend PPS Kalyan Tarolah. How come this is the Labour Government, *et pe vine donne nous leçon!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister is aware of this situation. I am informing the population of this country and we do not have to be taught by these people of the Opposition. *Nous avons un Premier ministre qui est à l'écoute de tout un chacun avant de préparer le budget, à l'écoute de la population, M. le président.*

I am really very grateful. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister for having provided funds for the construction of these three headquarters for the District Councils of Pamplemousses, Flacq and Savanne. *Pas faire piti quand ou pas kapav soigné!*

(*Interruptions*)

Let me reassure the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that, as a Government,...

(*Interruptions*)

...we will leave no stone unturned to bring this country to rise to the challenge of our ambitions in this process. As Minister of the local authorities, I have also organised consultative committees with Mayors, Chairmen of Councils, Chief Executives, Accountants and Heads of Planning Departments in view to discuss and find solutions in respect of all problems encountered by Councils and Municipalities.

Since January, more than 20 committees with their respective institutions have been held. Plots of land have already been identified and secured. The approval of the Project Plan Committee has been obtained. The plans have been finalised. The procurement process will start soon after the Budget is approved by this House.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our cemeteries are now saturated. Land for the setting up of new ones is scarce. Traditional incineration is performed in a manner which is not always environmentally acceptable. Trees are cut and old tyres are burned to insulate the corpses everywhere in this country every day. My Ministry will be providing funds to the local authorities for the setting up of incinerators in several localities across the country. Since the setting up of the first incinerator at Phoenix during my 10-year office as Mayor of the Municipal Council of Vacoas-Phoenix, the demand for incineration has increased, and this demonstrates that the mindset of our people is changing and they are now environment conscious. We must avoid the cutting down of trees and also the use of tyres during bad weather conditions. We must ensure that additional cremation remains only an alternative to incineration, that is, when there is a breakdown of the incinerator. Today, incineration is not only less costly compared to traditional cremation, but also the families already in distress would not have to wander in the search of wood and, in some cases, avoid being exploited by some traders. They just need to contact the local authority and all the arrangements are already available for them once they have secured all the permits. The hon. Prime Minister is convinced of the need for new incinerators and has accordingly made provision of Rs23 m. for the setting up of new incinerators at Camp Levieux, Quatre Bornes, Tombeau Mahebourg, Highlands, Allée Brillant, Souillac, and Montagne Longue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for too long the previous Government has allowed the urban-rural divide to exist and to perpetuate. Modern markets and market fairs are long needed in our rural areas. Buyers and sellers do not always have a comfortable location and infrastructure to meet and exchange their commodities. It is high time that our fellow countrymen in villages have modern and decent accommodations where they can meet and perform their trading activities. I have taken this matter with the Prime Minister and he has gladly accepted to make funds available for the construction of new markets. This Government will, therefore, proceed with the construction of new market places in Bel Air, Goodlands, Chemin Grenier, and Mahebourg. At last, in Mahebourg! *Ceki Bunwaree, ceki travailliste pann fer, nous pé faire!*

In some of these locations, land has already been identified and secured and, in others, the process of land acquisition is on. Other market fairs will be improved, for example, the existing market fair at Plaine Magnien, *n'est-ce pas* hon. colleagues! This market will be covered to provide modern and satisfactory shelters to users.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government will also provide funds for the construction of a new multi-purpose complex at Plaine Verte. I have consulted my colleagues in Government and convinced them that, in the context of this project, the existing Goomany Centre will be upgraded and new structures will be added to provide for a new modern multipurpose complex. Another new multipurpose complex will also be set up at Rivière du Rempart.

(Interruptions)

Normal, pann blié twa! The City Council of Port Louis is in the process of appointing a consultant for the Plaine Verte multipurpose project.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House may be aware that there is a significant soil movement at Hermitage in Coromandel and both private and public properties are suffering or are likely to suffer damage. I am happy that the Minister of Finance and Economic Development would be providing funds for the necessary consultancy services, and subsequently for the works to be undertaken in order to stabilise that particular area.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to say a few words on our *patrimoine* which is under the care and responsibility of our local authorities and, in particular, the Plaza Theatre and the Town Hall of Curepipe. These two sites – *ceki PMSD pann fer et pas pou kapav fer. 10 banané, 12 banané!* And he was Minister of Finance! *Et li pé vinn donne nou leçon!*

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these two sites which form part of our *patrimoine* have too long been left without attention. Our Government has shown strong commitment to mobilise the necessary resources towards the rehabilitation of these sites. *Ils souffrent d'un syndrome 'narien pas bon dans le budget !'* We are all happy to note that our hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has provided financial resources for these projects.

Energy efficient street lighting, with a view to reducing the cost associated with the maintenance of electrical spare parts and energy consumption, the local authorities are embarking on a project to gradually replace all damaged and worn out conventional CFL fluorescent streetlights by led lanterns.

It has been decided that all new lighting points will be supplied by Led lanterns. This project will be implemented in several phases, as all the lanterns cannot be replaced in one phase due to financial constraints. The main objectives of the project are -

- (i) reduction in maintenance cost;
- (ii) 50% cost reduction compared to conventional light;
- (iii) six times longer life span;
- (iv) environmentally sustainable, and last
- (v) the use of the existing lighting infrastructure such as electric columns, cables, etc.

In addition to the funding of the rehabilitation works, the Government will examine along with the local authorities and other stakeholders on an appropriate mechanism and framework to keep the buildings in a sound condition at all times and also to gain some revenue out of the use. This revenue will be used towards the continued maintenance of the buildings.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now comment on some of the measures which are announced in the Budget last year and have already been implemented by my Ministry. To begin with, I have to inform the House that, in a spirit of equity, the Local Government Act has been amended to allow some 114 families of housing units at the Municipal Housing Estates like Les Casernes in Curepipe and Sookdeo Bissondoyal in Port Louis. The option to buy the plot of land on which stand their housing units at the nominal price of Rs2,000 per plot. *Ena toupet dire pan faire nanien!*

As the Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands, I am fully aware of all the challenges and difficulties that prospective economic operators have to face prior to starting their businesses. With a view to allowing the economic operators to consolidate their businesses, some bold measures were enunciated in last year's Budget and legislative amendments have been brought to the Local Government Act to enable 75,000 economic operators plying around 84 trade activities. They will be exempted from the payment of the annual trade fee of Rs5,000 for the next three years as from 01 January 2017.

This measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has undoubtedly given an added impetus to the small and medium enterprises, especially those at the lower rung of the economic ladder.

Further, the process for the determination of Building and Land Use Permit (BLUP) has been greatly simplified and modernised. Previously, all the applications for BLUP required the approval of the Executive Committee of the Council. While we cannot deny the fact that our local councillors need to be aware of developments in their areas, it is also important to ensure that there are no stumbling blocks or unnecessary steps or procedures at the level of processing and determining developments' applications.

Following amendments brought to the Local Government Act last year, applications are being examined by the Permits and Business Monitoring Committee (PBMC) only and are being referred to me, as Minister, only for places of worship.

It had been noted that this implication of process has enabled quick applications at the level of the local authorities and has greatly contributed to the Ease of Doing Business in the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, further amendments have been brought to the Local Government Act, whereby applications are now being verified by competent personnel of the local authorities. Any additional information is being requested from the applicants within a set of statutory time frame of eight working days.

Another strategy for the country, which needs to be stressed, is a fully-fledged digital society. To this endeavour, the online Building and Land Use Permit System is being revamped, not only to make it simpler for users, but also to encourage applicants to use the online application facilities. Such online applications will remove human interference and will save them both time and money. It will also enable them to submit their application on a 24 hour, 7 days a week basis. This portal will be enhanced so as to provide a tracking mechanism on the status of applications made. Upon approval of the applications, payment of

relevant fees would be also allowed electronically, thus relieving the applicant from moving to the council's premises and spending time in queuing up at cash offices.

The application mechanism is also being further simplified as the number of documents being requested from applicants is being reduced. In this respect, I am thankful to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Information Technology, for the esteemed collaboration from his Ministry in making necessary arrangements for the local authorities to have access on the information highway.

The local authorities are presently having access to the database of the Civil Status Office as well as the Corporate Business and Business Registration Department with a view to obtaining the personal details and the BRN of the applicants respectively. As such, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an applicant will no more be requested to provide his NIC or BRN Certificate while submitting an application for a BLUP. In the same vein, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a prospective economic operator calling at the local authorities to commence a business is no more required to submit a copy of his NIC or BRN Certificate.

It is also worth noting that, as announced in the Budget Speech, henceforth, plan approvals from CEB, CWA and Waste Management Authority will not be required when applying for a Building and Land Use Permit.

Further, the exemption for a BLUP is being extended to more economic operators. The community at large stands to win out of this Budget measure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House may be aware, since the coming into operation of the Local Government Act 2011, all new constructions and additions to existing immovable properties in the five Municipal Council areas are not being subject to the levy of general rate, unlike those put up before December 2011, due to a loophole in the Local Government Act currently in force. This state of affairs has not only led to an important shortfall of revenue for Municipal Councils, but also created an unfair situation where owners of immoveable properties existing before 2011, where charge for general rates whilst owners of new buildings were not. To correct this anomaly, legislative amendments are being made in the forthcoming Finance Bill. This will enable the Government valuer to value these buildings in urban areas and work out updated valuation list for the purpose of enabling urban councils to levy rates on all immoveable properties in their administrative jurisdiction. This measure will in addition result in additional revenues accruing to the urban local authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the role of local authorities continues to evolve, they will need to make some difficult choices over the next few years. Delivering extensive changes and meeting rising expectations about the quality and responsiveness of services is demanding. Doing so when authority finances are subject to close scrutiny will be particularly challenging for those responsible for managing the process.

This Budget should, therefore, encourage all of us to remain prudent in our expenditures, be it in our Ministries and Departments or even at home and ensure that each rupee is spent in a responsible manner. Time is also needed for thinking through long-term issues, including future priorities and objectives.

In this context, I have to inform the House that, as from 01 July 2017, the local authorities will be implementing the International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) for financial accounting and reporting.

This is a significant achievement for the local authorities and raises further the standard of financial reporting. Financial reporting, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a critical element of governance and of sound management, both of which are central parts of the Government's vision to transform the Civil Service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to turn to the Mauritius Fire and Rescue Services. The Fire and Rescue Services provides a very useful service not only to the population, but also to the various sectors of the economy like industries, commercial undertakings, hotels and restaurants, offices, to cite only these ones.

The service has a crucial role to play to provide security to these sectors, and it is important that the unit be properly staffed and equipped. In terms of staff, the Government is increasing the number of funded positions by 100% in the grade of Divisional Officer, Station Officers, Sub Officers and Fire fighters.

I personally effected site visits at the Fire Stations of Flacq and St Aubin, whereby I have once again witnessed the different existing flaws. I have witnessed that the building, a new build building in Flacq, comprises many defects such as cracks in the walls, scaffolding boards were still existent underneath the cement - *zot in crépi cofraz*. Du jamais vu! Flacq Fire Services, which inauguration was done, I think, in 2011 - leakage from the roof, short circuit everywhere. Building constructed by the previous Government. Go and have a look. See what has been constructed. Unfortunately, I have not known about this issue when I was

in the Public Accounts Committee. I will ask the Public Accounts Committee to go and have a site visit there. The fire...

(Interruptions)

Pas lakaz kot toi kin krake ! Ale geter ki to gouvernement in faire !

The firefighters also lack of necessary equipment. At the same time, Government has made provision for improving and enhancing the capacity of the Fire and Rescue Services. *C'est historique, M. le président. Ce gouvernement, avec à la tête un Premier ministre jeune, dynamique, will purchase 20 fire fighting vehicles at an estimated cost of Rs200 m. Never has this been done in this country. Et à chaque fois on vient poser des questions. Moi-même j'ai posé combien de questions with regard to the vehicles of the firefighters and in what conditions these people were working.*

(Interruptions)

Sa pas kozer sanla la !

I will ask my friends from the Public Accounts Committee to go and visit the existing vehicles, lorries that we have got in different fire stations all over the country.

Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. You have listened to me. I am very happy that, at least, we can have some very good vehicles in the coming years, and an amount of Rs200 m. over the next few years and two high volume water pumps to be used particularly for managing flood problems at a total cost of Rs30 m. This is called a caring Government! Not what we have seen for the past ten years! Caring only for some *petit copains et petites copines*.

Moreover, this Government would be providing funds for the construction of a modern Fire Station at Rose Belle. Works would be starting in a few weeks' time. The House would wish to take note that, since 2001, a plot of land has been vested for the setting up for a Fire Station at Rose Belle, but nothing in concrete was done by the previous government. *Et ti ena ene le roi dans le sud, Rose Belle, numero 11?* Nothing has been done!

We are also planning to start the preliminary works for the construction of two new Fire Stations, namely at Goodlands and the relocation of Quatre Bornes Fire Station, and this will be done by year 2019-2020. It is good to note that it is for the first time, since I became Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands and I have got Fire Services also, I have

sent some Fire Officers, because Agalega had no firefighters there. This is historical. Now we have sent some firefighters. This Government, this Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(*Interruptions*)

Li bon tone aler; ban soy la in aler. PMSD!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to Agalega, the Government is convinced...

(*Interruptions*)

The construction of the runway and the jetty also is good! I started in the year 2000. And, according to the plan, the runway should have been done at latest mid-2004.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: And it is only because of hon. Paul Bérenger, when he was Prime Minister - because of him - that this has not been realised. Go and ask him why! I was the General Manager. We approved in the Board. He wanted to protect his cousins for *Catovert!* He was giving me instructions, through his Ministers, that I should amend the conditions for the consultancy. I refused. For this reason, he brought the Agalega Island Council because he could not manage me at the level of OIDC, and the last government has done nothing for these people of Agalega!

I am really very happy today! India is helping us. Thank you, Shri Narendra Modi. You are helping Agalega. And when I hear that people who have been against independence in this country are against the financing of this project by India, what a shame!

(*Interruptions*)

I do not know what Abbas is doing!

On this side of the House, our Mentor, at the age of 87, is going to the United Nations. Yes, he has gone to the United Nations, fighting to get back our Chagos. *Nous n'allons pas faire la même bêtise qu'a faite le Parti travailliste pendant la négociation de l'Indépendence. Notre indépendance n'a pas été réalisée à 100%.* And this Government will do the best to get it at 100%. And today, they are telling us that we are giving sovereignty to India! To India!

C'est incroyable! Go and ask Bérenger why! If this airstrip could have been realised in the year 2004, we would not have gone to India today.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jhugroo: *Li coner li; dimane li!* They had two former Ministers where hon. Sangeet Fowdar was Minister. There was also Mr Putten who was Minister.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode, allow me to listen! I listened carefully when you gave your speech this morning!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jhugroo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to Agalega, the Government is convinced more ever than before that the living conditions of our brothers and sisters in Agalega should not be left aside and that they also should participate in the development process. Important infrastructural development will start in this financial year for the construction of a new jetty and a runway with all necessary supporting infrastructure and associated facilities.

Moreover, Internet connectivity on the island will also be greatly improved with the provision of an extended bandwidth of 10Mb per second. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2017-2018 Budget is, thus, another significant step in taking the economy forward.

Je n'ai qu'une conclusion, M. le président. La bonne intention est présente tout le long du discours du budget. Elle est réellement présente dans chacune des mesures énoncées. Ce qui manque, M. le président, ce ne sont pas les bonnes mesures, mais la bonne volonté d'apprécier ces bonnes mesures. Cette bonne volonté n'est pas du tout présente de l'autre côté de la Chambre. C'est comme je l'ai dit au début de mon discours, nous assistons à un syndrome de 'narien pas bon' venant de l'opposition.

I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his astounding Budget measures and congratulations to all those of his team who gave their best in producing what alone mattered for the country and what is required to set the stage for a proper redress and a high income economy. This is the essence of this 2017-2018 Budget and I thank you for your attention.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramkaun!

(5.07 p.m.)

Mr S. Ramkaun (Third Member for Pamplemousses & Triolet): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is in fact a privilege for me to address this august Assembly on such an important issue that is the Appropriation Bill 2017. I followed the speech of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development on 08 June 2017.

I must say that I was impressed by the way he has managed to come with a Budget which has only positive points, out of which I shall try to elaborate only a few. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say, having been in touch with the people of my Constituency Pamplemousses & Triolet, I had no problem to assure them that this Budget presented by hon. Pravind Jugnauth is for the people, for the needy, 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 in the Budget. However, I would like to express myself on the following subjects, namely the water sector, the National Development Unit, the Indian Ocean Islands Games and the eradication of poverty.

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 measures have been taken to have the most inaccessible places to get drinking water throughout the day. Regions like Rivière du Rempart, Plaine des Roches, Roches Noire in Constituency Number 7 and Morcellement Swan in Constituency No. 6 had practically no water from the pipelines, these areas having been serviced through CWA water tankers for more than 10 years.

Further to the discussions we had with the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, the urgency of these projects has been considered, and now the contract for the replacement of pipes in all these regions has already been awarded. Gone shall be those days where our mandates had to phone the CWA hotline to get water through water tankers.

I must say that the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has left no stone unturned to see to it that this sector gets its absolute due as this sector which is the most concern for the population. It is good to notice this Government's willingness to invest in this sector as promised during our electoral campaign, assuring the population water supply on a 24/7 day basis.

The effort to invest Rs2.3 billion for the replacement of 264 km of pipes and Rs400 m. to improve the efficiency of 150 stations is unprecedented. Rs345 m. in the installation *d'un bassin en acier de 2,000 mètres cubes et l'effort de creuser des duplicate boreholes dans 13 sites viendront alimenter les réseaux pour diminuer les coupures d'eau. L'installation d'une pompe à l'énergie solaire viendra améliorer l'efficacité du service dans 12 régions.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *le prolongement du water tank scheme pour encore un an et amener le seuil à R 25,000 est une autre preuve de ce côté caring que ce gouvernement veut montrer à la population, sans oublier l'augmentation en capacité de traitement à la Nicolière pour améliorer le service en eau pour les nordistes.* What is more important is to show the future generation the caring side of this Government by introducing in schools a system on how to preserve water for better use. The installation of a treatment plant at Bagatelle Dam for better water supply is most welcome.

The second issue is the construction of drains in the following regions in the north such as Camp Carol, Grand' Baie, Beach lane at Pereybere and Fond du Sac besides other flood prone regions such as Grand Bois, Flacq, Bel Ombre and Clemencia. The inhabitants of these regions have suffered much in the past due to non-caring attitude of the previous Government. It is good to note that the projects of Camp Carol and Pereybere are already on the implementation stage and that of Fond du Sac on the procurement stage. This Government is sure that all projects in these localities where there is still a high risk of flood shall be in the near future no more a fear to the inhabitants of these localities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must say that through this Budget our beaches shall no more be of the state that this Government had inherited from the former one. *Le rehaussement du niveau de nos plages était devenu un must sans condition.* I am sure our fellow countrymen will be relieved to know that this Government will bring more cleanliness and security to our beaches, which remain of the most suitable places for family gatherings. Accordingly, with the upgrading of the infrastructures of the Beach Authority at Belle Mare, Pereybere, Blue Bay and Flic-en-Flac, our countrymen will have better moments at those

places. Some of our mandates have also suggested that certain of our camping sites be provided with basic amenities like power points, toilet facilities and bathrooms as well as security, same as those being provided in other countries like Canada. This will allow a larger number of families to join the camping sites even if against payment for these services.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the caring policy of Government is once more *palpable à nos yeux* with the construction of a *Centre de Refuge* at Quatre Sœurs. Concerning this whole sector, I must say that the Minister of Finance *a montré de la vision dans son approche à ce secteur*. Our athletes are our pride. *Ils allument dans nos cœurs cette flamme patriotique à chaque fois qu'ils vont défendre notre quadricolore au niveau mondial*. I must say that the Minister of Youth and Sports, hon. Stéphane Toussaint, has been very attentive to the Constituency of Pamplemousses-Triolet in the implementation of a sports complex at Triolet. At such a location, this will benefit the whole of the nearby villages of Calebasses, Arsenal, Pamplemousses, Morcellement St André, Pointe aux Piments and Balaclava. This complex shall help a lot of our young friends to practise in those sports activities and to have a better health and future. I must here reiterate the willingness of this Government to prepare the youth for new heights and new challenges.

The Leader of the Opposition, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, had been stating, on several occasions, that the propositions in this *bilan* are *menti menti*. While going to the previous Budgets presented by him as Minister of Finance of the previous Governments, I could notice so many proposals which were really *menti menti*.

The construction of a multi-sports complex at Triolet had been provided by him in the previous Budgets and the more so, with the Minister of Youth and Sport of the previous Government being from the same constituency, we could only see a sign board fixed there, but without any sign of multi-purpose sports complex.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the allocation of Rs25 m. in the uplifting of 15 of our sports infrastructures, this Government and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has shown that *il a à cœur l'intérêt de nos jeunes et qu'il fera tout son 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 Iles en 2019* and with the accommodation for the foreign delegations in the northwest of the island, I wish that the sports infrastructure in this region be considered for an upliftment which will be of a great help for the people of this part of the island, knowing quite well that this constituency is now having first division players in volleyball, football, and beach volley. Coming to the National

Development Unit and the local sectors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *il y a de la satisfaction en l'air avec le budget de R 1.1 milliards allouées à la NDU*. Maybe it seems to be a bit short, but I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other authorities will join hands with NDU, under the guidance of the Parliamentary Private Secretaries, to make things move in the right direction.

The District Councils and the Municipal Councils, being national partners of the NDU in bringing development to the doorsteps of our inhabitants, will show deep concern for the projects in their jurisdiction, and hopefully with the grant of Rs500 m., they will be able to give assistance to certain projects in their respective control, thus not to put *tous les fardeaux sur le dos de la NDU*.

I must also admit Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the concern of the Ministry of Finance in the allocation of Rs590 m. in construction and extension and modernisation of primary and secondary school infrastructures. Once again, the Minister of Finance has proved *qu'il est un politicien qui n'est pas insensible aux attentes de la masse étudiante*. In fact, without hesitation, he has proudly announced the construction of a new campus for the University of Technology of Mauritius. 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 Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development to bring such a masterpiece. We have seen how, in the past, those who have been Minister 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 where hon. Pravind Jugnauth had eyes on all those who want to contribute in the progress and the development of the country. We just have to look with an open mind the numerous facilities he has given to the small and medium entrepreneurs. Never before, a Government has given such opportunities to people to come forward to contribute to the economic development. We cannot just sit idle, *attendant la manne venue du ciel* just like we are toiling hard in this Government to bring prosperity in every Mauritian's home.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would say that there could not have been a better Budget that any other Government could have proposed in the present context. This Budget has considered all the aspects of life for citizens of the islands of Rodrigues, Mauritius, Chagos and Agaléga. All the projects, as stated in the Budget, could not have been possible without the proper planification and without the funding of projects through, be it loans or grants given by the Government of India, which has always been by our side, with a

proper monitoring for the conceptualisation, design, procurement and implementation for 24 projects funded under Indian Financial Assistance:

- construction and upgrading of 14 drain projects;
- construction and upgrading of secondary roads;
- construction of amenities, market fairs, multi-purpose complexes, swimming pools;
- construction of eight incinerators, as mentioned by our friend, Minister of Local Government;
- three District Councils Head Offices;
- Four medi-clinics;
- Two are health centres, and
- Seven community centres during the three strategic years.

The whole island together with the outer islands will be transformed into a construction site. I would like to thank hon. Members for their kind attention, and let us forge together our future slowly but surely with serenity.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for half an hour.

At 5.23 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.05 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr D. Ramful (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, while I was listening with great interest to the Budget, I was trying to figure out one word which I can use during my speech to try and describe the economic vision of this Government since they have been in power since 2014. I was thinking of the word ‘fool’, fooling the people. But then I realised that that word would not be appropriate because the public already know that they are being fooled every day. So, I said let me use the word ‘bamboozling.’ Bamboozling in my opinion, Madam Speaker, is the appropriate word to describe the action of this Government since they have been in power. Bamboozling, for those who do not know, means *embobinement. Ou bien roule dans la farine*, as hon. Bhagwan said.

I have heard my colleague, hon. Mahen Jhugroo, intervening before me. Every time something goes wrong, a crack in the Fire Station of Flacq, he blames the Labour

Government. A crack *dans le drain*, he blames the Labour Government. Hon. Minister Sinatambou has come up with this *narien pas bon* syndrome, but I will say that they have the syndrome of *tout sa ki pa bon, mette lors Parti travailliste*. Well, we will see!

(*Interruptions*)

We will see!

I have dusted off the first Budget of this Government that was presented by hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, the magician. The magician who had promised us *le deuxième miracle économique*. I said to myself: let me go and see, since this Government has come to power, in their first Budget, what they had promised to the population. I will not go into all the projects, a few of them, what he promised. For 2015/2016, I am talking about GDP, we expected growth to go up to 5.8% and for 2016/2017, we are targeting a growth of 5.7%. This was what was promised by *le magicien* in his first Budget, and we know that in 2015/2016 the growth rate was only 3.2%.

Let us look at the projects. He promised high investment and high employment. We remember he said there would be two jobs for each unemployed young person in this country. Smart Cities - *Maurice sera un vaste chantier de développement*. When we look around us, we see *récession* everywhere. *L'île Maurice, nation d'entrepreneurs*, the SME Bank, in fact, Maubank was created. Rs10 billion seed capital was earmarked, out of which peanuts were given to the SMEs. Transforming the Port Louis Harbour from a destination port to a regional hub; we have not seen DP world. DP world has vanished. What else was promised? *Gradués chômeurs! 3,000 gradués chômeurs!* They will be trained, they will be employed and they will be given Rs80,000 per student per year. Nothing! What else? The Marshall Plan against poverty, zero! *Nation zougadère!* They were saying that the country, under the Labour Government, has become a *nation zougadère!*

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: No provocation!

Mr Ramful: You will remember, Madam Speaker, the same Government, the same Minister of Finance granted 10 betting licences. Ten betting licences! This was what was announced to the public at the crossroads. We have wasted one year. We have seen nothing coming.

Then, enters hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Minister of Finance - a New Era of Development - his Budget Speech 2016/2017. Let us see what was promised. *Embozinement!* Bamboozling with the population. He promised that the expected growth would be 3.9%, but according to Statistics Mauritius, it reads 3.7%. Anyway, we give him the benefit of the doubt. We know that Finance Ministers tend to be optimistic. We give him the benefit of the doubt. SMEs, there will be two new SME industrial Parks, one at Plaine Magnien, in my constituency, and one at Vuillemin. Zero! Nothing! In Dubreuil, promises were made to the tea planters. Moreover, the ex-Dubreuil tea factory, which was closed in the late 1990s, will be reopened to promote tea and other agro-processing activities. Nothing has been done up to now! Let us see what was said about the Rose Belle Business Park –

“Furthermore, the Rose Belle Business Park will host the new Mauritius International Derivatives and Commodities Exchange. I am allocating Rs50 m. as seed capital for its initial setup.”

Zero!

Heritage City promised to the population, zero! Consumer protection, this reminds me of this sentence. There was at a certain time, in this country, where you could go to the shop with a pocket full of money and you come back home with a bag full of goods. Today, you go to the shop with a bag full of money and you come back with a pocket full of goods. Consumer protection! *Ene sous lor dipain!* Well, these were what were promised to the population and this is why I said ‘bamboozling’ is the appropriate word.

The second Budget as well, Madam Speaker, was a non-starter, and we have seen two years of waste; promises, promises, promises. No projects, nothing has been realised.

Now, let me come to the present Budget. I will go, Madam Speaker, on the economic indicators, what is being promised now. The hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has promised a growth of 3.9% for 2016/2017.

I have said that the GDP that was promised last year was downgraded to 3.7%. Now, he is promising that there will be a growth of 4.1% next year. And what Statistic Mauritius is forecasting is that there will only be a growth of 3.9%. Investment - a lot has been said about investment. He promised an increased investment from 17.5% to 17.9%, with higher public investment. And the result according to Statistic Mauritius shows that the investment rate has decreased from 17.4% in 2015 to 17.2% in 2016.

Well, he said that, apparently, there has been an increase as far as private sector investment is concerned. But what he fails to tell the population is that there has been a decrease of negative 2.9% as far as public sector investment is concerned, and this is what explains that only 2/3 of the capital expenditure that was voted has been spent. Public debt, Madam Speaker, is another serious problem. We know public debt has increased from 65.1% from end of June 2016 to 66.1% of GDP at the end of June 2017; an amount of 295 billion, not counting, of course, *les R 18 milliards qu'on a reçues de l'Inde*. This, we all know, out of accounting manipulation, unfortunately, does not fall in the account, but we know that at the end of the day we need public money to reimburse that line of credit. I am surprised, but there is one thing, which is very important, which has not been addressed in the Budget, and it concerns the private sector debt. The Budget is silent about private sector debt. I have gone through the figures, as has been reported by the Bank of Mauritius, and you would be surprised, Madam Speaker.

Since 2004 - I will be fair - up to this year, there has been a sharp increase of private sector debt, which has risen from 73% in 2004 to 103% in 2016, that is, there has been a 30% increase over a period of ten years. This is according to the statistics of the Bank of Mauritius. If you go through the statistics, if you go back to March 2015, the private sector debt was 278 billion. Then, it has risen, in March 2016, to 283 billion, and now, if you look at the latest figure for April 2017, it has gone up 345 billion.

These figures are alarming and we are saying, 'Why isn't the private sector investing?' Because when we look at the figures, they are highly indebted! Look at the sectors: Agriculture - 21 *milliards*; manufacturing - 20 *milliards*; tourism - 39 *milliards*; construction is worse - 88 billion; traders - 30 *milliards*, and it goes on and on. You have Global Business - 59 billion. So, we are in a situation where the private sector is heavily indebted. We have public debt on our head. We also have this serious problem about private debt, private sector debt.

And what is being proposed in the Budget? What has the Minister of Finance proposed to these private sectors? What incentives are they given for them to be able to clear out their debt? Nothing! Nothing in the Budget! And now, what is worse, Madam Speaker, public debt increasing, we have the private sector being indebted to banks, and we see our economy stagnant over the years. There has been stagnation over the years, the economy has not grown, and this is a serious problem because eventually, what will happen, we will

become *une nation endettée*. This is the route that we are taking, and nothing has been provided for in the Budget. Now, there is another problem. We have on the one hand the public sector heavily indebted with the figures that I have shown, 379 *milliards*, and on the other hand, we have an excess of liquidity in the banks.

Public sectors are indebted and an excess of liquidity in the banks. Therefore, what do we deduce? That these private sectors are so heavily indebted that they cannot even borrow money from the banks! This is why we are not seeing any investment. On the one hand, they are indebted, and on the other hand, they cannot borrow money; excess of liquidity. And what is being proposed? Instead of coming with concrete solutions to boost up the private sector - do not talk about this 7.4 or 5.4 % of growth in the private sector. This is all in real estates; non-productive sector -, to boost up the economy, we are increasing the limit; we are increasing, in this Budget, the minimum capital requirement for banks from 200 *millions* to 400 *millions*. But this is going to cause another problem. The idea was to clear out the excess liquidity. This is why the Minister of Finance is promoting that the minimum capital requirement be raised from 200 *millions* to 400 *millions*! But then, there will be a price for that! And do you know what will happen, Madam Speaker? Commercial banks are going to restrict lending to the private sector. So, we are in a vicious circle. It will continue. This is why I am saying that we have taken the wrong route. We are going directly towards *l'endettement*. The nation will be *endettée*. We have to be very careful. We need to be very careful. This is why I am saying: this Government is bamboozling the people. Nothing concrete is being proposed.

Now, let us look at Foreign Direct Investment! The other day, I listened to my friend, hon. Mahen Seeruttun, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security. He was saying, “In 2014, when we came in power, the economy was at its low.” As I have said, everything that goes wrong, *c'est le Parti travailliste qui est responsable*. But let us look at the figures! Foreign Direct Investment in 2014 when Labour Government left, we had received FDI 18.5 *milliards*.

(Interruptions)

I am a bit careful with my friend, hon. Rutnah, when he talks about figures.

(Interruptions)

I better be careful! But then, it is not about the quantity. We have to see where does the FDI come from. Is it coming from productive sectors or unproductive sectors? And you would realise. Let me look at the figures again, the gross direct investment flows from the Bank of Mauritius, Madam Speaker; as I have said, in 2014, *R 18 milliards* FDI. That was when the Labour Government left. And out of which, there was *R 6 milliards* from real estate and *R 6 milliards* approximately from accommodation and food service activities. Productive sectors! Half from real estates, half from productive sectors like accommodation and food services! In 2016, when we look at the figures, *R 13 milliards* of FDI have been received out of which - you would be surprised - nearly *R 10 milliards* from real estates. *Au-delà de 73% de FDI provient des* real estates. Unproductive sectors! And only about Rs200 m. from hotels, accommodations and services. So, you see the FDI, we should not boast up and say, "There has been an increase in FDI from 2015." We have to see where the FDI are being invested.

So, Madam Speaker, let me very briefly go to a few sectors in the Budget that, I believe, we have failed to address, we have failed to come up with concrete solutions. We have the financial sector. There was a PNQ this morning, and it is a pity, Madam Speaker - it is a pity! - when we know all the challenges that are facing the financial sector; the aftermath of the renegotiation of the DTA Treaty with India. We know what will be the impact on the financial sector. We know about the OECD and G20, issue about the BEPS, Base Erosion and Profit Shifting. We have all these challenges facing our financial sector, and what have we heard from the Minister this morning about the case of Alvaro? It is a pity as to how there has been cover-up! We are destroying the financial sector. We are sending the wrong signal. There are about 14,000 to 15,000 people getting their lives in that sector. We are putting the career at stake. We should be very careful. Although I do appreciate the decision that was taken about the blueprint over 10 years, but then we have to come with immediate action. Challenges are facing us in two years! So, we have to be very careful about this sector, Madam Speaker.

There is another issue about unemployment. In fact, the three-year Strategic Plan does mention the concerns with regard to youth unemployment and women unemployment. Unfortunately, again, I have heard nothing about solutions being proposed to tackle this problem. There is no indication of the number of jobs that Government expect to create except for recruitment in the Police services and health sectors. There is this programme: the Youth Employment Programme. And there is a serious problem about this programme.

In my constituency, Madam Speaker, I have met so many youths. They have been through that programme. First of all, there is not enough transparency on how recruitments are done; on how these people are selected to follow the programmes. There is no transparency at all. This is one issue. Secondly, they are enrolled on this programme on a two-year contract. And most of them, after their two-year contract, they are back in the streets. No permanent job is being created. There is this case about 115 trainees who followed courses at the MIE, and after their contracts, they had no job. So, there is no holistic solution ...

(Interruptions)

Holistic teachers, yes! And there is no holistic solution about unemployment, unfortunately. In fact, in May this year, even the hon. Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training made a public declaration. He made a public statement to the Press. He said that this programme will have to be revisited and he even said that he has made proposals to the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, to the hon. Prime Minister to come up with solutions to revisit this programme. Unfortunately, we see nothing in the Budget.

There is another issue facing the nation: ageing population. Would you realise, Madam Speaker, social benefits are projected to increase by 7.7%, and this is a serious challenge to the pension scheme. In fact, if we look at the three-year Strategic Plan, mention is made about this problem. If I may quote, Madam Speaker -

“Population growth has stagnated at a low rate of 0.1% in recent years while total population at the end of 2016 was 1.26 million. It is expected to decline as from year 2020s.”

So, there is a serious problem and we have to find solutions. And what solutions are being proposed in this Budget? Nothing! Targeting is not the solution, unfortunately, and even increasing the tax exemption. Would you imagine someone already having three dependents will now go and give birth to another child just to benefit from those few thousand rupees? Is this an incentive that is going to tackle this problem of ageing population? If you look at other jurisdictions like Singapore! Singapore has come up with restructuring plans. They have come up with crash courses to reskill their labour. For those who have retired and want to come back to the workforce; there are crash courses that are being offered to them for them

to be employable. So, these are concrete solutions. Otherwise, if we leave matters as they stand, we are in deep trouble, Madam Speaker.

The sugar sector - we know the sugar sector is facing a lot of problems with the Sugar Protocol coming to an end. We know the quotas have already been removed, and we are facing a lot of problems in that sector. Again, what is being proposed: removal of VAT on lorries, but most of the sugarcane planters do not own lorries themselves. How is this going to be beneficial to them? We are thinking of bringing back abandoned land under sugarcane cultivation, but the product is not profitable. Sugar is no more profitable. What incentive is being proposed to help those small planters? People want to see; the small planters want to see concrete measures. We will have, at the end of this year, I think, the renegotiation of the Power Purchase Agreement. This will concern Alteo, and this is going to be a precedent for the other Power Purchase Agreements that will come in the future. I hope that the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food security is going to negotiate terms in favour of the small planters, and I am talking here about the price of bagasse under the Bagasse Transfer Fund. A meagre Rs125 per tonne! The percentage that they get is, I think, about only 12%. I hope that the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security is going to take this opportunity to negotiate terms in favour of the small planters and set this as a precedent for the other agreements that are going to come in the future. I also wish that the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security gives an undertaking to the small planters about the Sustainability Fund. Money is being provided by the CEB, but it is only for three years and it is coming to an end, I think, in 2017. I hope that this also is going to be renewed. These are concrete measures that small planters are expecting in the Budget.

Now, let me come to the Betamax issue. Madam Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the Rt. Minister Mentor. He has been a politician. I have a lot of respect for him, but it was a pity on the other day when he intervened trying to defend the position of Government on this dossier. Would you believe this: a Queen's Counsel, Minister Mentor trying to convince us, trying to convince the population that he had terminated the contract of Betamax on the advice of hon. Bhadain? Would you believe this? He has to tell the truth to the public! Is it true or not that the Office of the Attorney General, the Solicitor General had advised Government not to resiliate this contract? Is it not the truth? Now, he is trying to tell us he did not follow the Attorney General - I hope that the Attorney General had advised him. He is trying to convince us that he did not follow the Attorney General. He did not follow the Solicitor General's advice and he had followed hon. Bhadain's advice. As I have said, if

something is wrong, then it is either *Parti travailliste* or MMM or PMSD or Bhadain. This is their problem!

(*Interruptions*)

Now, there is also this issue about minimum wage, there is inconsistency on this issue. We have the negative income tax. Now, this is clearly in contradiction with what Government had promised on the minimum wage. What will happen to the minimum wage? When we come up with the minimum wage – well, first of all, are we coming up with the minimum wage? That is the first question. And if we come up with the minimum wage, then what will happen to the negative income tax? That is another issue. So, we are not being told what will happen; what Government is going to do.

Let me talk about my constituency. I will end with my constituency, Madam Speaker. For two years, we had the first Budget: ‘At The Crossroads’, which means that we have reached a stage where we need to take important decisions for the future of our country. I have said it. It has been one year of waste. Then, we had the second Budget: ‘The New Era’. Waste again! In none of those two Budgets was there any project about my Constituency, Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien. *Ma circonscription a été orpheline* in those two Budgets. Nothing! No provisions mentioned for Mahebourg/Plaine Magnien.

So much so, I was saying this to my colleagues. Hon. Jhugroo is not here. Well I have to congratulate him. At least, he managed to upgrade the cemetery at Tombeau, Mahebourg, and he was so happy. Well, it is a good thing - I have to congratulate him. He was so happy having managed to, at least, realise one project during those two years. Two weeks ago, I was invited in a function, and the audience was composed of old age pensioners. You know, he was so pleased about having upgraded the cemetery, he said - “You need to go and have a look!” And he even added, “You know I have even planted flowers. I have even put lights and you are invited to come during the night. Go and have a walk at Tombeau in the cemetery at night.”

(*Interruptions*)

So pleased! My friend, hon. Hurreeram, was present during that function.

(*Interruptions*)

He was so pleased that, in two years, in Constituency No 12, he managed to come with a project. Well, I can see that three projects have been identified: the incinerator at Tombeau; there are the markets at Mahebourg and Plaine Magnien, but I hope that these will be completed before the end of the mandate of this Government.

Madam Speaker, I was talking about my constituency. I remember, about a couple of weeks ago, hon. Jhugroo along with hon. Hurreeram visited the Waterfront at Mahebourg. Do you know what they promised to the residents? That there will be an artificial beach! Artificial beach, along Waterfront! I then put a question as to when they are coming up with this project. But, unfortunately, I see nothing in the Budget.

Madam Speaker, I will finish here by saying one thing. I have said bamboozling, two years the population has been bamboozled by this Government. I am sure when they will look at this Budget, they will be bamboozled till the end of this current mandate. But there is one thing, you can bamboozle as long as you can, but patience has a limit. So, be careful!

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

(6:46 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): I wish to thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to intervene on this year's Budget.

Allow me, Madam Speaker, at the very outset to congratulate the Minister of Finance for his foresighted Budget. He has presented this year's Budget to the nation in a double capacity, as Minister of Finance and as Prime Minister of our country. As he stated in his speech, Madam Speaker, at the dawn of our 50th anniversary, as a proud independent nation, we are on the track to become a high-income country. Our ambition is very clear, that is, by 2023, our income per capita should reach USD13,600, and may I remind the House that it was under an MSM Government that, as a nation, we became a middle-income country, that is, by the end of 1991. And from 1991 until today, we have remained a middle income country.

Back in 1968, the per capita income was USD 250 only, Madam Speaker, and the present per capita income is around USD 9,740. So, it took us some 24 years to become a

middle-income country, and I am very confident that, by 2023, we will become a high-income country.

Madam Speaker, during my intervention, I shall make it a point to support my arguments with facts and figures. As usual, I shall use *langage de vérité et je vais être raisonnable dans mes propos. Mais si jamais, Madame la présidente, je me laisse emporter, c'est que j'ai à cœur l'intérêt de la population, et je m'en excuse.*

Let us start with what hon. Ramphul has just said. I am a bit surprised, Madam Speaker. *Pour quelqu'un qui appartient à un parti qui a dirigé notre pays pendant ces 10 dernières années, qui a mis ce pays à genoux, où le népotisme se pratiquait à outrance et où la dilapidation des fonds était à l'ordre du jour et où le lion reniflait ses proies à tout bout de champ. Je le trouve très culotté, Madame la présidente, de venir donner des leçons aux autres.*

Madame la présidente, allow me to comment on the remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition concerning mainly the growth rate. Madam Speaker, as compared to what he said, I believe that the figures in the Budget are very promising and give us hope for a very bright future. Growth rate last year was 3.9% as compared to 3.2%, and it is expected to rise to 4.1%. Unemployment fell to 7.3%, but when you listen to the Leader of the Opposition, I think one should go back to what he, himself, said when he intervened during the debates on the Budget of 2015 with regard to growth rate. He said and I quote-

“I note that the growth rate in 2014, that is, last year, was 3.5%, which I must say I consider to be reasonable.”

And he said -

“In 2014, it was 3.5%; in 2013, it was 3.2% and in 2012, it was 3.4%.” And he added -

“These are the years, of course, where I presented the budget. I consider them to be reasonable because I had a look at what the world was doing.”

Madam Speaker, in 2015, the world growth rate was 3.2% and, in 2016, the world growth rate was 3.1%, Madam Speaker. So, I consider what was achieved last year as growth is more than reasonable, Madam Speaker.

We all know that it is only with hard work and discipline that we will succeed. It is only by putting aside our political, cultural and social differences and united as a nation that we can succeed.

Allow me again to refer to the Budget Speech. It is stated that the Government will set up a very important institution, the Economic Development Board, whose role is to oversee the policies and actions of the Government. It will help three directorates. The first one will be responsible for the national and sectoral economic planning, the second one for investment and export promotion, and the third one for business licensing.

I also, Madam Speaker, welcome the setting up of the National Economic and Social Council, which will be under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister because I believe this is a very important institution to address key economic issues of our country. It will also re-establish the dialogue between the private sector and the civil society, and I believe such an institution will create a feel-good factor within the country among all the stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, innovation has allowed many advanced countries to make giant leaps. It is only through research and development that these countries have been able to achieve such progress. Therefore, I welcome the conversion of the Mauritius Research Council into the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. The creation of a National Innovation and Research Fund with Rs50 m. being injected in that Fund will, no doubt, help both the public and the private institutions to have access to finance, in order to carry out research and development. Investment also in education and training shows the will of Government to give our youngsters means to success. Investing in our children is investing in our future. On the social front, Madam Speaker, numerous measures have been announced in the Budget, and I shall enumerate those measures later.

Before I move any further, Madam Speaker, a lot of those who have intervened before me have spoken on the Betamax saga. I wish to say a few words on that saga, Madam Speaker.

Madame la présidente, on a l'impression, en écoutant surtout les membres de l'opposition, que dans le scandale de Betamax il n'y a eu qu'une fin et qu'il n'y a jamais eu de commencement. Aujourd'hui, on parle de ce jugement qui a été rendu, mais on évite de parler comment tout cela a commencé et par qui tout cela a commencé, Madame la présidente.

C'est pourquoi moi je pense qu'il y a beaucoup de malhonnêteté dans ce qui est dit dans l'affaire de Betamax, à commencer par le leader de l'opposition lui-même. Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente, de rafraîchir la mémoire de cette Chambre. Tout a commencé - parce qu'il y a eu un commencement - sous un gouvernement Parti travailliste et PMSD. Voilà la dure réalité.

(Interruptions)

Et qui avait la responsabilité de présider le comité qui allait donner les recommandations pour que Betamax puisse avoir le contrat ? N'est-ce pas l'actuel leader de l'opposition ? Et dans une déclaration, Madame la présidente...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry, you are disturbing hon. Lesjongard!

(Interruptions)

No, not from a sitting position, please!

Mr Lesjongard: Dans une déclaration, Madame la présidente, à un journal, voilà ce que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval avait dit, suite à ce que le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam avait dit sur l'affaire Betamax -

« Ce comité présidé par moi-même, et composé de cinq autres ministres, dont des *Senior Ministers*, avait siégé à quatre reprises. Suite aux profondes divergences au sein du comité, il avait été décidé de faire appel à un cabinet d'experts-comptables très réputé pour trancher. Celui-ci nous avait fait savoir qu'il était l'auditeur de Betonix, appartenant au même groupe que Betamax, mais que cela n'affecterait pas son indépendance et son objectivité. »

Et vous savez, Madame la présidente, ce même consultant avait été recruté par la STC, à l'époque, sans appel d'offres ! Savez-vous comment ? Je vais lire la lettre qui avait été envoyée à ce consultant ; lettre signé par le directeur de la STC à l'époque -

“Please refer to the meeting we had with you on 29 September 2009 in the presence of hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism, Leisure and External Communications and hon. Mahen Gowressoo, Minister of Business Enterprise and Cooperatives.

In view of the proposal made by Betamax Ltd for a long-term contract for carrying petroleum products, the STC will need to conduct an evaluation of the offer, with focus on the comparative cost advantages that the latter company would provide, if any, as opposed to arrangements made with the present carriers on the basis of the contract for the period 2008-2009. Thus, the services of BDO De Chazal Du Mée are solicited for the evaluation.”

Then, it says –

“(...) the STC will provide BDO with all the necessary documents.

Please kindly inform us if you accept the above engagement and, in the affirmative, indicate to us the fee applicable. In case you accept the offer, we would be grateful to have your evaluation report by Wednesday 07 October 2009.”

And they were recruited, and we know what happened.

But, Madam Speaker, they were right in saying that they were the auditor of Betonix Ltd, and if you have a look at the shareholding structure of those companies falling under Betamax Ltd which, when the contract was awarded, became Betamax Shipping Ltd, under Betamax we had the holding company, that is, Betonix Holding Ltd, and under the Betonix Holding Ltd we had a company by the name of FHL1 Ltd. And, when you see the shareholding structure, in Betonix Ltd, Société SBM Betonix, Mr Bhunjun Vikram and Mr Bhunjun Amal, they had 70% of the shareholding. And in FHL1 Ltd, the same persons that I have mentioned, they also had 70% of the shareholding, and the same three persons, they had 60% of the shareholding in Betonix Holding Ltd where Betonix Holding Ltd had 85% of shareholding, and 15% of the shareholding were held by Executiveship Management Private Ltd, the Singaporean company. That is, if you have a look at this shareholding structure, and if you have a look at the letter which was addressed to STC, whereby BDO said that they were the auditor and that they are not worried, whether there might be a conflict of interest.

Madam Speaker, I believe, there is a case of conflict of interest. Why? Because on 27 June 2015, following an article that appeared in a local newspaper, that company BDO had to come forward with a *mise au point*, which appeared in that newspaper. And it said –

« BDO agit en tant qu'auditeur indépendant auprès de Betonix Ltd, une société ne possédant aucune part au sein de Betamax contrairement à Betonix Holding Ltd.

BDO insiste également sur le fait que la lettre de mission à la STC comprenait les informations. »

This is not correct! When I have given, Madam Speaker, information with regard to the shareholding structure, it is clear that Betonix had shareholding in the Betonix Holding Ltd, which had shares in the Betamax Shipping Ltd, which obtained the contract for bringing petroleum products to Mauritius. I am not a legal person, Madam Speaker, but I have said that to the attention of the Attorney General so that he can pursue that matter forward.

Let me get back to my speech, Madam Speaker. I was saying that I shall elaborate on the other measures in the Budget. Let me get to the agro-industry sector. As everybody, Madam Speaker, I think we are all concerned with regard to the area of land which has been abandoned by our small planters. We need to get them back to their land, and I hope that with the measures that have been announced in this Budget, they will get back to their land. Not only that, Madam Speaker, I also welcome measures announced at Paragraph 74-75 in the Budget, whereby they are being provided with alternatives, that is, new varieties of plants such as cocoa and macadamia. This will help our local planters to move into high value products. I also fully support the measures with regard to bio farming, and I believe this is the way forward, if we want our population to consume healthy food, free from chemical products.

I shall now say a few words on the Ocean Economy. I shall make a few observations when I dwell on this sector. I strongly believe that this is becoming a new pillar of our economy. I will make a few suggestions: first, I think it is high time that we get a Master Plan for that sector. That Master Plan will help us to clearly define our priorities and our vision for that sector. It will also give some visibility to that sector, for people of our country to understand more the importance of that new pillar of development.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, I remember some time back, one promoter had submitted a project with regard to Deep Ocean Water Application. We are supposed to use deep-sea water to develop a series of upstream and downstream commercial activities, ranging from green cooling, seaweed culture, cosmetics, and pharmaceutical projects. If I am not mistaken, Government had already given its approval for the main component of that project, and a letter of intent was issued. Maybe when the Minister would intervene, he will let us know where matters stand with regard to that project.

Then, there are other new avenues in that sector, that is, marine renewable energy that has to do with tidal and offshore wind energies. Now that we have an agency responsible for these types of energies, I think that they should work on studies to know whether such projects are feasible for our country.

Now, let me say a few words on the creative industry. The hon. Minister of Finance has taken a series of measures to give a real boost to that sector. And he has shown how compassionate he is towards that community. And this is where, Madam Speaker - and I will be very frank about that - I fail to understand the repeated attitude of certain artists, especially those who, under the Ramgoolam Government, were acting as advisors and held key positions. The problems that the artists are facing today, they were facing that yesterday, the same problems. And I wish to put that on record. Fortunately, not all artists reacted the same way.

Here, I am thinking of artists like Desiré François, Alain Ramanisum and others who, as true patriots, did not boycott our national day celebration. I think that, in this Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance has heard the voices of our artists. The setting up of a National Arts Fund with an initial contribution of Rs50 m. will, no doubt, help our local artists. The annual award ceremony will give due recognition to our local artists. Then also, the hon. Minister of Finance has stated that they will be remunerated for their performance on the MBC Television. But if there is one measure for the creative industry for which I wish to personally thank the hon. Minister of Finance is for the budgetary measure at paragraph 147, that is, the creation of a *Village des Artistes* in Constituency No. 14, at Batterie de l'Harmonie, Rivière Noire, the cradle of our local music, that is, the sega. The renovation of Plaza with a project value of Rs300 m. and the town hall of Curepipe with a project value of Rs110 m. will definitely provide the necessary space and environment for our local artists to perform. There are other measures in this Budget, Madam Speaker, for the artists; for example, the creation of an Art Zone at Granary, the construction of a *Palais des Arts et de la Culture* at Côte d'Or.

Madam Speaker, I listened carefully to hon. Ramful and he was comparing the things that were under the Labour Party/PMSD Government and this Government. Let me say a few words about projects that were implemented by the Labour Party/PMSD Government. Yes, fortunately now, the project has been completed. It is operational. Thanks to this Government. The Bagatelle Dam! We had PNQs and PQs in this House on that dam related to the costs of implementation. The cost was estimated at Rs3.1 billion. At the end of the

project, it cost this country Rs6.2 billion. One should go to the report of the Director of Audit about this project with regard to award of the contract. You know what was the Ministry's reply when queried by the Director of Audit why that project was costing so much? It is stated that –

“One the conditions of the foreign loan agreement is that the works should be undertaken by contractors of that foreign country. Accordingly, its Embassy was requested to submit to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development the names of, at least, three contractors that would be invited to submit bids for the construction works. However, they were informed that the International Contractors Association of that country has designated one specific contractor to implement the project.”

If one goes to the list of contractors in China who had implemented such projects, one will be surprised on the number of such contractors. We had only one contractor for the project. There are 54 contractors in China, Madam Speaker. We all know that this is not the only project where funds were wasted. There is also the Terre Rouge/Verdun project where again we have wasted a lot of public funds.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words on investment and infrastructure. First of all, I think we should all acknowledge the immense support of India to Mauritius to enable us to implement some important projects in our country. The Metro Express project will be fully financed by the Government of India. I have heard a lot of criticisms on the Metro Express, but people hardly compare the advantages of the Light Rail System with the Bus Rapid System. It has been proved, Madam Speaker, where both systems are present that the LRT offers a lot of advantages as compared to the Bus Rapid System. I will not go in details because I have got other issues that I wish to talk about. I would wish to talk on squatters, but before I get to squatters, let me say a few words with regard to electricity and to the attention of the Minister.

I definitely welcome the following measures that have been announced in the Budget by the hon. Minister of Finance, for example, taking on board the low income households and SMEs in production of clean and renewable energy in our country. Having said that, I wish to refer to paragraph 183, where CEB (Green) Co. Ltd wants to set up a PV farm of 15 MW. It is stated that they would start with 2 MW and then later add 13 MW more and the place that has been earmarked for that PV farm is Henrietta. This is where I am a bit uneasy, Madam

Speaker, because we all know that Henrietta is a place where, in our country, we do not have enough sunshine as compared to other places because, from an engineering point of view, when we set up a PV farm, it has a lot to do with the efficiency of the plant and I believe that the area that has been chosen will not allow that PV farm to work efficiently. If I may make a suggestion, today we have the renewable energy agency and one of the functions of that agency is to assess the feasibility and competitiveness of renewable energy projects and make recommendations.

I humbly suggest that that project be referred to that agency and obtain the approval of that agency with regard to feasibility and competitiveness before we embark on such a project, Madam Speaker. Like I said, I also wish to say a few words on squatting in our country. The measures, Madam Speaker, announced in this Budget go in the direction to help those poor families that have been squatting land for years now and one of the measures which I really would wish to comment on is the regularisation of the relocation of squatters at *La Ferme reservoir* which is found in Constituency No. 14.

Those families were very worried and, today, the Minister of Finance has reassured them that they will have a decent place to stay with all the required facilities. I heard the Leader of the Opposition criticising the Minister of Housing and Lands concerning the regularisation of squatters. Allow me, Madam Speaker, to give one example to show how compassionate the Minister of Housing and Lands is towards the squatters of our country. People will recall that he regularised the situation of some 50 families or more in the region of Cité de Dieu, an African town in the south, at Riambel. And when he did that, none of the Members of Parliament of that constituency was in Government. We were in opposition at that time. So, that is why I am saying how compassionate he is towards the squatters.

Now, today morning, I listened to the speech of hon. Abbas Mamode. I have forgotten - not I have forgotten, but I did not want to come back again to what I am going to say. But because he brought in this House the case of a person who passed away in a hospital, that is why, if you will excuse me, Madam Speaker, I will relate to you something. I will relate, Madam Speaker, something that happened back in 2012, in Cité la Cure, behind the NHDC.

You will recall, Madam Speaker, that back in 2001 - I think so - Sir Anerood Jugnauth was the Prime Minister of this country and he decided, together with hon. Paul Bérenger, to regularise the situation of squatters that have been squatting land in our country before a cut-off date, and we started the process. By the end of 2005, we had regularised the

situation of some 2,900 squatters in this country but, unfortunately, that Government lost power and we could not bring utilities to those sites, that is, water and electricity.

Those families had an official document to state that where they were staying, Government has allocated them a lease. Then, the Labour Party and PMSD Government - I am happy that hon. Mrs Perraud is back because she knows the case - came into power. They made a request for their services back in 2005. From 2005 to 2014, they stayed without electricity and water. *Il y a plus que ça. Il y a le cas d'une petite fille de 11 ans. J'ai demandé aux parents si je pouvais aujourd'hui nommer le nom de cette petite fille, ils m'ont dit oui, il n'y a pas de souci.*

Madam Speaker: It is much better that you do not.

(Interruptions)

Mr Lesjongard : Non, pour voir la véracité de ce que je suis en train de dire, parce que c'est important, Madame.

Madam Speaker: Even then!

Mr Lesjongard: Je vous dis ça pourquoi, Madame ? Pendant ces 10 ans, on a posé des questions, on a manifesté devant le Parlement, on a envoyé des lettres, mais c'était resté lettre morte. Cette fille est handicapée mentale et physique. Elle avait 12 ans, elle est décédée en 2012 d'un asthme chronique, Madame la présidente. Vous savez pourquoi ? Parce que quand elle était tombée malade, elle devait se servir d'un *nebuliser* car elle n'arrivait pas à respirer, et pour se servir de ce *nebuliser*, il fallait de l'électricité. Il n'y avait pas d'électricité. Il y avait ce qu'on appelle un *standby generator*, un delco. Ce jour-là ce delco n'a pas fonctionné et le temps qu'on emmène cette petite fille à l'hôpital, elle était déjà morte. J'ai assisté à son enterrement et l'honorable Madame Perraud a assisté à son enterrement. C'est pourquoi, Madame la présidente, il faut faire bien attention à ce qu'on dit, parce qu'on se fait toujours rattraper par l'histoire, et ça c'est une vérité. Alors, voilà l'histoire de cette petite fille, Madame la présidente.

Autre chose, je voudrais remercier mon collègue qui est à côté de moi, l'honorable Léopold.

(Interruptions)

Oui, nouveau, mais sincère !

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard: Pourquoi ? Parce qu'il a fait un discours empreint de patriotisme.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

(*Interruptions*)

Yes, but that is no reason why you should interrupt the hon. Member!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard: Ni le Parti travailliste, ni le PMSD ne se sont jamais préoccupés du sort de nos compatriotes Rodriguais.

(*Interruptions*)

Oui ! Les commentaires du leader de l'opposition dans son discours - allez relire son discours - sont inacceptables, Madame la présidente. Cela démontre l'intolérance de l'honorable Xavier Luc Duval envers ce peuple, et c'est pourquoi je suis content qu'hier l'honorable Léopold l'ait rappelé à l'ordre, Madame la présidente. *And today, Madam Speaker, we are hearing same thing, the same attitude towards our sisters and brothers in Agalega.* Alors, pour ce que je viens de partager avec vous, Madame la présidente, nos îles éparses sont le cadet de leurs soucis. Alors, cessons cette politique démagogique de bas étage. Qu'ils soient Rodriguais, qu'ils soient Agaléens, ce sont nos sœurs et nos frères, Madame la présidente.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, this is the second time that you are interrupting and I will not give any more warning now!

Mr Lesjongard: *Pas fer mwa dire zafair lor Babool, zot tou pou regretter labas !*

Madam Speaker: Please, hon. Lesjongard...

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard: *Taler mo dire !*

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard : *Ene paké pas coné. Ena kit fois ziste ene seul ou deux dimouunes ki coné !*

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard, please do not deviate from your speech!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Lesjongard: May I ...

(*Interruptions*)

I am a gentleman, I won't say that.

En guise de conclusion, Madame la présidente, ce budget est le premier budget de ce gouvernement avec l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth comme Premier ministre. Avec ce budget, je suis très optimiste pour mon pays. J'ai côtoyé l'honorable Premier ministre pendant des années. Nous avons connu des hauts et des bas, Madame la présidente, mais pour moi il reste un homme de cœur, et il l'a démontré encore une fois avec ce budget. Mais le plus important dans ce budget, Madame la présidente, c'est qu'il confirme à notre peuple, à cette population, qu'il mérite leur considération et qu'il est leur digne Premier ministre.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

(7.38 p.m.)

Mr A. Duval (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Merci, Madame la présidente. Pour ceux qui se demandent pourquoi je suis en train de parler à la place de Roshi Bhadain sur la liste d'orateurs, c'est tout simplement parce qu'on a été très difficile pour laisser l'honorable Bhadain parler, et j'ai trouvé ça, moi, très discriminatoire, et que je me suis porté volontaire pour donner ma place à Roshi Bhadain vendredi et que je parle, moi, avec une heure et demie de *notice* sans vraiment un discours. Mais ce n'est pas grave.

Madame la présidente, avant d'entamer mon discours écrit très vite, je voudrais premièrement répondre à la personne qui a parlé avant moi....

(Interruptions)

... à l'honorable Lesjongard qui a parlé. Vraiment, j'ai failli tomber de ma chaise - encore heureux que les chaises soient fixées ici - quand il a critiqué l'honorable Ramful d'appartenir au Parti travailliste, d'appartenir à un parti qui soutire le népotisme. Il a dit qu'il était culotté de donner des leçons aux autres, parce qu'il appartenait au Parti travailliste. Et vous savez, Madame la présidente, le comble c'est que ça vient de l'honorable Lesjongard. C'est lui qui est culotté, vraiment sans scrupules, pour venir donner des leçons à l'honorable Ramful qui fait un premier mandat, qui est resté sincère avec son parti dans la défaite, surtout que l'honorable Ramful, il n'y a pas si longtemps de cela, était le collègue d'alliance de l'honorable Lesjongard. Le collègue dans la même alliance ! Les amis du Parti travailliste le confirment. Quelqu'un qui a systématiquement *cross the floor*, systématiquement cherché son avantage, ses intérêts, qui n'a pas de fidélité, qui ne connaît pas la sincérité ; quelqu'un que l'honorable leader de l'opposition a qualifié de '*drag queen politique*' ; lui, qui était si souriant, si content, en 2014, d'être candidat sous l'alliance de Navin Ramgoolam ; lui, qui a fait trois ou quatre mois de campagne en défendant bec et ongles Navin Ramgoolam, en défendant bec et ongles son alliance, et surtout en faisant les éloges...

(Interruptions)

Vous savez, ça me passe tellement à travers la gorge que je ne trouve plus les mots. C'est une honte ! Il aurait dû avoir honte. Une politique de langue de bois, Madame la présidente, qui ne connaît pas de limites.

En ce qui concerne l'affaire Betamax, il a parlé de plein de choses. Il a attaqué tous les amis de mon parti. Je pense que, demain, l'honorable Madame Perraud, ayant plus de temps que moi pour préparer un discours, répondra. Moi, en tout cas, j'aimerais lui dire une chose. Il a parlé de l'affaire Betamax. Qu'il ne se soucie point ! Il y aura une *PNQ* sur ça très prochainement. Je demanderai aux spectateurs qui regardent tous les mardis et tous les jours en ce moment, avec le budget, la télévision parlementaire, *to stay tuned*, de rester sur les écrans, car il y aura un autre épisode, il y aura un autre choc, un autre scandale. Ne vous inquiétez pas...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Somebody has a phone inside! I am sorry to interrupt you, hon. Duval. Who has a phone? Please, go outside and take your phone outside, and leave it outside, please!

Mr A. Duval: Donc, Madame la présidente, je disais : ne vous inquiétez pas sur le scandale Betamax. L'honorable Xavier Luc Duval viendra avec des questions, et j'espère qu'il répondra à vos réponses. Et de toutes les façons, l'honorable Lesjongard n'était pas au *Cabinet*, au Conseil des ministres à cette époque. Comment sait-il ce qui s'est passé ? Sûrement il cherchait une porte ouverte, *ene l'imposte pou rentrer*, mais il n'était pas au Conseil des ministres à cette époque-là et, donc, les accusations farfelues qu'il porte aujourd'hui restent des accusations farfelues.

Madame la présidente, since he has mentioned the Betamax scandal, I am pleased myself to announce a new scandal and, for that, I have to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has, a few minutes ago, given me the copy of a shocking email, and I hope that the Press will take note.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: No, I am sorry, hon. Member.

Mr A. Duval: But the Press...

Madam Speaker: Please sit down, I am on my feet. You cannot from this House address the Press. You cannot do that. It is against the ethics and against the practice and procedures.

Mr A. Duval: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I rephrase; I hope that those watching us will take note.

Yesterday, we had a PNQ to ask the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications, NDU, Minister of Finance whether in regard to the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing in Mauritius, appointed on 24 September 2014, he will state, amongst other things, if he has requested the Commissioners to provide a copy of the Confidential Interim Report thereof submitted to the President of the Republic on 28 November and, if so, indicate if he has been provided therewith and the actions he proposes to take in relation thereto.

Madam Speaker, Hansard is not yet updated. I wish I had the answer. I will have to go by memory. I remember very, very, very clearly that the Prime Minister said that he never saw that report once in his life. I remember he said during previous PNQs that the former Prime Minister must have cleaned his office and taken the report. And he also said that the report was lost from Réduit to Port Louis, which is such a long distance, and it was such a mystery. A great mystery as to what happened to that report!

Yesterday, hon. Xavier Duval, the Leader of the Opposition, finally put an end to that mystery and he tabled the report, but let me attempt to put an end with concrete proof to the second mystery about Mr Beekarry's involvement and let me just perhaps read the email and table it after. We will read it for yourself. Freshly baked email received today at 4.14 p.m. It is written by Mr Rick Parry, the Chairman of the Commission on Horse Racing. He says –

“Dear Mr Duval,

Benn Gunn has asked me to set out some key facts about my visit to Mauritius in March 2015.”

And, *entre parenthèses*, before I read the rest, we will all recall yesterday, today hon. Sinatambou, the radio is going on and on about how there is a *démenti*, that Mr Beekarry or anyone else for that matter at the Prime Minister's Office, under this new Government, has had any contact with the Interim Report. So, keep that at the back of your mind when I read this email. So, I take it again –

“He has asked me to set out some key facts – Benn Gunn – about my visit to Mauritius.”

This is an email from Mr Rick Parry, Chairman of the Commission on Horse Racing.

“I have relied upon my contemporaneous notes as well as numerous emails. On 17 March 2015, I had a 45-minute meeting with the President. I was accompanied by Mr Seebah, the Secretary to the Inquiry. As requested, I gave the President three bound copies of the final report. I asked him what had become of the original Interim Report. At that time it was Mr Purryag in Réduit. He confirmed that he had received it and had sent it to the previous Prime Minister. On 19 March 2015, I had a 35-minute meeting with the Prime Minister. Once again, I was accompanied by Mr Seebah, also present were Mr Ballah and Mr Beekarry. I handed two hard copies of

the Interim Report to the Prime Minister and after a brief examination of the document (...).”

(Interruptions)

Yes, you heard right.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry, you can’t talk to him...

(Interruptions)

You can’t talk! You can’t talk to him when he is talking.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, since hon. Henry disrupted me, I’ll start that sentence again.

“I handed two hard copies of the Interim Report to the Prime Minister and after a brief examination of the document, he said it must be acted upon without delay. I also left a memory stick - for those who don’t know what a memory stick is, it is a USB stick – with copies of the Interim Report and the final report on it – and this is the important part – I would be more than happy to visit Mauritius to state these facts under oath in front of any Tribunal or Forum.

Kind regards.

Rick Parry.”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry, this is the last time I am giving you a warning. If you continue to interrupt, then I will have to take action.

Mr A. Duval: I say it again.

“I would be than happy to visit Mauritius to state these facts under oath in front of any Tribunal or Forum.

Kind Regards.

Rick Parry.

President of the Commission of Inquiry on Horse Racing.”

I hope that this answers the question that hon. Lesjongard had if he had any doubt or those other Members of Government about yesterday’s Private Notice Question.

Madam Speaker, this is concrete proof and it is more serious than that. Madam Speaker, I hope perhaps that you will enquire on possible statements that misled the House when replying to the PNQ. We have to establish the truth of what is said here. But, Madam Speaker, it is shocking that we have been deceived once more, by this Government. It is shocking that we have been lied to in our faces without any *remords*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, did you say “lied”? If you did say...

Mr A. Duval: I did say “lied”.

Madam Speaker: Then kindly withdraw that word and put your sentence in another manner.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, I remember your ruling saying that “when you are not talking about someone specific in this House, you can say that, misleading, etc.” I said we are being lied to by this Government.

(Interruptions)

You will remember a ruling in the same nature.

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Adrien Duval, when you were talking, you were referring to the previous Prime Minister or to the Prime Minister and then you said that you have used the word “lied”. If you are confirming that the word “lied” was not meant to either the hon. Prime Minister or to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, then you are saying it is addressed not to any of them, it is acceptable, but if you mean that it is addressed either to the hon. Prime Minister or to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, then you will have to withdraw it.

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I have learnt something in these three years, it is not to discuss with the Chair, as you would never win an argument. In any case, Madam Speaker...

Madam Speaker: No, I am sorry! Please, hon. Adrien Duval, what did you say, I did not get what you said. Are you saying that it was not meant? You have to say clearly.

Mr A. Duval: What I meant is you are being lied to by this Government, not specifically targeting anyone. Anyway, in any case, Madam Speaker, *c'est très grave. C'est très, très, très grave et c'est le pire exemple qu'on puisse donner aujourd'hui à la nation mauricienne.* C'est très, très, très grave, et c'est le pire exemple qu'on puisse donner aujourd'hui à la nation mauricienne, si c'est à ça qu'on peut s'attendre de nos dirigeants politiques dans le temple de la démocratie où la liberté d'expression prime, supposément doit primer. C'est désolant surtout pour les jeunes aujourd'hui qui nous regardent et qui ont déjà des préjugés sur les politiciens bien sûr, vu par le comportement d'une bonne partie de la classe politique actuelle et dans le passé, il faut réaliser qu'aujourd'hui, avec cela, n'arrange en rien des préjugés que les jeunes ont sur les politiciens. Moi, je trouve désolant, grave et, personnellement, ça m'inquiète énormément que sur de petits détails comme où est la copie d'un rapport, où est passé tel ou tel rapport, on peut ne pas dire la vérité. Sur quoi d'autre nous mène-t-on en bateau aujourd'hui ?

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker, I have written a very quick speech. Let me very briefly talk on the Budget itself. There is consensus, Madam Speaker, on this side of the House and in the country that this Budget is *un budget menti menti*. It is not the first time that we have heard this. Why is it a Budget *menti menti* you may ask?

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Henry!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Henry, I will order you out if you continue. I tell you it is the last time I am giving you a warning; the last time, and I will not allow you to interrupt again.

Mr A. Duval: It repeats, Madam Speaker, the same mistakes of the same Minister of Finance who made last year's Budget and the one before him, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, and that is to *vann rêves bon marché et à gogo*. This is what this Budget is doing - dreams that unfortunately would not come true. If you want a fact, I will give you one. Out of the 418 budgetary measures enunciated last year in last year's Budget, only 27 were implemented as

at January 2017. Till date, God knows how many have been implemented, but we all know it is far less than 50% of the measures announced. Astonishingly, Madam Speaker, if you bother to compare the Budget announcements of last year and of this year, you will see that many paragraphs enunciated last year and enunciated this year, the same measures and have merely been copy pasted. Take a look at paragraph 3 of last year's Budget and paragraph 3 of this year's Budget, for example. They all talk about 3-D printing and its implementation, but that is also a dream because no 3-D printing facilities exist today in Mauritius. Hopefully, it will become a reality one day. I understand that the Prime Minister is a busy man especially being responsible for Home Affairs, for the NDU, for the Ministry of Finance, for the kitchen cabinet. He is a busy man, but it is no excuses *pour avoir pondu un budget aussi médiocre et mensongère. Je félicite le leader de l'opposition pour avoir démasqué les faussetés, les effets d'annonces farfelues de ce présent budget.*

Madam Speaker, I will not take the time of the House to repeat what has been said before, instead I want to focus on the future of this country and, therefore, I want to talk about the youth and the challenges they face today in very specific areas. Firstly, the drug problem, Madam, yes, there is a drug problem for the youth contrary to what hon. Gayan once said that drug is not a major problem for the youth. I do not think at all that this is correct. The Leader of the Opposition has clearly explained this war on drugs is not one which we are winning unfortunately; the figures show it. The prices on the market are the strongest indicator of the failure of this Government and previous Governments in fighting the drug problem. The war on drugs, I believe, should not only be waged at the level of drug imports as this clearly is a losing battle. What we need is - and this is not new - a holistic approach to combat the drug problem. We need to study, first of all, the root cause of drug consumption, especially within the youth and especially synthetic and hard drugs. We need to understand why there is an unprecedented trend in conception of ever more harder, stronger and deadlier drugs in this country, and I must say as well it is an international phenomenon. I ask myself: what are we not understanding? What is it? Maybe that we are refusing to understand. This takes me to hon. Ganoo and I am sad that he is not here now. I hope he is listening. Hon. Ganoo has, in my opinion, launched the right debate.

Ça se mérite d'être débattu, Madame la présidente, le débat que l'honorable Ganoo a lancé, pour pouvoir tous mieux comprendre le problème. Un débat permettra à tous les acteurs de la société civile, du gouvernement, des membres de l'Assemblée nationale de

proposer des idées, de débattre sur des questions fondamentales et puis, éventuellement, de prendre des décisions.

Hon. Ganoo has asked the question whether it is a mistake to treat cannabis drug on the same level as heroin and other drugs like synthetic drugs. He has asked whether we should not contemplate debating on softening the laws on the soft drugs like cannabis, and I think we need to debate it. Now I know the ones after me, especially hon. Gayan, will come and tag me because I said this with all sorts of tags, but he is the last person to tag someone with anything. And I am being genuine, Madam Speaker, because I am 26 years old and I live in this generation that is the most affected by the drug problem. And, for me, as someone who wants to have a career in politics and who wants to bring change to this country, it is my mission, it is my duty to care about those people. This is why I have to congratulate hon. Ganoo, and this is why I support the need for a debate on this.

Madam Speaker, by a holistic approach, we need to look at the following, which we are not today; first of all, the prevention and secondly, the rehabilitation; by prevention, I mean, at the school level, Madam Speaker which are the main hot spots for the distribution and marketing of synthetic drugs. We did more and more sensitisation campaigns, and I urge the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health, perhaps the local authorities, to double their efforts in this respect. If I can propose that we need to give children real-life concrete examples of what hard drugs consumption really does to the human body.

If I can give my personal experience, I was schooled in a private school and I remember when I was in school, very young we were taken to visit a drug rehabilitation centre run by an NGO, I believe, in the region of Terre Rouge. And, Madam, I was shocked, I have to say. Tens of years later, I still remember this vividly. I was shocked because I met with drug addicts, with people affected by AIDS, with people who consumed heroin on a daily basis and who were attempting to have a second shot at life in a rehabilitation centre run by an NGO.

I was shocked to see first-hand how the injection of brown sugar and heroin into the veins of one's body. especially at the level of the arms - it would begin like this - and then when the veins would no more be accessible in the arms, they would then shoot themselves between the toes in the foot and then the drugs use to consume the human flesh and leave holes. When these were no longer possible, they would inject themselves in the pubis area. I am sure that hon. Dr. Husnoo knows what I am talking about. I was shocked, Madam. I was

shocked because I was very young and my classmates also were shocked because we saw that. They showed us the scars and we were scared of ever falling ill to that source of drugs and ending up like these poor people who are now living a nightmare.

I believe that these sorts of programmes are the programmes that perhaps you should encourage more children to see, to have contact with drug users for them to see real-life examples, to have contact with people who have suffered for years of drug abuse and who have been victims of AIDS and of all sorts of parallel diseases, and I think this will help make them smarter on the drug problem. I think this will help make them understand better the consequences of drug addiction and consumption on one's body.

By prevention, Madam, I also mean to offer an alternative to youngsters, a different path a better way. This can only be done by providing much more, and I say much more, leisure than what we can access today. This is the real problem, Madam. We need more leisure facilities which would welcome and encourage youngsters to socialise within their compounds and not to turn them away as if they were nuisance and trouble as it is so often today in community centres. I see myself in my constituency; hon. Malini Sewocksingh can bear witness to that. How many youngsters have we met who have told us that they cannot access community centres, they cannot access the SILWF centres and, therefore, they are turned away systematically. The only option they have, Madam, is to go on the street because they have nowhere to welcome them. You know, Madam, all they ask for is to be able to socialise, is to be able to practise their art, their culture, their music, their dances; to play some social games, to practise some sports and, unfortunately, so many youngsters in this country are not given a chance or the means to have access to those things.

Allow me to elaborate on this, Madam, leisure, as you know, encompasses sports, art, culture, social games, nature and so on, *les passe-temps*. What I would like to urge the Government to do, it is not all about trying to state the problems, but it is also about trying to give a solution. First of all, to give free access to all sports facilities in Mauritius to the youth. Find a way, whether they have to register, whether they have to abide to some conditions, find a way, but make it, and I hope that the hon. Minister for Youth and Sports will take that on board. Find the way, and I know that he is keen on doing that because I know that he is also concerned about this. So, I urge hon. Toussaint to find a way for these youngsters to have free access because I will tell you, you will be surprised, Madam Speaker, and I will quote an article that appeared on 10 June 2017 in *Le Défi*. It says –

« 300% de la hausse sur la location du terrain de badminton à la Municipalité de Vacoas (...) »

And perhaps hon. Soodhun will be interested. It is his constituency after all.

« *Dans son discours budgétaire, Pravind Jugnauth a annoncé plusieurs mesures pour encourager les Mauriciens à se mettre au sport. Le même jour, un groupe de joueurs de badminton de Vacoas a adressé une lettre au maire de la ville, déplorant que les tarifs pour la location d'un terrain de badminton a connu des hausses considérables.*

A partir du mois de juillet de cette année, il faudra débourser plus pour pratiquer du sport à Vacoas. Si, pour certaines disciplines, la hausse se situe entre 125% et 175%, (...) »

If hon. Rutnahn can calculate that *augmentation* –

(Interruptions)

« *Le tarif est passé de R 50 à R 150 en heure creuse (...) »*

And in the peak time it is 300%. *Madame la présidente, imaginez-vous !*

« *En comparaison, ceux qui pratiquent le Futsal devront payer R 500 lorsque les nouveaux prix seront applicables, alors que le prix actuel est de R 400. »*

You know what the problem of this is? It is four times cheaper to get a dose on synthetic drugs and smoke than to play badminton at the Municipality of Vacoas. That is the stark reality! It is five times cheaper to smoke synthetic drugs, the whole team of Futsal to smoke for the same price of renting the Futsal at the Municipality.

(Interruptions)

Well, it is only perhaps some of you are doing *l'autruche* and do not want to know, I think I take an interest in what is going on in my country, hon. Soodhun...

(Interruptions)

But, in any case, Madam, this is a fact. It is a reality, and this is why you see people today leaning more towards drug consumption because, in fact, they have no access to any leisure,

to any sport. It is out of reach financially. It is also ‘*souvent guet figure pou done la salle*’. For that matter, I do not even get the Municipal Centre anymore in Curepipe to have a meeting or a social centre to meet my constituents. So, they do *guett figir pou donn la salle*. Anyway, Madam, this is something. It does not make sense, Madam, I am sure you agree with me, it does not make sense to anyone in here that the Futsal costs Rs500 and that these youngsters cannot have access to it. I think we have to correct that wrong. I am not saying it is this Government’s fault. All I am saying is you have the means to correct that now. So, give free access to youngsters. *Donnez l'accès gratuit à tous les jeunes pour qu'ils puissent avoir un peu de loisirs et pour qu'ils puissent avoir accès aux centres de sport, etc.*

Deuxièmement, Madame, je fais appel au gouvernement pour mettre à la disposition des jeunes le plus vite possible des salles de loisirs telles que les salles de répétition pour les jeunes qui pratiquent de la musique, de la danse ou une autre forme d’art et de culture, parce qu’aujourd’hui, Madame, nous avons tellement de jeunes bourrés de talents qui n’ont pas accès à ces salles. A Curepipe, nous avons une quantité de ces jeunes-là et qui ne demandent uniquement qu’on mette une salle à leur disposition pour qu’ils puissent venir pratiquer leur art et leur culture, et ce sont ces jeunes demain qui feront la fierté de notre pays, j’en suis sûr.

Madame, l’appui et le coup de main des ONG dans le combat de la prévention de la drogue tombe sous le même chapitre est *sine qua non* afin de le remporter.

Mais tout cela est aujourd’hui gravement menacé avec la décision catastrophique de monopoliser toutes les contributions du *CSR*, en tout cas 75%, et d’avoir un droit de regard sur le reste dans un organisme étatique qu’est le *CSR National Foundation*, qui est alourdi par la bureaucratie et qui sera, sans aucun doute, alourdi et empêtré par l’interférence politique et bien sûr une mauvaise gouvernance. Ce sera malheureusement une mise à mort certaine de toute initiative fort louable du secteur privé et la société civile afin d'aider dans la prévention contre la drogue. Et je pense que c'est plus que dommage. C'est un crime à mes yeux.

For us to stop the supply of drugs, Madam, to finish on this chapter, we need to focus on stopping the demand and not trying to stop the supply. We have to do both, but the real focus today, since we have all this equipment in the Port now and in the airport and that the ADSU has been bringing results, we need now to focus on trying to stop the demand, therefore, on trying to sensitise people to stop consumption of drug. And it brings me to the second point: the rehabilitation of drug users.

Our penal system makes no provision for rehabilitation of drug consumers. We only know to punish, incarcerate, thereby in most instances hardening those who face the whims of justice, but this is not how we deal with the drug problem in the 21st century. We must be inspired by what is widely done abroad, concrete examples of rehabilitation, and we must do that to rehabilitate rather than to incarcerate those petty drug consumers, especially those first-time drug consumers. Is it then logical, I will ask you, Madam, to incarcerate those first-time drug users, for soft drugs or even hard drugs, for long periods of time in the same compound, in the same prisons as hardened drug traffickers who would do anything to recruit them? In fact, statistic shows that those first-time drug users, once in prison, most of them become hardened criminals. And this is what we are doing in Mauritius. If anything, Madam, we are making it worse for ourselves and for the future of this country. I, therefore, urge this Government, the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, the Attorney General, to focus on how to introduce rehabilitation of drug users concretely in our penal code.

Madam, I would like to talk about education. The Leader of the Opposition has already made the point about the dire need for massive investments in the education sector. Let me add that it is a pity to witness the degrading conditions in which our youngsters are studying and especially at the tertiary level. It is also a pity to see that instead of embracing the points and recommendations raised by the Opposition on this matter, we have been criticised rather for having brought them up. I think that we are expecting more from this Government. There is also the lack of career guidance, and the Minister will know, I have spoken on this last year on the Budget and on many occasions. We all know that there is a great mismatch between demand and supply on the job market and there is more importantly a trend of rising unemployment rate of the *gradués chômeurs*. This should be the alarm bell for us and for the Minister, especially.

I am sad that I have to say this again, one year later, but I have not seen or heard of any concrete actions to date addressing the career guidance and how it will be able to predict in the future, how it will be able to forecast, how it will be able to advise young students who are taking university studies about the trends in employment and about the golden opportunities and the saturated. I have not heard of it.

(Interruptions)

Well, then, perhaps it should be more public. Lots have been said on this. I know that it is a difficult job. I know that it cannot be done in one day. But I think that the career mismatch and the career guidance is key to solving that issue of the rising unemployment.

As we all know, we have an ageing population and - the Leader of the Opposition said it last time - in ten years, we will have only three working people contributing for one retired person. Therefore, the emphasis has to be put, now, on short-term remedies that will bring short-term benefits, and that is the tertiary education.

Let me finish very quickly, Madam, on the law and order. Just a few observations and suggestions I would like to make. The Leader of the Opposition talked a lot about the equipment. I would like to talk a bit about the lack of training in the Police Force.

Madam Speaker, you know, a Police Officer will go for training as a recruit for nine months. He will have basic first-aid training and he will have, I suppose, all sorts of training, basic shooting skills, etc., and then he will go into his career as a policeman. However, Madam, you would be perhaps shocked to learn that there is no real Continuing Professional Development for the officers in our Police Force, and it is a shame. For example, Madam, a policeman posted at a police station will usually go for shooting training only twice a year. And, Madam, twice a year only will he go and have a chance to shoot a gun; a gun that is - I am sure the policemen know this very well - very old and sometimes misfires. This is the sort of training that is given, and I think we could do so much more. We are putting the emphasis on the quantity; always recruiting new Police Officers. But we should really put the emphasis on the quality. If you imagine, Madam, a policeman, 10 or 15 years on in his career will have no refresher course for basic first-aid and training. No refresher course! So, a policeman is expected to remember his basic first-aid training that he had 10 or 15 years ago if he is trying to save a person. This is the sort of difficulties that our Police Force is working with. And I think we should correct that now. Equipment is important, but we have to give the proper ongoing training as they give to barristers. We go to Continuing Professional Development; doctors go to Continuing Professional Development, and yet, essential services and essential people in the Police, the SAMU, the Fire Brigade do not have that luxury.

The policemen, perhaps here, protecting the hon. Ministers, have shooting training often. They often go to train at Vacoas at the VIPSU. But the policeman who is protecting the vulnerable citizen, the policeman who is protecting the everyday bloke on the street does not have luxury of that training. Only Ministers have! Only high-ranking officials with

VIPSU protection have this! But the everyday Police Officer does not have that kind of training! And this what we need to correct now, because every citizen in this country matters; their life matters, and they should be given the same protection as you all here are given! Example was given in Germany. Three years training, and then ongoing, continuous training throughout their career.

Madam, we need to give incentives to the Police Officers. Those who are brilliant; those who are capable Police Officers; those who outshine the rest, whether in physical training or those who outshine the rest in demonstration of courage, like we have so many; those who are otherwise outstanding. We need to give them the value they deserve. Instead, what do we do? We politicise promotion exercises. Instead, what do we do? We interfere to give this and that one a promotion. But that policeman, who has outshined the rest in training; that policeman who has demonstrated courage like the one we have seen in Caudan, who jumped in the water of Caudan. I am myself a keen swimmer, but I would never jump in the water of Caudan because we all know what sorts of fish must be travelling nearby with the amount of food that is dumped in the port. This policeman jumped in the water and he saved the life of an old age person. This is the kind of demonstration of *bravoure* that we need to encourage. This is the man that should get his promotion, but instead there have been three promotions this year for the rank of Inspector. Would you like to know who got that? Two bodyguards attached to the Minister Mentor were promoted to the rank of Inspector and one bodyguard attached to the Prime Minister. In the tens of thousands of policemen that we have in this country, only three people were worth promoting. How do you expect the very good Police Officers of this country to be motivated, to show sign of *bravoure*, sign of being outstanding? How do you expect them when they know that there is political interference at the highest level of the Police in Casernes? When they write their examinations, they do not even know whether they have passed or failed. They do not even know why they have passed or failed. There is no clear reason to fail or pass someone. We all know here, we are not stupid, how it works in reality. This is the kind of bad practices that will leave our Police Force demotivated. This is the kind of practice *qui décourage les policiers à Maurice*.

Madam Speaker, I think we have to invest in the policemen, in the person, in the people, in the training, not in the recruitment and not in the equipment alone. We have to invest in every Police Officer as if we are investing in future Commissioners of Police. For every Police Officer, we give them the training that they deserve. We give them the training that the people of this country deserve.

To finish, Madam Speaker, let me talk about Curepipe. Yesterday and on Monday, a lot was said on the swimming pool. The Leader of the Opposition said, 'Swimming pool, my foot!' Well, I join him on that because, Madam Speaker, we are not fools even though the construction of a swimming pool was part of our manifesto for the Municipal elections. Even though myself, hon. Mrs Sewocksingh and hon. Toussaint, we have been going on and on in meetings, saying that we want to have a swimming pool, which was the idea of hon. Mrs Sewocksingh by the way and she campaigned on that. And rightly so! But we are not fools, Madam Speaker, when we read the Supplementary to the Budget, we see that out of Rs75 m. forecasted cost of the Budget, only Rs1 m. were provided for this year to conduct a feasibility study. Therefore, we are announcing now things that we are not sure are feasible. This is the kind of level of Budget that we have today. Nowhere is there money to be seen in next year's forecasted expenditures or the one after that or the one after that. So, for the four years to come, there is no new provision for a swimming pool and, by then, the mandate will have ended. Therefore, I think, *il nous mène en bateau*.

I said to my dear constituents, allow me to apologise on my behalf and on behalf of hon. Mrs Sewocksingh; we campaigned on the swimming pool. We believe on that manifesto that there would be a swimming pool, but I am afraid there will be zero swimming pool in Curepipe. I am afraid they will have to wait for years and years again to ever dip their feet in a swimming pool with the Curepipe temperature.

Second and lastly on Curepipe ...

(Interruptions)

No, if you do it, I am happy because I campaigned on that, but...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Gobin, you just joined the Chamber and I do not want you to interrupt!

Mr A. Duval: The number of measures announced last year have not seen the light of the day this year.

Then, there is *hôtel de ville*, Madam Speaker, and Mrs Nathalie Gopee did a good job. I am very proud of her - the former Mayor. We worked very closely and she made other procedures for the renovation of the Town Hall in Curepipe. *Elle avait fait toutes les*

procédures. Elle avait demandé l'argent au gouvernement central et, malheureusement, pas un sou n'avait été débloqué pour la construction de l'hôtel de ville.

Aujourd’hui, un autre effet d’annonce dans ce budget, Madame la présidente. On annonce la rénovation de l’hôtel de ville. Mais encore une fois, j’ai bien peur que ce n’est qu’un effet annonce, qu’on nous mène encore une fois en bateau, parce qu’il y a zéro roupie qui a été *budgeted* - R 700,000 *budgeted*, Rs410 m. *renovation*. There is no fund to renovate the Town Hall in this budget year. There is no mention in the next budget year nor the one after that or the one after that. And there you go. I hope that we are not, but I fear that we are being taken again for a ride and it is a shame, Madam Speaker.

On that note, I would like to end.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, you have just tabled a document which has been brought to my notice and I am really sorry that the Table cannot accept this document which is neither dated nor signed, but has been typed. I would kindly request you if you could table a copy of the original document which you mentioned in your speech.

Mr A. Duval: I will table, Madam Speaker. Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Okay! Hon. Gayan!

(8.33 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Madame la présidente, je voudrais en premier lieu exprimer à l’honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances toute notre appréciation pour la présentation d’un budget.

(Interruptions)

Par principe des *Standing Orders*, il faut qu’il écoute, parce que c’est un débat et c’est bon d’écouter la vérité.

Je disais, Madame la présidente, que ce budget qui a été présenté par l’honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances est un budget qui a été présenté dans un climat international très difficile. Mais malgré ce climat difficile, le thème de ce budget qui est ‘*Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions*’, s’élève aux défis de nos ambitions, est quelque chose qui donne espoir et donne courage à la population.

Madam Speaker, I wanted to say to this House, that the present international climate is very difficult. We have Donald Trump in the United States who wants to put America first. We have Brexit. We do not know how things will happen on the Brexit talks. We have the United States pulling out of the Paris Climate Agreement on climate with all the major problems that this is going to give rise to, but it is against that particular environment that the hon. Minister of Finance and Prime Minister has presented a Budget which sets out the five central challenges, and I am quoting from paragraph 14 of the Budget, Madam Speaker.

‘First, fostering higher growth for more and better jobs.

Second, investing massively in the infrastructure of the future.

Third, further improving the quality of life of our people.

Fourth, ushering in a New Social Paradigm.

And fifth, consolidating macro-economic fundamentals.’

Madam Speaker, a lot has been said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and the Members of the Opposition about the contribution of India to this Budget. When I listened to the remarks of the hon. Leader of the Opposition on India and when I listened yesterday to hon. Perraud who, en passant, mentioned about what Minister Mentor had said, I feel I am living again in the late 1960s. We are living a time when the PMSD was fighting against Independence; was responsible directly or indirectly for racial riots. We should not forget that we had racial riots in 1968 in this country on the year of independence and, next year, we are going to celebrate 50 years of independence. But while we have moved, the country has moved, the PMSD has not moved. The PMSD has been stuck in time; you are frozen in time. Your reflexes, your reactions are the same: just because India is helping means that we should reject the help of India. Hon. Adrien was talking about Curepipe. Who does not remember what happened? ‘*Malbar nou pa le, enveloper nou pas le.*’ Who does not remember all this, Madam Speaker?

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan! I will just ask you to refrain from making communal remarks.

(*Interruptions*)

Now, I did not talk to you hon. Rutnah!

Mr Gayan: The hon. Leader of the Opposition today was on radio saying that he wants to be the next Prime Minister of this country. That is legitimate. We are in a democracy. Anybody can aspire to be the Prime Minister of this country, but aspiring to be the Prime Minister of this country and using demagogic and using India as an excuse to

mobilise support among the other communities is simply wrong, and we have to denounce it. We have to denounce it because it is undemocratic. In this country, we have democracy; they can say whatever they want about...

(Interruptions)

And they want to be the future leaders of this country when they cannot even take the heat. As they say, 'If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen.' This is the place where you must take the heat.

(Interruptions)

This is the place where you have to take the heat. Madam Speaker, I was talking about the theme of the Budget. This Budget gives hope to all the young people of this country because this Budget speaks about the opening towards Africa. We are also relying very heavily on what China is doing for Mauritius. So, this country is open to the world. We have to be open to the world because Mauritius is too small as an economic player on the international stage.

If you want this country to really become a high-income country where people live like people live in Singapore, then we must branch out, we must go to Africa, we must go to Asia and we must go to India. India, Madam Speaker, has been by the side of Mauritius even before Independence. India has given to Mauritius, only to Mauritius, the possibility of anyone of Indian origin to apply for the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI). And this OCI card allows Mauritians to go to India and to practise any profession, to engage into any business and to do whatever any Indian does except two things –

1. not to be able to vote in Indian elections, and
2. not to be allowed to purchase agricultural land.

But everything else is open. India is a large country, and I believe that we must get our young people to be open to the world. I am sad to have to say, Madam Speaker. When I was the Minister of Health, we had more than 400 doctors who were unemployed. I said to them, 'We have opportunities in African countries, go to these African countries', but no one wants to go. This is wrong because everybody who lives in this country, Madam Speaker, came from somewhere, whether it is Europe, Africa, China or India.

But we are too comfortable in this country. Whatever people on the Opposition side can say, that in Mauritius there is unemployment, there is poverty, but people are comfortable. I will come to that aspect of employment later on, but we must get our young people to be open to the world and to look for opportunities in Africa and elsewhere. That is where prosperity lies. We are investing massively in education, we are training people, we are training engineers, doctors, and Africa needs them.

We need to train nurses; the world needs nurses, the world needs paramedical staff. Germany is looking for nurses. Hon. Adrien spoke of aging population. Aging population is not only in Mauritius, it is all over the world. In Japan, they need nurses in thousands because their aging population is much worse than anywhere in the world. So, we need to look for opportunities, and this Budget sets the stage for those opportunities to be seized, for those opportunities to be taken on board by all those who really want the well-being of this country.

Madam Speaker, I was talking about employment. Today, we are living in a world where things are happening, and things are happening at so fast a speed that we, in Mauritius, sometimes do not even know what is happening. Tectonic shifts are happening all over the world and we need to be able to do something about that. Every Wednesday, Madam Speaker, all my colleagues, and also those in the Opposition I am sure, we go and meet *nos mandants*. 99% of those who come to see us are looking for a job. We tell them, 'But there are jobs in the private sector, there are jobs everywhere, look at all the advertisements.' Hon. Guy Lepoigne and I we were receiving together. He knows, he can confirm that.

Everybody wants a job in the public service or in Air Mauritius or in a parastatal body, Cargo Handling, but this cannot go on. The public service will not be able to absorb everybody. We have to do something about the young people. It is good to talk about leisure and all these things, but the basic thing that we need to instil in the mind of the young people is that we have to take the jobs that are available and not the jobs that are desirable. It is very important, Madam Speaker, that we send this message because we are investing massively in education. This Budget, Madam Speaker, gives billions for training; Rs310 m. have been earmarked for the training for the polytechnics, for *les écoles hôtelières* and all this. All this is being done because we need people in the sectors where jobs exist. There is a mismatch, but we need to address the mismatch between jobs that are available and the training that we provide.

The previous Government, Madam Speaker, committed a crime against this country by saying that there need to be a graduate in every house. Of course, it is good to have a graduate, but graduates who are employable. The employability of graduates is very important. You train people for degrees, diplomas, and no one wants that kind of a degree. Then, we have a serious problem. I think the harm has been done by the previous Government with the complicity of the PMSD. Of course, hon. Baboo was not there, hon. Lepoigne was not there, but you cannot shirk responsibility for what was done during those 10 years. It is too easy just to pass the buck on, but the fact remains that we can work towards

the second economic miracle. It can happen, but we need to have a paradigm shift in the way we do things and in the mentality of our people.

In fact, I think, when we receive our *mandants* - it happened to me recently; a mother came with her daughter and we said that for the PSC there are procedures, etc. But there are jobs in the call centres. The call centres are employing people. The girl was agreeable, but the mother said “no”. And when we go back in time, Madam Speaker, in the 1980s, after the first 60-0 was over, we had the elections in 1983 and the new Government under Sir Anerood Jugnauth started, we went out on missions to Hong Kong and to other Asian countries to attract investors to come and set up factories. People were queuing outside our houses for them to be employed in the factories. I am not saying that all Mauritians need to work in factories, but what I am saying is that we must be open to take whatever jobs are available. It is perfectly in order for anyone to look for a better job. That is perfectly in order, but I am happy that we are going to come with that *Agence nationale de l'emploi*. When that happens, we will know really what is the state of unemployment in this country.

Madam Speaker, this is why this Budget also provides for the negative income tax. This is a very important measure. It helps those who are living in very precarious conditions. But the most important element of this negative income tax is the fact that people will be in employment, in formal employment, and it is only after six months of formal employment that they will be able to benefit from the negative income tax.

Madam Speaker, we have, in this country, a big informal economy; moonlighting as they say in other countries. In fact, in *The Economist* of 13 May, this year, there was an article on Africa’s economy. The title was ‘Dispensing with informalities’. This article speaks, and I quote - and I do attribute. I do not do like some Members of the Opposition who just say things without attributing to who wrote it.

“Common to all men, according to Adam Smith, is “the propensity to truck, barter and exchange”. Less common is a willingness to report all of this enterprise to the authorities (which have a propensity to register, regulate and tax).”

Then, it talks about the informal economy. I was surprised when looking at all the African countries. The African average for informal work masks a wide range from under 25% of GDP in Mauritius and South Africa to about 65% in Nigeria. It is huge! So, the informal economy represents 25% of GDP. This is, Madam Speaker, something that we need to look

into. I am sure that the negative income tax will have a direct impact on this because those who will benefit from the negative income tax, will have to be registered, will have to pay the NPF and they will be part of the formal economy and it is good because productivity is going to increase. The employers will have to be more responsible. So, this landmark proposal in the Budget is going to be a defining moment for the employment sector in this country and, coupled with the *Agence nationale de l'emploi*, this is going to be something which will, I hope, take Mauritius forward from what it is today.

Madam Speaker, let me say a few words about poverty alleviation because in my constituency also there is a lot of *poches de pauvreté*. When we speak about poverty alleviation, we need to speak about it because a country that aspires to be a high-income country cannot afford to have pockets of poverty. We cannot have pockets of poverty because it is inhuman for people to live in conditions in which they live. But it is also important, Madam Speaker, that we speak *la politique de vérité - la vérité* - because the hon. Leader of the Opposition speaks of '*budget menti, menti*'. Let us look at *la vérité* because he, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, spoke of family planning for women, for mothers who have many kids.

Madam Speaker, today in my constituency, a woman came to see us. She has eight children. One is 24, married, and all the others are under her care. The eight children are from eight different men. This is not a one-off case, and I have said to the NGOs that are talking a lot about CSR; they should go to that kind of people to help them to come out of poverty.

(Interruptions)

Sorry!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ramful!

Mr Gayan: The fact is that the NGOs have a responsibility, Madam Speaker, because unless we accompany that category of Mauritians, they will not be able to be uplifted out of poverty. We have a responsibility towards them. So, when we talk of poverty alleviation, we need to look at it holistically. It is not a one-off. I give you a house and that is the end of the matter. It is not that I come and give you some money and that is the end of the matter. It has to be accompanied. But there must be that social responsibility and the responsibility of the parents to send their kids to school. There is no better instrument to climb the social ladder than education. Education is critical. Many of us here have been able to be where we are

because of education. And we have free education, Madam Speaker, free transport. So, it is difficult to accept that parents do not send their kids to school.

It is important that we say all these things to the people because it is all right to come here, we make a beautiful speech and all this and then that is the end of the matter. But we have to face these people every week, every day. So, it is a partnership that I am proposing between Government and all those who need support. It is possible to do wonders in this country provided we all work together, but, of course, if you have an Opposition that is demagogical, that comes here to speak about high principles, Madam Speaker - this becomes high principles; I will come to some of the high principles that they speak of. But we have to be truthful to our country. It is easy for hon. Adrien Duval to say that this Budget is *effet d'annonce*, that nothing is going to happen, that for the swimming pool at Curepipe, there will have to be a feasibility study. But, of course, there have to be a feasibility study. How can you do something like a swimming pool in Curepipe, of all places, in Curepipe, without a feasibility study? I live in Curepipe. In fact, I was walking on my lawn today and – yes, he lives in Grand Gaube and he is applying Grand Gaube temperatures and climate to a place like Curepipe! How can that be?

Its good he is coming back to listen. We have had rain continuously in Curepipe for about three to four weeks. So, there has to be a feasibility study for any swimming pool. It is normal! You need to have the soil test, you need to see where you are going to place it, and you need to know whether it has to be a heated swimming pool or where you are going to place it. And Curepipe is not covered. You know, Mauritians like comfort. If you give them an unheated swimming pool in Curepipe, you are in deep trouble.

But let me come to *effet d'annonce*. Hon. Xavier Duval presented his first Budget as Minister of Finance on 04 November 2011. He announced ‘*construction du Harbour Bridge pour traverser le port, des Salines au centre-ville.*’ He proposed ‘*partenaire stratégique pour l'exploitation des ressources minérales dans les eaux mauriciennes.*’

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: *Ça c'est politique de vérité...*

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: That was in 2011. I did not know that we have mineral resources in our Mauritian waters which are ready for exploitation, but that was an announcement made in the Budget in 2011 by Xavier-Luc Duval.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: This is not *menti menti*, Madam Speaker. This is true true.

(*Interruptions*)

Then, he also announced in 2011 ‘*lancement d’incubateur pour aider les jeunes développeurs d’applications.*’ Hon. Adrien Duval, maybe you should listen to what your dad said in 2011! ‘*Lancement d’incubateur pour aider les jeunes développeurs d’applications.*’ *Effet d’annonce ! ‘Création d’un Emerging Leaders Award sous la direction de Robin Sharma.*’ That was the great time when hon. Xavier Duval and the former Prime Minister were on the best of terms.

(*Interruptions*)

They are still! He also announced ‘*le Grand’ Baie Conference Centre mis à la disposition des artistes.*’ I heard hon. Adrien Duval talking about the artists. His dad, in 2011, proposed ‘*le Grand’ Baie Conference Centre mis à la disposition des artistes.*’ And then, in 2012, Madam Speaker - nothing happened in 2012 - ‘*un repas chaud avec cantine dans toutes les écoles ZEP. Lancement de deux projets pilotes, un aquaculture au Morne et à Mahebourg.*’

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: *Création des fermes d’aquacoles au large de Rodrigues.*

(*Interruptions*)

Création des fermes d’aquacoles, pas à Rodrigues, mais au large de Rodrigues. How *au large* it was, I do not know, but it was *au large*. ‘*Lancement d’une école de kitesurf au Morne, construction d’un marché moderne à Quatre Bornes.*’ That was 2012. 2013 now!

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, do not interrupt him! We are already late! Allow him to continue!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: 2013, ‘*introduction de la télévision privée. Construction d’un tunnel à travers la montagne des Signaux vers le Champ de Mars. Crédit d’orchestre dans les écoles et création d’une troupe culturelle nationale. Collecte et réexportation des bouteilles en plastique, reconstruction du Forum à Curepipe.*’

(*Interruptions*)

Effets d’annonce !

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: So, what we have heard from the Opposition, Madam Speaker, is simply fake news, alternative facts, false news. But let me come to another true news from the PMSD. Hon. Adrien Duval was talking a lot about drugs, young people! He forgets how Cindy Legallant was able to get VIP Lounge facilities at the airport!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: VIP facilities to avoid luggage being checked under normal conditions! That was Subutex, and I wonder who asked for VIP Lounge facilities for Cindy Legallant. Somebody has to ask a PQ on that.

(*Interruptions*)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker, keeps talking about advertising everything, calling for tenders and giving everybody a chance; meritocracy. Okay, let us see what the PMSD has done. I have, Madam Speaker, a brief on Fun Island. Fun Island has submitted an application for a platform and a security boat to be used as an artificial island inside the lagoon with embarkation point at Black River.

The shareholding structure of Fun Island was one Mr Fanchette, François Gérard Patrick, Mr Dana Laksmi Kamachi, Mr Jean Baptiste and Mr Phillippe Harel.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, do not talk to the hon. Member.

Mr Gayan: Now, this, I do not know what happened, but from Black River, the Fun Island submitted another application in October 2013 and then it was approved not for Black River, it was approved for Mont Choisy.

What happened at Mont Choisy, this Mr Fanchette submitted a request. Originally, it was for 30 persons for that floating island. Then, it increased from 30 to 80. Then, questions started being asked: how was it possible for something that was meant for 30 persons to accommodate 80 persons? And then something happened. From my information, it appears that when the information was asked, that particular platform was towed from Mont Choisy to somewhere else and it sank.

(Interruptions)

Let me give another example. When hon. Duval was Minister of Tourism, Government started 'Discover Mauritius Ltd' and, again, a company was formed 'Island Monitoring Ltd', represented by its Director, Mr Patrick Fanchette.

(Interruptions)

Yes, and this Island Monitoring Ltd had somehow managed to get on lease Flat Island. You remember Flat Island, hon. Duval went to have big celebrations and all this! You know!

(Interruptions)

You remember!

(Interruptions)

Discover Mauritius Ltd, which is a Government entity, entered into a joint venture agreement with Island Monitoring Ltd. And Discover Mauritius Ltd was represented by whom, Madam Speaker? By its Chairman, Robert Valentino Pallamy and its Manager was Mr Joseph Hugo Thierry Henry...

(Interruptions)

For the development, yes, I do not ...

(Interruptions)

And then they come to talk about nepotism, they come to give us lessons.

(Interruptions)

Wait! It is not over! Wait! It is not over. Be ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Perraud, ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Now, do not interrupt! I have said...

(Interruptions)

But do not interrupt! Why are you now arguing with me? I am asking everybody not to interrupt. Now, you start arguing with me!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: Then, things happened, there were conditions attached to the Flat Island lease by the Ministry of Agro-Industry. The terms and conditions were not complied with.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: If you continue, I will suspend.

Mr Gayan: And then the Minister of Agro-Industry cancelled the lease to Discover Mauritius. And then the Island Monitoring Ltd claimed damages under the joint venture agreement, and it claimed damages from those who are in the joint venture company and it so happened that when the claim for damages came up, Mr Robert Pallamy, Mr Thierry Henry and Mr Brian Lin had already taken leave of the company.

Madam Speaker, hon. Seeruttun mentioned about the impact of stray dogs and cats in the country and also in the tourism industry. In the year 2007, because there was a problem of stray dogs and pets and ravens, the Tourism Fund approved a project to deal with that problem. And the project was financed by the Tourism Fund for the activities related to dog catching, dog sterilisation, and coordinating and supervising the whole programme of catching, sterilising and other related issues.

The first approval, Madam Speaker, on 16 November 2007, was for Rs2 m. for six months and, for each dog caught, the MSPCA then will be refunded an amount of Rs225 and

each dog sterilised by PAWS, an amount of Rs375 would be refunded to PAWS to meet its costs.

(Interruptions)

And the Board also approved the payment of a travelling allowance to the project coordinator, Mr Steve Aza, and then, on 22 February 2008, the Board agreed to pay to the MSPCA Rs300 for dogs caught at night.

(Interruptions)

There were lots of things happening. Then, a year later, the Board approved a new rate of Rs600 to be disbursed for the sterilisation of dogs and cats by PAWS. And you know, Madam Speaker, at a special meeting held on 17 September 2009, the Board agreed to extend the programme with new tariffs for Rs280 for an animal caught by day, and Rs320 for an animal caught at night plus Rs30 as incentive for the dog catcher to increase output.

(Interruptions)

And then for cats, the tariff was Rs270, but, anyway, to cut a long story short, Madam Speaker, the amount that was disbursed to PAWS from February 2008 to June 2010, Rs8,626,659.12. And for the coordinator, Mr Steve Aza, from December 2007 to June 2010 for travelling, Rs1,000,043.33, and then they come to talk about principles. *Ça résultat lor résultat.*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, can I ask you, for how long you have...

Mr Gayan: I have another 15 to 20 minutes, Madam Speaker, or I can stop at this time.

Madam Speaker: Can I ask the Deputy Speaker to take over.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

... I think my colleagues on this side did not hear properly the amount, so I am going to repeat the amount given to PAWS from the Tourism Fund from February 2008 to June 2010; Rs8,626,659.12.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, I am being asked for information about who is behind PAWS. Who knows who is behind PAWS?

(Interruptions)

I think it is one Mrs Hardy!

(Interruptions)

Bouillabaisse was in France.

(Interruptions)

Mont Blanc!

(Interruptions)

And you want this kind of people to be Prime Minister of this country?

(Interruptions)

Anyway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

I have something else to say about the Citadelle, but since the point has been made about the way of governance of the PMSD when they are in charge of authorities like the Tourism Authority...

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, when you are a Minister, you hear lots of things, but I do not believe what I hear until I check. I heard that somebody who was related to hon. Duval had companies which were given licences by the Tourism Authority; one was born to fly and

born to sail. I checked and I saw that all the applications made on behalf of those two companies were made by a company called Nexia.

(*Interruptions*)

So, that is why I say it is alright to come before this House to pretend and adopt a holier than thou attitude...

(*Interruptions*)

They are blameless!

(*Interruptions*)

When the reality is different, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! What they say here is *menti menti* and then they pose as the *donneurs de leçons à la jeunesse*.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to say this not because I have any grudge against any Member of the Opposition...

(*Interruptions*)

No. In fact, I am on the best of terms with my *colistier*, hon. Guy Lepoigneur. I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that yesterday, my friend hon. Lepoigneur raised the issue of a widow. We discussed this matter. Let me say that had I been in his place, I would not have done that.

(*Interruptions*)

I would not have done that.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Deputy Speaker...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Allow the hon. Minister to make his speech!

Mr Gayan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in this House, this is a democracy. In this Parliament, we are on the Government side they are in the Opposition. Everybody has the right to speak. We can agree to disagree or we can disagree to agree, but this is what democracy is all about.

In fact, yesterday, Mr Deputy Speaker, I was watching the first session of the House of Commons after the elections in the United Kingdom. *Quel plaisir!* What a delight! The elegance, the way the Prime Minister talked, the Leader of the Opposition and all the leaders of the parties talked! There was a certain *hauteur* in the way they addressed each other. Of course, they did not agree with each other. They were on opposite sides!

But what we hear, calling names, mentioning the names of people who are not in this House, who cannot defend themselves, striking below the belt. This is undignified and this is something which has to be condemned in this House!

(Interruptions)

Civil servants! They keep brandishing the names of people who have no right to defend because in this House you have immunity, you can get away with anything you say because no action can be taken against you! This is not what true democracy is all about.

I was hoping, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I was going to speak after hon. Bhadain today, but whatever happens he is going to speak. I wanted to say one thing to hon. Bhadain. When this Government started its life in December 2014 - I have been a Minister before. I had worked with two Prime Ministers. I know what it is to be in Cabinet and what is the role of a Minister in Cabinet. Cabinet can only function, Mr Deputy Speaker, if Ministers have absolute trust in each other. If there is no trust, no Cabinet can function. I am not disclosing any Cabinet secret, but I am saying the procedure. When, as a Minister, I bring something to Cabinet, my colleague Ministers must trust implicitly that I am not going to mislead them. It is the same for me when I read a document from another Minister. That is what the doctrine of collective responsibility is all about. If we do not have that doctrine of collective responsibility, the whole foundation of democracy collapses.

When hon. Bhadain started his career as a Minister, I had full trust in him until the time came when he started bringing very important issues at a stage in Cabinet when you have to proceed by way of a memorandum. That is when I said that we need to test whatever that particular Minister is coming to Cabinet with and it is a pity that he is a Minister for the

first time, but it is very important for those who will be Ministers after us and for those who are Ministers for the first time to understand that the very basis of Cabinet, Government, is absolute trust among the Ministers.

(Interruptions)

Someone will reply to hon. Bhadain whenever he speaks, but I regret it is not me, but never mind! That is the way life is. That is the way democracy functions, but I am sure my colleagues will be able to give him what he needs to be told.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah will do the needful.

Let me say a few words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about *les Assises du Tourisme*. I understand hon. Jhuboo was a bit critical about *les Assises du Tourisme*, but I would like to place on the Table of the Assembly an article from *Business Magazine* of today which speaks of *les Assises du Tourisme et les attentes des opérateurs entendues*.

We had *les Assises du Tourisme*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because for the last 10 years, there has been no thinking about where the industry is going. It has been *ad hoc* and it has been going on without any intellectual input in how we want the industry to proceed. We have had conventional tourism, but we are now moving into sustainable tourism. So, it is a new mindset that we need to look at, and this why we had *les Assises du Tourisme*. We addressed lots of issues. I am very happy to say we had about 300 stakeholders. They all came and they all participated fully in the work of these *Assises*. One of the things that we came up with during *les Assises* is to enhance the visibility of the destination, Mauritius.

In fact, the Budget speaks about opening up of KLM, which is going to start its service in October. This is a major development for Mauritius. It is going to open all of North Europe to the hub of Amsterdam. So, the arrival of KLM is a game changer as far as tourism is concerned. Hon. Duval, the Leader of the Opposition, was saying, ‘Oh, this year we have had 6.4% growth in the tourism sector. I do not like to brag. I gave him a *rendez-vous* in December, then we will see the reality of the situation. We are doing lots of things in the tourism sector to boost arrivals, not only to boost arrivals, but to increase the spending by tourists in Mauritius by expanding the range of activities where they can spend money.

I have been impressing upon the hoteliers that the tourists must engage with the local communities. They must know what is happening in the country. Instead of keeping the tourists inside the hotel, I am encouraging them to go out and meet the people. Mauritians are friendly people, we are safe a destination, we are a secured destination. We want to have *des tables d'hôtes*, we want the tourists to go and have a meal anywhere in Mauritius. We want them to travel, whether by bus, taxi, contract car or whatever, because Mauritius has a lot to offer. I keep saying it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius is the only country in the world where within the radius of 1Km, you can have a Hindu temple, you can have a mosque, you can have a pagoda and a Christian church. Nowhere in the world do we have this. We have an infinite variety of cultures. We teach lots of languages and, in fact, tomorrow, I will be addressing a meeting on sustainable tourism to an international organisation that has come for a meeting, and I will be talking about these issues because tourism is the industry of the future. Tourism can become like the sugar cane industry. What the sugar cane industry was in the past? It has lots of potential, but we must be prepared to invest in human resources. We must have a research unit that responds very fast to emerging trends and new challenges.

All this we have to do, and this is why *les Assises du Tourisme* have been so successful and I am very happy that we have had various speakers because it helps everyone to understand the nature of the challenges facing us, and we also need to understand that tourism will succeed when every Mauritian becomes a stakeholder in the industry. We must develop the sense of ownership by everyone because when everybody owns the industry, everyone is going to protect the industry.

It is important for us also to do other things. We want to embark on medical tourism, and I am glad hon. Joomaye is one of the pioneers in that field. There are lots of things that we can do. But for us to be able to do that, we must not - and I make an appeal to the media not to blow up any small incident that occurs in the country, because today with the digital world, everything is broadcasted worldwide. Anything can happen, anywhere. In London, there were terrorist attacks, two attacks in three weeks. But when a small country like Mauritius has bad news, it does a lot of damage. Paris, despite its attacks, happened to generate more tourists after the attacks because it is an established destination. It has resilience, whereas Tunisia had an attack and until today, what is broadcasted, Mr Deputy Speaker? It is not the beauty of Tunisia. I do not know how many, in this House, have been to Tunisia. Tunisia is a wonderful country with a lot of history.

(Interruptions)

I will come to Egypt. But what they are showing is the blood on the white sand, on the Tunisian beach. No amount of advertising, no amount of marketing can change that. I was talking of a big hotel chain in Egypt, in Sharm El Sheikh. After the attacks, the occupancy is 5%. The industry is killed. So, this is why my appeal to the Opposition also and to the media that this industry belongs to all of us. A lot of people live of this industry, one in every 10 jobs depends on the tourism industry. So, we have a stake in its continued survival and its continued success.

This is why I say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that tourism holds a lot of promise. We are going to go into eco-tourism and we are going to open Mauritius to the tourists. But we must also bear in mind that, at the end of the day, Mauritius will be what we make Mauritius. We cannot, as Mauritians, continue to diminish our country. We must have a sense of pride in our country. This is why this Budget gives us that pride and it gives us confidence in the future. I think, once again, before I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister needs all our congratulations for having presented a Budget of a great nation.

Thank you, very much.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour!

At 9.34 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.39 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Wong Yen Cheong!

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to join my colleagues who preceded me in the present debates to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his third Budget.

A series of measures have already been announced in the two previous Budgets presented since this Government came into power, and added to that, we have a whole gamut of new measures and initiatives aiming at propelling our country at a higher level of its development, be it economic, social or infrastructural, amongst others.

Unfortunately, we cannot prevent people from being demagogical. Being in a democracy, we must accept the fact that some people make comments and express their pseudo-disagreement, just for a show, the more so that we now have the live broadcasting of the proceedings of the National Assembly. But, believe me, if they were, or for some if they were still on this side of the House, they would have applauded the measures announced.

The title of the Budget 2017/2018, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, perfectly matches with the vision and, above all, the mission of this Government. We have ambitions for our country and its people and we will do whatever is necessary to rise up to these challenges.

This Government has announced its vision, and irrespective of what Members on the other side of the House say, we, on this side, are committed to initiate the required actions, which will make things happen and achieve our goals.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2017/2018 is a historic landmark Budget with a clear vision and strategic plan. Vision 2030 looms large in the Budget Speech which, *inter alia*, hinges on wealth creation, decent job, narrowing of the gap between rich and poor and alleviation of absolute poverty. Moreover, the Budget strikes the right balance between growth, investment, job creation and poverty alleviation, amongst others.

In fact, the Budget “Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions” stands on five major pillars, which are -

- (1) fostering higher growth for more and better jobs;
- (2) investing massively in the infrastructure of the future;
- (3) further improving the quality of life of our people;
- (4) ushering a new social paradigm, and
- (5) consolidating macro-economic fundamentals.

The five pillars together give the Budget 2017/2018 a comprehensive and integrated approach for a new era of socioeconomic development. It is also a realistic achievable Budget, far from rhetoric. This Government means business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, the Budget 2017/2018 is a balanced Budget with a strong dose of “social”. There is almost 50% of the total budget outlay devoted to the Social Ministries with a panoply of measures meant to improve the quality of life of our citizens, mainly the most vulnerable ones.

It is also the conviction of this Government that we should not pursue growth for growth sake. It is our belief that meaningful development requires that the benefits of growth percolate down to the people, to the grassroots; otherwise, growth is meaningless for the many and prosperity for the privileged few. This Government does not propose to create such a society *à deux ou plusieurs vitesses*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is sad to note that some people, on the other side of the House, are using poverty to make petty politics. On hearing their arguments on the whole aspect of the fight against poverty, we get the impression that their only wish is that we fail on this particular front and that more and more people get stuck into the poverty trap, thus giving them scope to criticise, do cheap politics on the back of poor people, and get people's sympathy. I believe that is disgusting.

What have we not heard since the beginning of the present debates? One example is that more than 8,000 families have benefitted from the subsistence allowance, and the hon. Leader of the Opposition ironically asks if these families have come out of poverty. Let us not be ridiculous. We are all conscious that in the present technological era, many things can be done in a click. But I fear that it might not be the case for poverty eradication.

If things could be done so easily, then I should ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition how many families he took out of poverty during his tenure of office as Minister of Social Integration and Minister of Finance.

(Interruptions)

If you see that, year after the year, the number of people that are benefiting from Social Register keep on increasing, then I don't believe that there was any fight at all.

Our aim regarding the absolute poverty is to empower the poor and all spheres of society by encouraging families to engage in education and economic activities.

Government, amongst others, proposes to enhance empowerment support programmes through a case management approach so that these poor families move out of the poverty trap and become self-sustaining.

In this context, the National Empowerment Foundation will recruit additional Case Management Officers to better serve the beneficiaries.

This Budget also aims at harmonising social policies to provide integrated support to pro-poor programmes and instilling a culture of monitoring and evaluation. Side by side, a number of programmes on skill enhancement through education and training are proposed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me point out that it is the first time that Government is coming up with a participatory approach in public policy formulation. In fact, the use of the online Citizen Support Portal would particularly benefit those of the lowest rung of the ladder in not only accessing public service, but also give their views and suggestions for a better service delivery.

Understanding that many might not be computer literate, they will get the assistance and help of CAB officers. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to dwell on some specific measures regarding which much progress is being achieved.

Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire Schools (ZEP Schools). As the House is aware, last year, a pilot project was introduced regarding five ZEP schools under the Marshall Plan against Poverty. The objective was mainly to assist in improving learning in community schools. It is comforting to note that the project is being extended to five additional schools during financial year 2017-2019. Thank you, Minister of Finance.

Secondly, there is a new social paradigm. As I stated earlier, this Government is reiterating its unflinching commitment in alleviating absolute poverty by embarking on a new social paradigm. It is, therefore, a matter of pride to announce that my Ministry has already paid Subsistence Allowance to more than 8,000 families to the tune of Rs105 m. since December 2016.

Whatever some on the other side of the House might say, the Subsistence Allowance is an income support that is being paid to beneficiaries living below the absolute poverty threshold per adult basis to ensure that the basic needs of families are met. It also entitles beneficiaries to have access to other conditional cash transfers such as Child Allowance, Crèche Voucher, School Premium, Resit Exam Fees and school materials, and to benefit from other empowerment programmes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to seize this opportunity to commend another breakthrough measure announced to address the issue of absolute poverty and promote economic empowerment, namely the Negative Income Tax. It is the first time that a Minister of Finance dares to come up with such a revolutionary measure. It is an '*avant-gardiste*'

measure which will go a long way in alleviating poverty and narrowing the gap between the rich and the poor.

In the same line, the Solidarity Levy of 5% is yet another bold measure which is being introduced. This Solidarity Levy is meant to reduce inequality between rich and poor. This measure will target high-income earners whose chargeable income plus dividend is above Rs4.5 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Corporate Social Responsibility is also an important component. And the National CSR Foundation is instrumental in advancing the cause of vulnerable groups. Applications have been received from a number of Non-Governmental Organisations for project funding, and disbursement is expected before the end of June 2017. The National CSR Funding is primarily meant to benefit vulnerable groups and beneficiaries of the Marshall Plan Social Contract.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I mentioned it earlier. Pursuing poverty alleviation is a priority. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister of Finance, much of poverty problems stems from inadequate and poor housing conditions. We are fully conscious of this fact. And it is worth noting that Government is allocating Rs6.8 billion for the construction of social and low income housing units for thousands of poor and low income families. Government is looking forward to those living in absolute poverty can have decent living conditions, whereby facilitating their integration and economic empowerment.

This House will appreciate that Government is demonstrating its full commitment towards absolute poverty alleviation. Another example is the increase in budgetary provision for social assistance benefits scheme by 34%, that is, from Rs297 m. (2016-2017) to Rs398.5 m. for the year 2017-2018.

With that significant increase, my Ministry will be in a better position to meet the aspirations and expectations of the most deserving people. The enactment of the Social Integration and Empowerment Act 2016 is landmark in the history of poverty alleviation and economic empowerment in Mauritius.

This piece of legislation has enabled the payment of a monthly subsistence allowance to eligible SRM beneficiaries. Mr Deputy Speaker, this initiative inevitably demonstrates the compassion and social responsibility of the Government towards the less fortunate people of our country.

I am confident that this legal framework will significantly help to improve the lot of the absolute poor and get them out of the poverty trap.

To enable the implementation of the Subsistence Allowance Scheme, my Ministry has elaborated a Marshall Plan Social Contract, which constitutes the backbone of the overall reform encapsulated in the Marshall Plan against Poverty. As at to date, it is worth mentioning that some 8,300 social contracts have been signed.

By signing the Marshall Plan Social Contract, beneficiaries receive a number of benefits, services, programmes and facilities in the area of education, training employment, health, child and family development, sports and leisure and business facilities, as provided by key service providers.

Mr Deputy Speaker allow me to tell you that, during his speech on the Budget 2017-18, the hon. Leader of the Opposition made some remarks on which I would like to comment. First, he made reference to paragraph 300 of the last Budget Speech, quoting –

“There will thus be no person living in conditions of absolute poverty in our country.”

As rightly stated in the speech of the then Rt. hon. Prime Minister on the Vision 2030, this Government is taking appropriate measures to alleviate if not eradicating poverty. Therein, it was stipulated that –

“There is no magic solution to addressing the issues of unemployment and poverty”.

- the Ministry of Social Integration has been created since 2010, and up to now, the battle against absolute poverty is still ongoing.
- in fact, it goes without saying that poverty is a battle across years and this Government has already started the process through the payment of the Subsistence Allowance, which is meant to help the vulnerable families invest in health, education and other basic needs. It is the first tool of empowerment put in place, and through this assistance, this Government is not promoting ‘*assistanat*’, but is empowering the families to be self-sufficient, and follow-up is in fact being made through periodic Case Management.

- moreover, providing a monthly allowance for a period of even one year, empowers the poor and brings a relief to them.

With regard to the statement of hon. Duval saying ‘there are more persons living in conditions of poverty than previously’, I would like to point out that –

- the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment has taken proactive stand to ensure that only the genuine poor are being targeted for pro-poor programmes. The 8,000 families, referred to by the hon. Leader of the Opposition are those who have been registered under the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) through a Proxy Means Test (PMT) by December 2016.
- the Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) was, in fact, launched in year 2012, as being a tool for identifying the poor and their socioeconomic profile. This Government has adopted this very system to target the poor, as recommended by UNDP. It is worth noting that the SRM system is a systematic and scientific means in determining the eligibility of families.
- as at date, there are more than 8,900 eligible families, proving that the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment is ensuring that maximum poor people are taken on board, and the process of registration under SRM, which is dynamic, is ongoing.

The Leader of the Opposition also made reference to ‘accompanying measures and social contract signed by families’.

- payment of Subsistence Allowance has started as from December 2016 and the following empowerment measures have been taken by the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment -
 - (a) Needs assessment of families to ensure needs-based interventions. This exercise is primordial to ensure enforcement of Marshall Plan Social Contract to tap on the real needs of the families, so that no programmes are dumped on families.
 - (b) Children have been empowered through education schemes such as School Materials, Crèches Voucher, and School Premium. It is an undeniable fact that poverty perpetuates from generation to generation and this Government is targeting on education of

children as a priority. The children of today will give a leeway to ‘no poverty’ in the future through literacy and employability.

The hon. Leader of Opposition mentioned that NEF has not constructed a single housing unit since the election. I have to inform the House that NEF catered for CIS housing units for victims of fire since 2015. Those fire victims also received an allowance from the Ministry of Social Security.

With regard to the previous CCIS houses constructed in the previous Government which have been labelled as ‘*lacaz boîte allumette*’, this Government has taken the initiative of providing a more decent housing unit to the vulnerable families. The Full Concrete Housing Scheme shares the same idea that poor families deserve the right to have a decent housing condition.

141 families have registered for the scheme and, as date, 47 families have already signed social contracts and BLP procedures are already processed at the level of NEF.

A re-tendering exercise has been carried out for three districts, which represent 55 families. This would bring a total of 102 families who shall be considered for the scheme shortly.

I have to remind the House that this scheme is catering for landowners only and the remaining 40 applicants have been kept in abeyance due to discrepancies on title deed/land area, etc.

As agreed by the Ministry of Housing and Lands, 10% of the NHDC houses constructed will be reserved for these families registered and eligible under the SRM scheme and who are considered as landless.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me talk a little bit about my constituency. Since my appointment as Minister of this Government, my objective has also been that my Constituency No.1, Port-Louis West-Grand River North West, should not be left behind when it comes to development and infrastructural progress.

It is, therefore, with much satisfaction that I note that, in the present Budget, major projects have been announced for Constituency No.1.

- (i) wastewater projects in Pailles and Pointe-aux-Sables;
- (ii) construction of drains at Pointe-aux-Sables;

- (iii) a new traffic centre in Pointe-aux-Sables, and
- (iv) a new passenger Terminal Building at Les Salines to accommodate cruise and inter-island passenger traffic.

And I am sure that many, many from my constituency will be able to get a job there.

Since this Government is in power, so much has been done in Constituency No.1, and I was the target of hon. Armance, unfortunately, during all his speech. I did not listen because I was busy; I had some work to do in my office. I never listened and I do not want to listen, but I heard that I was the target. I do not know why.

(Interruptions)

I do not know why, but I can say he keep on saying – I heard a few – “*Eh vous-autres, il y a de la pauvreté! Eh vous-autres il y a du désordre ! Eh vous-autres...*” There are five deputies in that constituency and works have not been done.

(Interruptions)

If you do not see me, *il y a réciprocité, parce que si tu ne me vois pas, je ne te vois pas!* *C'est normal!*

(Interruptions)

I have the list and I have proof of it day-to-day because luckily today there are so much social media; Facebook and things like that. You can see day to day, every day, what I am doing and where I am. You can follow me. My life is public.

(Interruptions)

And you know what, when hon. Armance said, “nothing has been done”, you know, one of the first things he said he was doing, there was pavement at Grand River North West in front of hon. Patrice Armance’s office, and that was one of the first works that was done. He did not say it! And there was a traffic light which was long due – the hon. Member knows very well. This traffic light next to Montée ‘S’ from the junction going to Petite Rivière is there. There has been cleaning and embellishment of the nine beaches - that was completely blocked - of the constituency in not less than two occasions in two years.

(Interruptions)

I personally made a gift. There was an old container that was being used by the fishermen in Pointe-aux-Sables. I made a gift; a new one to these fishermen there. It is there. They are using it as '*a cabane de pêcheurs*'. We are going to make it better. There are resurfacing of roads at La Tour Koenig, Prison Road, Pointe-aux-Sables, Morcellement Rey; construction of drains in Pointe-aux-Sables, Montée 'S', St Louis street, Avenue Soleil, and I will come again on this. There are so many. Let me tell you! I have a list, in fact...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Order !

Mr Wong Yen Cheong : I am sure you also are satisfied because you have been elected for the same thing ; for the wealth and for the well-being of our constituency. I am sure. You know it very well! You are blessed with this. We are going to work. We are going to make it better. I got it from NDU. It is the list of projects for year 2016-2017 and I have also from 2015-2017, but let me start from here -

- construction of access road to public beach from newly built bridge at Sables Noir, GRNW, at the cost of Rs2.5 m.

(Interruptions)

Completed!

- resurfacing of N. Oosman Street, Cassis, to the tune of Rs859,000. Completed!
- resurfacing of La Tour Koenig Road (From MITD to MEDCO Bhujoharry College), to the tune of nearly Rs3 m. Completed!
- resurfacing of Prison Road, Pointe- aux-Sables, nearly Rs2 m. Completed!
- resurfacing of Marguerite Street (near Primary School), La Tour Koenig, to the tune of over Rs1 m.;
- resurfacing of A. Tank Wan Street, La Butte, to the tune of Rs1,5 m. Completed!
- resurfacing of Requin Road, Debarcadère. Completed!
- resurfacing of Hortensia Avenue, La Tour Koenig, to the tune Rs656,000. Completed! resurfacing of Lane of Peupliers (Near Atlas Rd), Pointe-aux-Sables, half a million rupees, completed;

- resurfacing of Tecoma Street, Morcellement Rey, Pointe-aux-Sables, completed, Rs1.7 m. completed;
- resurfacing of L. Fok Seung, Cassis, Rs651,330, completed;
- resurfacing of Umar Road, we call it Empereur Road, Débarcadère, Pointe-aux-Sables, Rs810,000, completed;
- resurfacing of Fossilia Avenue, La Tour Koenig, half a million rupees, completed;
- resurfacing of Muguets Avenue, La Tour Koenig, completed.

(Interruptions)

I need a glass of water to continue.

(Interruptions)

- resurfacing of Glaieuls Avenue, La Tour Koenig: Rs258,641, completed;
- resurfacing of Jasmin Avenue...

(Interruptions)

There are many resurfacing works. I can carry on like this. There are a few pages.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Wong Yen Cheong: Unfortunately, no one will see me doing it and whatever.

(Interruptions)

I promise you that I will go quicker. I will avoid this. Okay.

But I must say that there is one thing that strikes me. I find, at the last page, those which have been canceled. It is true. It has been canceled. Why? My two colleagues from my constituency know. There is a construction of a lane of Pailles Road - listen to that very well - near Gaz Industriel, Grande Rivière North West. Whose office is there?

(Interruptions)

Armance! It has been canceled why? Because he went with hon. PPS Abbas Mamode there, and he put that in the list! And when it was found that it was a private road, they canceled it.

It is the same like the drain that was done. I know you go in the constituency; I do not say that you are never there. I know, we met. You go in front of his House, the drain was built there first! This is the kind of person, *il se sert d'abord, avant le peuple*.

(Interruptions)

I will come up with different things. Some have been canceled. Let me go through it. My God! It is a long list.

(Interruptions)

Sorry?

(Interruptions)

We will come to it. I know, I agree with you also. We have the same aim: to be the constituent there. We are aware of this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with all these projects I have just mentioned and the forthcoming projects announced in the present Budget, I fail to understand that some people say that nothing has been done. It is so easy. You know why? Because it is being registered on the TV now, on all the net, it is so easy; it is the same way, the same rhetoric. Nothing has been done. It is so easy to say *narien pas faire*.

We cannot say that. We cannot be demagogue that way. We must admit that things are being done. And I should be happy when my colleagues from my constituency come with me, if they can take a rack, take something to clean, when I go cleaning. I will be glad that you come and meet me together. You do not want to come, but I wish because this is the leadership we show to the people. Or perhaps, should we understand that these people have done nothing when they were in Government and that they are generalising that inaction. In that connection, I would just like to remind the House who were the PPSs who were responsible for the realisation of NDU Projects for Constituency No.1 from 2010 to December 2016.

(Interruptions)

There was hon. Aurore Perraud.

(Interruptions)

And then there was hon. Abbas Mamode.

(*Interruptions*)

And I think, you know, the responsibilities of PMSD, and I can state that so many projects were never completed.

(*Interruptions*)

And I remember the face of the two former PPSs. Once hon. Armance was making a statement here, in his speech, and he mentioned and rightly said. We know it; there was that bridge in Sable Noir. It is a shame. Do you know why? They go and put a bridge, they did not know where it ends. It ends on a private property. Such a big waste! What are we doing to do now?

(*Interruptions*)

We will have to find the owner. We will have to find a way. We are going to do it.

(*Interruptions*)

Thank you very much because it is long overdue. It is a big shame. It is the same like dredging Canal Dayot. We are doing it now. Thanks to the Minister now - we have talked - because it was long overdue. It was voted; they have done it, but we are going to do it better.

Hopefully, today, we are freed by some '*poids lourds*'.

(*Interruptions*)

Come on! We say '*poids lourds*' ...

(*Interruptions*)

I believe it is my turn to talk and I was talking about my constituency.

(*Interruptions*)

And I cannot understand also. I can have the proof today that drain is not measured by the BMI. You know, when I hear some statements and remarks, I realise that the animal world and the brain is not proportional to the size of the body.

Anyway, I have spared you and thanks they are not here, because there were three lists like this for three years. It is here. We have the proof and it is signed, and it comes from the Prime Minister's Office. So, these are official documents that can be seen by all Members.

Let me just conclude. I am just happy that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, through the Budget 2017-18, has provided adequate leeway for social Ministries to significantly improve the quality of life for our less privileged citizens and has also provided a roadmap to attain the long-term Vision 2030.

The various practical measures and pragmatic approach characterising the Budget 2017-2018 demonstrates how one can make things happen if one is committed and has the willpower to make a positive difference in the life of people.

With proper implementation, monitoring and evaluation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have absolutely no doubt that our fight against poverty will, in the very near future, be a relic to the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me end here! I would say that with this Government the country will experience a new wave of prosperity and a higher level of quality of life for one and all.

The measures announced in the Budget Speech 2017-2018 are audacious and we have a great challenge ahead of us, but as it is so well said by Corneille -

« À vaincre sans péril, on triomphe sans gloire ».

I thank you for listening.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Benydin!

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 15 June 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

MATTERS RAISED

MALARTIC STREET, ROSE HILL – REINSTATEMENT

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My address is to the Deputy Prime Minister, who also is the MP of Rose Hill constituency. It concerns the state of the road at Malartic Street.

The Central Electricity Board has carried out excavation works - it was due - for the laying of cables. So, my appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister is to see with the CEB that reinstatement works be done as rapidly as possible. I know they need some time for the trenches to go down, but at least if the road could be re-tarred completely because this is a main road from Rose Hill centre, that is, near Sookhee to Vandermeersch Street, which is very used all day, not only by cars and lorries. We have received representations from the inhabitants. So, if the CEB could proceed accordingly, not only tarring the part where there have been trenches, but also the whole part of the road. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Deputy Prime Minister!

The Deputy Prime Minister: Thank you, Deputy Speaker and thank you, hon. First Member of Constituency No. 20.

About a year ago, I directed CEB to start a programme of removing electric wires and to have underground cables for electricity, for many reasons. We need not go into it. We all know the state of the network.

I am a regular user of that road. The hon. Member is an inhabitant of that road. Of course, it is a nuisance for the moment; it is a temporary nuisance. It is going to happen all over the country. We started in front of hon. Bhagwan's house, because we wanted him to be safe forever and ever.

Of course, the roads are going to be reinstated. I am not in a position to give timelines and details of this, but I can assure my hon. Friend that everything will be done timeously.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

SCHOOLS - ACTIVITIES – SPONSORSHIP

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Centraal): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to address the hon. Minister of Education. Ever since I have been elected - it is seven years now - it has always been the practice for Parent Teachers Association of primary and secondary schools, whenever they needed sponsorship for any activities, they would come to their MPs and we would help in whatever means.

Earlier this year, in April, the Parent Teachers Association of Guy Rozemont Government School in Tranquebar approached me and, again, I helped them. But, this time, they told me that the Headmaster has told them that they have received directives from the Ministry not to allow politicians in the school.

Last week, this time it was the Parent Teachers Association of Surtee Soonee Government School. They are organising a Sports Day and so they asked me if I could help them. I said okay.

This morning, they called me again and told me, “You know, are you going to do anything?” I said, “Okay, I will come to the school at half past one and I will talk to you.”

While I was in the National Assembly, I received a call and the Parent Teachers Association told me that the Headmistress, Mrs Oozeerkhan has told them that she has received instructions not to allow MPs from the Opposition. What is really serious is that MPs from the Government are allowed to come to the school, are allowed to sponsor events, but not MPs from the Opposition. So, I think this is a very serious matter. Either there is a general policy that henceforth no Member of Parliament is allowed to help any Parent Teachers Association or guidance be given, directives be given to the Headmasters and Headmistress not to interfere whenever the Parent Teachers Association ask for any contribution from Members of Parliament in their constituency. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Education!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just been informed of this particular incident, but I have to say that we try as far as possible to keep schools free of political interventions. Anyway, I will check. But if there is a policy, it will apply obviously to everyone.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

DR. JEETOO HOSPITAL - CAMERAS

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have a very simple issue, which concerns the security at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital.

According to the hospital, there are so many cameras which are being installed so as to make sure that there is no assault on professionals, be it medical officers, paramedical officers and also members of public.

I have just been informed that although all the cameras are operative, there are no people managing these cameras because the contract has not been renewed and, as such, there have been many incidents, not only assault of medical and paramedical officers, but also on members of the public, and worse, on doctors, professional doctors, whose vehicles which are parked are being damaged, and the cameras are not working. I was surprised last week. I had a phone called from a doctor who told me that his car has been damaged. I did not call personally, I sent a junior and, unfortunately, the cameras are not working because the contract has not been renewed. And this is a question of security in our hospital. Who will reply?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon.

Mr Baloomoody: Hon. Boissézon will reply? I hope that he will inform the House about the contract with regard to these cameras, whether it has been renewed or not and whether they are operative. If they are not operative, remove them, so that members of the public will use their own camera to record what is happening in the parking! Thank you.

Mr Boissézon: I thank my hon. colleague and I will transmit the information he is requesting to my colleague, the hon. Minister of Health. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

PETITE RIVIERE – MAIN ROAD - LAYBY

Mr J.C. Barbier: (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My plea is addressed to the Minister of Local Government, but I know that it also concerns the Prime Minister's Office because it is a project which, at a point in time, was being handled by the NDU too.

It is about the construction of a layby at the main road of Petite Rivière, before Cité Richelieu from Port Louis, where each time we have a funeral there, people arrive by bus, the funeral vehicle has no place to park, the busses stop on the road, and the time they take to disembark their passengers blocks the traffic all way through from both sides.

So, this is a very old project, where there was concertation between the Black River District Council and NDU, and the project was started. Already, there has been site visit, there has been a sketch plan or a layout plan has already been drawn and, until now, we do not know who is taking responsibility for the implementation of this project. I do not know whether it is the District Council, the Ministry of Local Government or the NDU.

I think that some concertation is needed at the level of these two bodies so that we can know where matters stand concerning this project. It will not cost that much and there is place. On the other side also, there is another cemetery for the District Council and there is bare land which can be used also for parking of cars attending funerals. So, I hope that this project will be given a new start and that we can see this being implemented soon within this new Budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister for Local Government!

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr P. Jhugroo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I will pass on this to the District Council of Black River and, if it need be, I will talk to all those who are concerned with this issue.

At 11.25 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 15 June 2017 at 11.30 a.m.