



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2017

CONTENTS

PAPER LAID

QUESTION (*Oral*)

MOTION

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

THE CABINET
(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	Minister of Tourism
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Ashit Kumar Gungah	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daareeawoo	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms

PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 12 of 2017

Sitting of 15 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)

PAPER LAID

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

Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training

The Annual Report of the Manufacturing Sector Workers Welfare Fund for the period January to December 2015.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

PORT LOUIS, RIVIÈRE NOIRE & GRAND PORT – SQUATTERS - RELOCATION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands whether, in regard to the squatters of Port Louis, Rivière Noire and Grand Port, he will state the –

- (a) number of families on each site who have –
 - (i) been regularized in situ;
 - (ii) been allocated an alternative site, indicating the number thereof who have physically moved to the new site;
 - (iii) neither been regularised in situ nor been allocated an alternative site; and
- (b) amenities, including water, sewerage, electricity, roads and street lighting, which have been installed at each site.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun): Madam Speaker, first of all I wish to thank the Leader of Opposition for having set a question which is close to my heart. As the House is aware, the problem of squatting over State Lands is a long outstanding one. It has existed for decades. Usually, squatters are persons who are economically vulnerable and, who, without authorisation, put up CIS structures over State lands and use same as residential units. The living conditions thereat are deplorable and generally unhygienic conditions prevail.

At the specific request of the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, I have been entrusted with this responsibility to address and solve the squatting problem. Moreover, in my personal capacity as father and grandfather, I cannot remain insensitive in front of the plight of these vulnerable families especially those with children.

The regularisation of squatters in general is subject to them satisfying the eligibility criteria which are mainly about the person not being already a land owner and of his social and economic conditions being very precarious. Some of these squatters may have the option of applying for a housing unit under existing housing schemes of the NEF and the NHDC whereby sites are granted at rental determined in accordance with their income.

The issue of squatters is a very sensitive issue which has to be handled with utmost care and humanity. The cut-off date for the regularisation of squatters is 01 July 2015.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Port Louis, as I had already indicated on 01 September 2015 in my statement in the National Assembly on squatters over the whole island, I mentioned that there were 347 squatters in Port Louis as follow –

S.N	Region	Number of Squatters
1	Monseigneur Leen	13
2	Military Road, Vallée Pitot	19
3	Alma Street-Vallée Pitot	72
4	Vallée Pitot Block 1	14
5	Tranquebar	82
6	Camp Yolloff-Nicolay	08
7	Motorway Reserves-Roche Bois	24
8	La Cure-Sir Robert Scott Avenue	12
9	La Cure Jhelum Road	21
10	La Cure-Marjolin Road	69
11	Vallée des Prêtres	7
12	La Cure Sir Hillary Blood Avenue	1
13	Vallée Pitot Block 5	1

14	Citadel	4
TOTAL		347

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, 62 squatters have been regularised *in situ*.

With regard to part (a) (ii), 192 have been allocated alternative site at Pointe-aux-Sables and Batterie Cassée. 107 have physically moved to their new sites.

With regard to part (a) (iii), 45 squatters cannot be regularised either *in situ* or through relocation for the following reasons -

- i. the site is above 20% slope gradient and which is against the PPG and the squatters have categorically refused to move out;
- ii. some of them are non-residential units;
- iii. some families have squatted over part of State land and part of private land or wholly over private land;
- iv. Squatters are on State land which are already leased, and
- v. Squatters are not submitting their necessary documents.

With regard to part (b) of the question, amenities are already available except for Pointe-aux-Sables. The NHDC Ltd has already initiated action to provide amenities such as electricity, water, roads, drains and street lighting thereat. An amount of Rs26 m. has been earmarked for this project and it is expected to be completed by the end of June this year. Thereafter, the site will be handed over to the Local Authorities.

I wish to point out that, out of the remaining 48 squatters, 10 have vacated the squatted site and 38 have yet to produce their relevant documents for regularisation. The case of *Longère Tôle/Longère Blanc*, Baie du Tombeau, is not included in the above figures. 140 families were identified thereat in July 2016. These families comprise about 560 persons and it is *aberrant* that there are only three toilets for all 560 people and bathrooms available for them. I would add that there has been a former Prime Minister for nearly more than ten years in this constituency.

I will invite hon. Members to go and visit these families and see for themselves, *de visu*, how they are living in a deplorable state. The then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, now Leader of the Opposition, did carry out a visit in October. He raised the issue with me.

I have requested the NHDC - and I thank the hon. Prime Minister - to work on the rehousing of these families *in situ* and in phases to minimise any disturbance to them. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister, as at least Rs225 m. have been provided for the project within the 2017/2018 Budget. And I can assure the House and my good friend, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that the consultant has already been appointed. Tender for works will be launched in mid-July and I am going to follow closely this project. I am going to monitor because they badly need, where they are now.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Black River, as I mentioned in my statement in the National Assembly, there are 232 squatters.

With regard to part (a) of the question, 36 squatters have been regularised *in situ*.

With regard to parts (b) and (c), 132 squatters at La Ferme and Eau Bonne will be relocated in the context of the rehabilitation of the La Ferme Dam. It has been a special request from my good friend, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, and we have set up a Committee under my chairmanship to look into the issue.

With regard to part (d), 64 squatters at Le Morne (*Dilo pourri*) cannot be regularised as they are squatting on lands which fall under the purview of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

With regard to part (b) (e), provision of amenities is being looked into at...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, it is with regard to part (b).

Mr Soodhun: Yes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: There is no (b) (e).

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: I am sorry!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: It must be a confusion. Please, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Please, proceed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: It is a very sensitive issue, Madam. I hope all hon. Members are aware about it!

Madam Speaker: No!

(Interruptions)

No!

(Interruptions)

Mr Soodhun: Do not joke on...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, it is only a confusion as to whether it was (b) (e) or (b). That is it! There is no other issue. Please, proceed!

Mr Soodhun: Regarding part (b), I said that provision of amenities is being looked into at the Comtesse de la Marque where the 30 squatters are being regularised *in situ*.

Madam Speaker, with regard to Grand Port, as mentioned in my statement in the National Assembly, there are 81 squatters.

With regard to part (a) (i) of the question, 63 squatters have been regularized *in situ*.

With regard to part (a) (ii), no squatter has been relocated to alternative sites. However, there are five cases at Old Grand Port village which need to be relocated as they are presently located on marshy land and another site at Old Grand Port Village itself has already been identified for their relocation.

With regard to part (c), the five above-mentioned...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: There is no part (c)!

Mr Soodhun: I think it is a typing error. The five above-mentioned squatters at Old Grand Port will move after site allocation.

With regard to part (a) (iii), 13 squatters have not yet been regularised as the Ministry is awaiting necessary documents to process their cases.

With regard to part (b) of the question, amenities are already available for cases already regularised in Grand Port district.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, with your permission, we are dealing with some of the poorest families on the island, and I have got some specific questions to start with concerning arrangements which have been made for the relocation of these very, very poor families.

Firstly, Pointe-aux-Sables, Madam Speaker. I have visited Pointe-aux-Sables and I have taken a number of pictures. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned, I think, that in June the works will be ready. Is that what he said? We are already in June!

Mr Soodhun: Yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: But I wonder whether the hon. Vice-Prime Minister wants to check that information because I am sure this cannot be the case.

Mr Soodhun: In fact, Madam Speaker, according to information that I have, the work will be completed. We are going to complete it in June. Rest assured, it is going to be completed in June.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I think the hon. Vice-Prime Minister does not have the information. I took these pictures myself. So, I will show them to the House and leave them here. It is clear that it is not going to be completed. In fact, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister may wish to know that no work, according to what I visited, has started yet in Pointe-aux-Sables. No work has started yet. And yet, as he mentioned himself, there are many, many people who have been transferred there and who are living in the worst possible conditions.

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I give the guarantee to the hon. Leader of the Opposition that I am personally going to visit the site tomorrow morning.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. It is the time of Ramadan, a time of sharing, and I hope that we will get some action because, Madam Speaker, we are talking about each family. These families are living there without roads - it can easily be proven - without water, without electricity and obviously, without sewerage and street lighting. So, they are probably really in a worst situation than where they were before. So, they have not improved at all. Will the hon. Vice-Prime Minister undertake to have this work done and, maybe, started hopefully this week? Because no work has started!

Mr Soodhun: According to information that I have, they have started, but I am going to visit tomorrow morning, as I mentioned. But let me inform the House, concerning the squatters which have been moved to Pointe-aux-Sables, that we have issued a letter on 06

December. I am going to table the letter where it is being mentioned that - I am not going into the details -

“This is to inform you that approval has been obtained to grant you a delay of six months from the date of this letter to move to the site allocated at Pointe-aux-Sables (...)”

It was on 20 May 2016 that they issued the letter.

In fact, we have given them more time. We have to see who is guilty for that, but specifically I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that we have to set up all the necessary amenities. But I can assure him that after my visit I am going to make a statement in this House.

Mr X. L. Duval: I take note of the assurance, Madam Speaker. I will deal now with Vallée Pitot, where there are some 33 families who live, as he mentioned, on a steep slope of more than 20%. What is being proposed for these families? The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned that they did not wish to move. Are they going to stay there or is he going to find a better site for them? What is going to happen to them?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, Madam Speaker, I have visited the place myself and they have built a concrete house on the top of the mountain. Hon. Members must be aware that I am doing my best to convince them to move, but they are not moving. What should we do? They have electricity and water. I cannot say: ‘okay, pull down your building and just move.’ They do not want to move. My hon. colleagues have done their efforts to do that, but so beautiful houses have been built. We can go and see. Ask my friend, he will tell you that. But I, myself, I was shocked and what can I do? There is no solution for that. I agree with the hon. Member.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, about *longère tôle* in Baie du Tombeau, which the Vice-Prime Minister has mentioned, it is true that we had visited it some time ago when I was in Government. It is a really difficult place to live. What concretely is Government proposing for that?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, it is a very complicated one. We have 140. How we are going to move the 140 and where we are going to move is very difficult. What we are going to do now, we are going to have what we call a *longère* for 75 people first. And then, we are going

to build 75 units and then, the other 75, we are going to move to the *longère*, we are going to replace them. Already now, the Consultant is working and, as I mentioned in my answer, we are going to start this year and money has already been allocated. So, I am sure we are going, and personally I am looking into it.

Mr X. L. Duval: I want to move quickly to give a chance to my colleagues to ask some questions. Madam Speaker, in Port Louis, there is Camp Manna with 46 houses; and Crown land Touri, I think, both are in Tranquebar with 10 houses. They are not included anywhere in the lists that are mentioned. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister tell us about this?

Mr Soodhun: In fact, all that I have mentioned, there has been a deep inquiry; there are some houses, as I mentioned, that fall under the private land. For all the State lands, we have not carried out any inquiry. I am sure that if you have any other, we are going to look into it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I move now to Black River. It is the same situation in Black River, where people are moving from La Ferme and Eau Bonne to a place behind the District Council, where, in fact, there are absolutely again no amenities. In fact, it is a slope again like that, it is a wooden area almost. And then, what is going to happen there and what has happened to the land, apparently, that has been identified in *Beaux Songes* which appears also to be nowhere to be seen?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that at the request of the Deputy Prime Minister, we are not going now to relocate as we are looking for other sites. And, as I mentioned, a committee has been set up under my chairmanship and we are looking into it, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and others from my Ministry, NHDC, but we are not going to now relocate all these squatters. I agree that there is some problem with the land, but we are looking for other sites also.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will also table some pictures with the camera, pictures of Eau Bonne, where these people are living at the moment. And you will agree, I am sure, that this is a very urgent issue. We have lost two and a half years. Two and a half years have gone by, and I think, it is no more time to wait, Madam Speaker. Perhaps the Minister can give us some firm time table for this one.

Mr Soodhun: As I mentioned in my answer, concerning this issue, the relocation is being done because they are going to now revisit construction of La Ferme Dam. I agree and

I can inform the House that in a couple of months we are going to also relocate them, either on a State land or we are going to just refer the case to the NHDC. We will find out whether houses are available, and we are going put the people there. We will have a solution for that in a couple of months.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, this time *Coteau Raffin and Dilo Pourri*, apparently they are nowhere to be seen on the list that the Ministry has for squatters that need to be regularised or moved. Are you aware of these cases?

Mr Soodhun: As I mentioned, we are going to see with the Minister of Agro-Industry, because I am concerned with the State land. We have other Ministries also, not only Ministry of Agro-Industry. The squatters have been there since long time ago, years ago, it does not fall under my purview.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, finally, and then I will let my colleagues perhaps, if they wish, ask some questions. On the case of African Town, we know African Town well, it is a big area, part of it has been regularised, I presume some are not. But I am told that in major parts of African Town, there is water, yes, but no electricity and no roads and no amenities.

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, whenever we relocate squatters, they are also allowed. We do our best to bring the water or electricity. But I can assure the House, wherever we have relocated the squatters, we have already brought all these amenities. Unless they are not on the State land, but whereas for the State land, I can assure you that on this part of Grand Port, we have done it.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, if I can return to Port Louis, in Pointe-aux-Sables. There are going to be 192 lots, you mentioned. Are there going to be amenities, crèches? I mean, is there going to be a social centre? Are you just going to build houses first? Are they going to be like that? I am told that each new inhabitant will have to pay Rs25,000 per pole for their electricity. Is that also going to be the case? Or are you going to provide electricity, at least, the connectivity free of charge to these ex-squatters?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, if the hon. Leader is referring to the 82, is it 82 cases of Tranquebar?

Mr X. L. Duval: No, *il y a trop*.

Mr Soodhun: Not all! There are 82 cases of Tranquebar...

Mr X. L. Duval: The whole of Pointe-aux-Sables.

Mr Soodhun: The whole of Pointe-aux-Sables. As I mentioned, there are different issues in Pointe-aux-Sables. There are some others at Tranquebar, 82 which have been already transferred in a NEF Housing Estate, and these people have to pay. We are not going to give any housing unit for NHDC; everybody who deserves or respects the criteria has to pay the deposit and has to follow all the criteria. Concerning Pointe-aux-Sables, there are 3 sites of these squatters, as I mentioned. First, these houses were 82 of Ring Road and 1 with all amenities, and this other one is without amenities. I just mentioned that we are working and we are going to visit tomorrow. But, at least, we can say the others have the amenities but for the connection, I think that we have already brought all the electricity and water. They have to do as other people, they have to go and we can help them. CEB or Central Water Authority will do the needful, but they have to pay. They have to pay as other people.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With regard to those who have moved to Pointe-aux-Sables, where there are no amenities, no water, no electricity, we want to be clear; do they have to pay Rs25,000 per pole to get electricity? And secondly, can I ask the hon....

Madam Speaker: One by one, hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Baloomoody: On the same issue. We have been informed now that they are going to be provided in 15 days. End of June is in 15 days, that they will have electricity and water. Pending that time, can I ask the hon. Minister whether he can have the NHDC, at least, to give a scavenging service there, pending that it is handed over to the Municipality of Port Louis?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, I said that I am going to visit tomorrow morning, and I am going to call all the authorities concerned together with me to visit it and we are going to sort out this problem. If there is any problem, tomorrow I will look into it.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard!

Mr Lesjongard: Thank you, Madam Speaker. May I ask the hon. Minister to confirm, and if he does not have the information, to check and maybe report to the House, whether in-between 2005 and 2014, the regularisation of squatters in our country were done strictly on a political affiliation basis, that is, those who were close to the Labour Party and the PMSD, their cases were regularised...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Lesjongard, please sit down! Hon. Lesjongard, we do not have that much time, so I will just ask you to ask your question so that the hon. Minister can reply. Don't make a long statement! I am appealing to you.

Mr Lesjongard: It is not a statement.

Madam Speaker: Don't make a long statement!

Mr Lesjongard: Can I?

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr Lesjongard: The question, Madam Speaker, is whether between 2006 and 2014 regularisation of squatters in this country was done on a purely political affiliation basis?

Mr Soodhun: Madam Speaker, we know very well in the Government of the Labour Party how it was done in the past. It is not a secret.

(Interruptions)

I prefer not to make any comment because we are dealing with the issue. I agree with my hon. friend that it has always been like this. Let me give you an example, Madam Speaker. I can ask any hon. Member on the other side; I have never played any political game with these poor people. Along with my good friends, hon. Alan Ganoo and hon. Joe Lesjongard - and instead of sending an invitation to hon. Jhuboo, we sent it hon. Jhugroo - I visited Constituency No. 14 even if they were in the Opposition. There was an old grandmother...

(Interruptions)

Let me tell them! This is a fact.

(Interruptions)

She was urging in front of people: ‘Before, I die, let me have a contract; at least, I am the owner of a land.’ I did it after two months. So, I never played politics.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, let me thank the hon. Vice-Prime Minister. He has been very helpful for Dubreuil.

Mr Soodhun: Sorry?

Mr A. Duval: For Dubreuil, he has been very helpful. They are waiting for their contracts. However, there is still Cité Anouska in Grand Port and there has been a horrific death there. They do not have the amenities. Can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister please look into it and then please look for Cité Malherbes? In Cité Malherbes, there are about nine families who are waiting for regularisation. I know you are a good man and you will do it. So, please do it!

Mr Soodhun: Thank you. Madam Speaker, I will look into this issue. There is a problem at Cité Malherbes. There are nine families in Cité Malherbes who came after we had already regularised others, but we are going to see whether we can do something. There is no problem.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank, you Madam Speaker. The hon. Vice-Prime Minister mentioned the squatters of Camp Manna who have been relocated to Pointe-aux-Sables. Is he aware that there are, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned, still 50 families in Camp Manna? These families do not have electricity because those who had electricity have moved to Pointe-aux-Sables. They are not on State land, they are on private land. Being given that he is the Minister of Housing, not just of State land, can the hon. Vice-Prime Minister make sure that these remaining 50 families are also given houses just like the other 82 squatter families?

Mr Soodhun: As the hon. Member knows very well, they are on a private land. All the people who were on the State land, we have already moved them. We will see to it if there is any possibility.

(Interruptions)

No, not on the private land! All the 82 families were on the State land. It is clear. The others, as mentioned by the hon. Member, were on the private land. Tomorrow when we will build new houses, we will give them the opportunity. We will see what we can do for them.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr X. Duval: Madam Speaker, I have a final request, in fact, a question, to the hon. Vice-Prime Minister concerning one particular case. I am not going to make politics as people make politics on the back of the very poor. I have a photo here. Mr Raffot lives in Marjolain in Port Louis. He has lost a leg as you will see. His family is here today and he has not been included on any list for relocation. So, would the hon. Vice-Prime Minister kindly have a look at that?

Mr Soodhun: I will see to this request, but I would like to mention here, we have 300 squatters who are living on a private land. This is a big problem. I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

(Interruptions)

No, in all Marjolain we have! If there is really a case pending, I assure you that I am going to see to it.

Madam Speaker: Time is over!

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. Benydin!

(12.06 p.m.)

Mr T. Benydin (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Permit me at the very first instance to express my feelings of deep appreciation to hon. Pravind Jugnauth, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for ushering innovative and bold measures in the Budget Speech for 2017/2018 and particularly the three-year strategic plan which gives us clear insights as to how action will be taken for implementation and to provide short to medium terms strategic directions and targets that can be evaluated for the continued development of measures geared at strengthening the various sectors of our economy.

Madam Speaker, rising to the challenge of our ambitions is full of meaning. It transcends all barriers and illustrates Government's firm willingness and determination to transform Mauritius into a high-income economy by year 2023; to put an end to extreme poverty and to curb down the rate of unemployment at the dawn of our country's 50th independence anniversary.

Madam Speaker, this Budget reflects a Government's vision for a prosperous Mauritius based on shared values and serious commitments to reduce inequalities and to meet the growing challenges, *inter alia*, for –

- (i) more and better jobs for the youth;
- (ii) massive investment in infrastructure;
- (iii) improving the quality of life of our citizens;
- (iv) strengthening institutional capacity to support growth objective, and
- (v) ensuring the participation of stakeholders including the civil society.

We have for reference the setting up of a National Economic and Social Council (NESC) under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister to address key economic issues and consolidating social dialogues to achieve consensus for social integration as well as to keep

pace with economic and social development. I was myself a member of the first NESC since its inception in year 2002 and I continued to be a member up to 2014.

Madam Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt you, hon. Benydin. Hon. Soodhun, you cannot talk to people in the gallery, I am sorry.

Mr Benydin: It has been proved to be a valuable and relevant instrument and forum for participatory democracy and I am sure that this Council will serve its purpose.

Madam Speaker, in presenting this Budget to the nation, the hon. Prime Minister has proved that the Budget is not merely a mathematical or arithmetical exercise in that he clearly defines Government's ambition to meet and respond to citizens aspirations in order to realise fundamental needs related to education, arts and culture, health, agriculture, food security, housing, employment, sports, law and order, public infrastructure and to ensure that Mauritius has an environment conducive for doing business that encourages investment, entrepreneurship and improve trade and commerce at both regional and international levels.

The Business Facilitation Act passed recently is undoubtedly a useful instrument to meet objectives, to facilitate and boost investment and economic growth. The hon. Minister of Finance has gone even a step further. On the one hand, take a reverse approach by announcing a negative income tax policy to relieve the most vulnerable segment of the population, 150,000 employees. Madam Speaker, indeed, I consider that it is a negative attitude on the part of those who are saying that the negative income tax will have an adverse bearing and impact on the minimum wage policy.

On the other hand, to generate more income and employment, this Budget has reduced the corporate tax for export-oriented SMEs from 15% to 3% to allow them to expand the export capacity and seek new markets. Moreover, Madam Speaker, a Budget is a public commitment that involves many stakeholders, if not all. Therefore, the hon. Minister of Finance has taken the challenge not only to establish pre-Budget consultations with all the sectors of the Mauritian society like the private sector, the civil society, NGOs, trade unions, sugar planters, vegetable growers, colleague Ministers, PPSs and other parliamentarians, and even received a good welcome from the general public.

And also, it is a fact that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance made it a must to personally visit each constituency, to have an insight of these constituencies and their needs in terms of projects, so that policies can be formulated to meet these expectations.

Madam Speaker, it is not a *menti menti* Budget, as the Leader of the Opposition wants to make us believe. On the contrary, it is a “*hardi hardi Budget*”. I think that the Leader of the Opposition missed his words.

C’est un budget courageux, brave, vaillant, intrépide et entreprenant, et nous devons féliciter le Premier ministre. Même le grand économiste, le Dr. Rama Sithanen, a avoué, au cours d’une émission à la radio - je crois avant-hier - que le budget comporte de bonnes décisions, notamment des investissements dans les infrastructures, la recherche et le développement, et des idées nouvelles pour améliorer la sécurité alimentaire.

Madam Speaker, the presentation of the Budget provides the proper forum for Government to highlight its previous achievements and to propose the implementation of its future mandatory visions with new innovative policies and continuity from what was proposed in the previous Budget. Therefore, the Budget presented by the hon. Minister of Finance must not be viewed in isolation, but as a continuity Budget to pursue the determination of this Government to alleviate poverty, create more jobs, improve living conditions of the population and ensure social harmony.

The negative income tax measures, the removal of VAT on certain commodities, the reduction in the price of flour, the revision of duties on land and exemption of registration duties for a first-time buyer, for example, of an ex-CHA house or of a residence acquired from the NHDC, are concrete examples of the determination of this Government to improve the lot of the vulnerable groups of the Mauritian society.

The presentation of the Budget, Madam Speaker, is a platform to bring about the confidence in the public by taking bold measures, as I have said, to alleviate the sufferings of the poor and at the same time provide an enabling environment for the private sector to boost the economy and the wealth of the nation. When measures to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are encouraged through various monetary and fiscal policies to safeguard and boost the economy, parallel measures have also been taken in this Budget to preserve the welfare state. This Budget, Madam Speaker, has been able to master these issues perfectly.

Having said that, let me now, Madam Speaker, highlight on how this Budget has matched the socio-economic and political drives of this caring Government. Despite the difficult world economic situation, Brexit and a stagnating world economy, this Budget has been able not only to maintain VAT at 15%, but has on the contrary reversed the situation by,

as I have said earlier, proposing the negative income tax coupled with the reduction of corporate tax for exporting SMEs, for example.

Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister of Finance laid in this Budget much emphasis on improving the quality of life of our fellow citizens as well as their wellness. This Budget has provisions for the National Development Unit of around Rs1 billion and 85 million, and this amount speaks for itself, in addition to a capital grant of Rs500 m. to local authorities to address minor works in their regions.

Madam Speaker, in Constituency No. 15, where myself, the Vice-Prime Minister, hon. Soodhun, and Minister Eddy Boissézon work together, we are coming with the upgrading of our football grounds, to mention that of Petit Camp at Phoenix and in Hermitage; the first phase of wastewater sewerage work will start in September 2017 in Highlands, and the construction of a new and modern ENT Hospital in Vacoas, amongst others, are vivid examples that translate Government's projects into action.

We are also providing - I see the hon. Minister of Youth and Sports with a smile - for a mini soccer pitch at Promenade Père Laval, Gymkhana, and working on a MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) Project in Closel, Phoenix. I think that will be the first of its type. We are also working on the project for a swimming pool to be integrated in this area. We just had meeting earlier before coming here, and I think that this project is possible; it will be realised. Infrastructural development will be unprecedented with the announcement of the construction of an enlarged Hollyrood Bridge to connect the West in no time (i.e. Hollyrood to Beaux Songes).

It was quite regretful that the former Government built an access road from Hollyrood to Beaux Songes, but did not care about the bridge at all. If you walk on the bridge, you will see that you are walking on a *balançoire – li bouger*. So, you spent a lot of money, but did not care. This Government lays more emphasis on building bridges. We bring people together. We do not build walls to divide people; we build bridges, and this is the philosophy that characterises this Government and soon the Hollyrood Bridge will be a reality.

I think that when hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Minister of Finance, he visited our constituency in Vingta, No. 3. I can inform him that the road is technically completed and we will be tackling the other major bridge issues in my constituency.

Drainworks, construction of new roads and incinerators at Highlands and Allée Brillant form part of the list of projects to be implemented.

It is with great pleasure, Madam Speaker, and to the satisfaction of the inhabitants of Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes, where I am also a PPS, that I am announcing the two major projects that have been completed because some people say: “there is no *bilan*”. There is!

For example -

- (i) The sports complex at La Source to the tune of Rs25 m. Done! Not to say ‘*fait*’ like my friend hon. Alain Aliphon.
- (ii) Parking area of the New Market Fair in Quatre Bornes: *fait*! This parking area has been a blessing in disguise. Just after its completion, it is being partially used as a temporary market. The old market is being upgraded by the Municipal Council of Quatre Bornes, and *fait*. It will be inaugurated next week, I am sure, by the hon. Prime Minister and also I understand the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Vice-Prime Minister and all our colleagues in Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo and hon. Eddy Boissézon, who was also the PPS at that time, did a very good work because there is a link road from Berthaud Avenue to Guy Rozemont in Rose Hill which will bring people an access road from Stanley, Rose Hill. Then, you can avoid a lot of traffic jams. And this will help. This is being done in collaboration. It also concerns Constituency No. 18, but I think that the major works, we must reckon, has been done by Constituency No. 19. So, this is a reality. I will not comment more on that because I have some remarks, I think, this is a major road project of an enlargement up to 7 m large. So this is being implemented.

Thanks to the vision of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development we are identifying wasteful expenditures to consequently prioritising our spending to adapt ourselves quickly to urgent demands with a view to achieve our set goals based on the measures enunciated in the Budget.

Madam Speaker, prior to the presentation of the National Budget, some people were a bit worried. They thought that whether they will be taxed more or whether there will be adverse consequences on our Welfare State, but nothing as such happened. On the contrary, more positive measures have been budgeted to maintain the Welfare State and even increase the budget for free education, that of public health and wellness of the citizens, no increase in

VAT and the threshold of income tax has increased, so, coupled with the reduction on certain corporate taxes and relief for medical insurance premiums. So, these are the positive actions, steps, measures mentioned in the Budget.

Madam Speaker, the National Wage Consultative Council, we hope, is expected to submit its recommendations with regard to a national minimum wage, which will contribute to improving purchasing power of workers at the bottom of the ladder to reduce poverty and better protect them and their families in their main objective of raising living standards.

Madam Speaker, I also welcome the creation of the Economic Development Board which will be established to ensure coherence and effectiveness of various promotion agencies, namely the function of the existing Board of Investment, Enterprise Mauritius, the Financial Services Promotion Agency and the Mauritius Africa Fund. Bringing these agencies under a common umbrella will bring more synergy in terms of strategy on the international front and increase our reputation. This grouping will also streamline processes and increase ease of doing business in Mauritius. At present, these bodies are working in silos without common effort. The EDB will be a game changer and allow more synchronised efforts to achieve the economic goals of the Government.

Madam Speaker, I consider it essential to thank the Government of India for the financial support of a total of Rs35.2 billion granted to allow our motherland to modernise its transport system with the Metro Express and to permit us to continue on the path of progress for the welfare of our population.

I add my voice to my colleagues who have elaborated on various measures geared at improving the quality of life of our people, namely -

- availability of water to all households on a 24-hour basis by the end of year 2019;
- raising eligibility ceiling for the grant of water tanks schemes from Rs15,000 to Rs25,000;
- funding of a National Sports Policy;
- improvement in health care facilities with the provision of additional mediclinics, health care centres, community centres and so on;
- construction and upgrading of primary and secondary schools and ZEP schools as well;

- construction of additional social and low-income housing units;
- capacity building and improvement of services within the public service to provide better and excellent service to the nation and also,
- renewable and clean energy.

Madam Speaker, the courageous action of the hon. Prime Minister and the political will of the Government to fight drug trafficking and eradicating this social evil should be underlined. In this context, I will fail in my duty as a former officer of the MRA Customs if I don't mention the excellent work being performed by Customs Officers together with their counterparts in the Police, ADSU for the relentless war against drug traffickers. The provision of Rs100 m. in the Budget for the purchase of modern and sophisticated equipment for Customs to detect drugs from entering our country will further consolidate actions in the war against drug traffickers.

Madam Speaker, drug seizures by MRA Customs as at May 2017 amounts to a street value of more than Rs2.6 billion. Let us, therefore, commend the heroic work being performed by officers of the MRA Customs.

As a concluding note, Madam Speaker, I would like to express the feeling of this side of the House by referring this Budget as ideal and people-oriented in spite of the present world economic context.

Before ending, I would like to refer to what hon. Bérenger himself said when hon. Pravind Jugnauth presented his first budget in the then MSM-MMM Government, I quote –

“Coup d’essai, coup de maître.”

Bravo, hon. Prime Minister! Therefore, let our country rise to gigantic and towering heights in our noble endeavour to make Mauritius a prosperous and modern country that will find its place in the concert of great nations in this world.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun!

(12.30 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun):
Madam Speaker, I think that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, not only deserves to be congratulated - I am not going to kiss his hand...

(Interruptions)

You are right! But I think people should know about the career of the hon. Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister started as the Minister of Agriculture. If we just go behind and see about his career, he is a man of his words, a man of dignity, of seriousness, *un homme de parole*, a hard worker. I know personally how he has been working during the whole week. Sundays, Saturdays. I phoned him one Sunday afternoon - it may be a joke for people but, at least, we have to recognise that he is not a Prime Minister who *just touss sali*. He is not a Prime Minister who is just abusing. He has worked, and he deserves. The population, not inside only, but outside also, recognise him as he has started as a Minister of Agriculture and he has...

(Interruptions)

I am not saying that my friend, the hon. Minister is not doing well. He is doing well, but he started the new. You know very well, Madam Speaker. You have more experience than me. You have witnessed yourself. He has brought the changes in the Sugar Industry, changes in the life of the workers of the sugar industry - the *artisans*.

Today, the workers of the sugar industry are the owners of a plot of land where they were living *dans le camp*, thanks to the then Minister of Agriculture and Prime Minister. He has also been the Minister of Finance in 2003 and he brought a lot of changes. Continuously three times, if I am not mistaken, he has brought the changes. So, today, our Prime Minister deserves our congratulations and God bless him for doing such a noble job.

Madam Speaker, as the theme indicates, the budgetary measures empower the country at all levels in 'Rising to the Challenge of Our Ambitions'.

Several important socio-economic measures have been announced to ensure that the well-being of the citizens are secured, that economic development is sustained and that Mauritius moves towards being a high income economy.

Madam Speaker, I am shocked by the remarks and comments made by certain prophets of doom on the other side of the House, who do not want to encourage our citizens to hope for a better future. When it comes to living up to challenges and coming forward with a series of measures towards achieving socio-economic growth, then cheap politics should be set aside. I urge the hon. Members. We are all Mauritians, and we all have to answer after five years of what we have done, be it the Government side, be it the Opposition side, the contribution that we have brought to this country.

Today, I personally don't know the reason why my good friend, the ex-Deputy Prime Minister left the Government. I don't know. We have today the Leader of the Opposition, who was last year a partner and a Deputy Prime Minister. It is surprising how they change their language as soon as they change their position.

Following last year's Budget, let me remind that *les paroles s'envolent les écrits restent*. During last year's Budget presentation, the Leader of the Opposition, then Deputy Prime Minister, stood in this Assembly on 12 August 2016 and said the following, I quote –

“(...) the Budget is excellent *dans la forme et dans le fond*. I mean it, Madam Speaker, because I like this Budget. (...) The Budget is comprehensive. It is coherent and, to me, it is also innovative.”

Madam Speaker, today is a different story and the language goes like “*Bidzé menti menti sans vision*” according to the Leader of the Opposition. I am sure that the reaction would have been different if he was still on this side of the House.

May I further remind the House that the former Deputy Prime Minister even stated the following, I quote –

“If there is one guy whose *le coeur fer mal*, it must be the then Leader of the Opposition.”

Today, it is obvious that the present Leader of the Opposition is in the same situation and “*le coeur fer mal*”. It might be. Maybe, now he has realised that he has taken the wrong decision. So, leave it at him.

Madam Speaker, the 2017/2018 Budget Speech conveys yet, again, the unflinching commitment and compassion of the Government of today. Considerable emphasis has been laid on improving the welfare of those at the lowest strata of the economy. For the coming

financial year, the social housing sector will be further developed with a total capital of investment of Rs1.1 billion.

Government has pledged to alleviate the housing shortage, especially for the low income earners with good transport services and communication linking people to jobs, schools, health and other services. As a Minister of Housing and Lands, it is my prime duty to see that we optimise our land resources so that it is judiciously used for housing development. In this context, Madam Speaker, strategies are being developed to provide a wide choice of housing types to needy families at an affordable cost. What has been done in the past? They have dumped the poor people in one area - more than one thousand units. In many areas, you can see it even in the Constituency of the Prime Minister. We are not going to do the same mistake. Never! We have developed a new strategy where we are going to build houses, where work is accessible, school, health, sport facilities. We can do about 400, not more.

My Ministry has already embarked on a vast housing construction programme comprising houses of moderate size of 50 square metres to accommodate, at least, 2 bedrooms, living and dining room and all associated infrastructure such as roads, drains, water and electricity supply. *Fini les maisons de 39 mètres carrés, Madame!* I don't want to go on about the 39 mètres carrés. I have personally visited and the Leader of Opposition also has visited. The former Government of Labour built a house of 39 mètres carrés, only one bedroom Madam. One bedroom for the whole family! I witnessed. They put a curtain in the middle. The children are sleeping on one side and the parents are sleeping on the other side. The children are studying theory on one side and the other side is practical. This is what has been witnessed. These people will come and say that *ce sont des enfants malélevés. Non! C'est le gouvernement qui a introduit ce système.* Also, as I mentioned, it is all under the leadership of the Labour Party, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam. He thinks all people are like him. Also, necessary social and recreational amenities are being provided, Madam Speaker, within the housing estates - which have never been - where required, so as to better integrate the residents within these housing estates and the existing settlement. I will give you examples.

- since 2015, the construction of 1,016 housing units has been completed with all necessary infrastructure and amenities, out of which 827 have been allocated;

- for the financial year 2016/2017, 596 housing units with associated infrastructure have been completed. The construction of 1,248 housing units is in progress, out of which 802 housing units are expected to be completed by December 2017;
- the construction of another 340 housing units is at bidding stage and construction is expected to start by September 2017. Consultants have already been appointed for the construction of an additional 1,180 housing units. Tender for works is expected to be floated by end of July 2017;
- the construction of 700 housing units. Thank you, hon. Prime Minister! Once again, it is due to your personal intervention that we are going to build 700 housing units out of the grant from the Government of India, that is, 700 units by the NBCC India Ltd is expected to start in May 2018;
- tender for consultancy services for the construction of some 4,500 housing units and associated infrastructure works are expected to be floated by end of mid-July 2017. Works are expected to start by January 2018 and completed in year 2019;
- consideration will be given to optimize land use by varying the type of construction, thereby increasing the number of housing units to reach the target of 10,000 housing units by 2019, in line with the objectives set in the Government Programme.

Madam Speaker, we also take into consideration the Roof Slab Grant Scheme. My Ministry is lending a supportive hand by providing a one-off grant of up to Rs75,000 to eligible families to enable them to cast their roof slab. In the past, the Prime Minister, before he was the Minister of Finance, he took a noble decision to increase the ceiling from Rs8,500 to Rs10,000.

He has also introduced a new scheme for all the people who respect the criteria, drawing a salary of 15 per cent. They also deserve. And today, not only the ceiling, but he has also increased it from Rs65,000 to Rs75,000. For Financial year 2016/2017, some 1,182 families earning up to Rs15,000, a new category that has been introduced by the Prime Minister, have benefitted from the Roof Slab Grant Scheme, totaling to some Rs72 m. which have been disbursed for this category of people. This is an ongoing scheme, and funds to the tune of Rs100 m. have been earmarked for the forthcoming financial year.

Madam Speaker, I shall now elaborate on the rehabilitation works for the NHDC Housing Estates, which is in a deplorable situation. I think, last year, a provision of Rs448 m. had been earmarked just for the renovation of the NHDC Housing Estates that date more than 20 years. To improve the living conditions of the inhabitants of NHDC housing estates and extend durably the life span of the buildings, Government is maintaining its rehabilitation programme in respect of same.

Structural remedial works on two NHDC housing estates at Beau Vallon – yesterday, the hon. Member of Constituency No. 12 said that nothing has been done. I think Beau Vallon is in Constituency No.12. We have spent Rs134 m. for the renovation, thanks to the hon. Prime Minister. Roof waterproofing works, drainage works, structural remedial works, rehabilitation of sewage networks and other associated works for some 16 NHDC housing estates will be carried out during this financial year. An amount of Rs162 m. has been spent for 2016/2017. Also, an amount of Rs163 m. has been provided for 2017/2018.

Madam Speaker, again, on the ex-CHA houses, the former Government under the leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, has the tendency to forget these people. Today, we can say that under the Access to Land Ownership Programme, Government is encouraging ex-CHA house owners to purchase the plot of State land on which stand their houses. 313 families have, during the last financial year, purchased their land.

Government has also provided financial assistance in terms of legal and other charges such as waiving of registration duties and payment of Rs2,000 for the purchase of the State land. Moreover, survey and notary fees are met by Government on a case to case basis. To this end, an amount of Rs305,000 has been disbursed to some 117 families and a provision of Rs500,000 has been made in the current Budget.

Madam Speaker, moving on to Syndic, there are about 41 NHDC housing estates where a Syndic is operational. There is nothing! Government was just giving the subsidy, but there was no control on what they were doing with the subsidy. Financial assistance for an amount of Rs14 m. has been provided to these Syndics to help them improve the living environment and maintain the common areas to the benefit of the community living in those housing estates.

Under my instructions, sensitization campaigns are being regularly carried out by the NHDC to encourage the residents to take full responsibility of their assets as well as to the need for them to contribute to the Syndic fund. Provision of Rs16 m. has been made in the Budget 2017/2018 to this end.

Prior to the prospective beneficiaries moving into their NHDC house – the new NHDC house, we are not going to do the same as had been done - a “*réunion d’information et programme d’encadrement*” is undertaken by NHDC to make them aware of their rights and responsibilities, in collaboration with the local authorities, police, notaries, legal adviser and housing officers. This is a programme which has been introduced since January 2015, *pour l’accompagnement des bénéficiaires qui ne sont plus pris pour des laissés-pour-compte*.

Madam Speaker, I, now come to the issue of absolute poverty. Who created these conditions of absolute poverty in this country? Maybe the Leader of the Opposition will find an answer to this question if he discusses with the former Labour Party colleague, Mr Rama Sithanen, who was the then Minister of Finance.

Maybe it is also worth recalling that it was the same Labour Party in coalition with the PMSD who abolished subsidies on SC/HSC exams, introduced National Residential Property Tax and taxes on bank interests and offered compensations below the inflation rate.

Needless to point that public funds were misused in the form of Stimulus Package allocated to *petits copains* in the private sector. Where was the concern for the vulnerable families at that time? Zero!

Compared to the previous regime, the Government has taken concrete measures which go to the roots of poverty. At the same time, solutions are being provided to empower middle income families.

The Budget presented by the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, is yet another proof of the commitment.

The creation of liveable settlements and optimisation of land resources can only happen if we have a proper strategy for the land development and appropriate standards for building, construction and infrastructure. This brings me to the planning strategy which provides for the judicious management of our land resources.

In this context, the new Planning and Development legislation will respond effectively to the planning considerations of a fast developing Mauritius with multi-faceted pillars of the economy. It will put in place new provisions to deal with current issues, to pave the way for innovative planning practices and legitimate concerns of general interest, including the setting up of a National Planning Commission.

Madam Speaker, all the relevant stakeholders engaged in land development will retain their powers and functions. But the Commission will be the apex body to coordinate and bring together the efforts and investments in a concerted and economical manner, funds and resources.

Madam Speaker, for *Morcellement* applications, the Financial Act of 2017 has consolidated and streamlined procedures from processing of *Morcellement* applications. The completeness of applications is now determined within three working days and the applicants are informed accordingly.

Following the enactment of the new Business Facilitation Act, Madam Speaker, the processing time has been further reduced for the applications that are accompanied by a preliminary environmental report or an EIA licence.

For financial year 2016-2017, my Ministry has issued 404 Letters of Intent and 436 *Morcellement* Permits as compared to 375 Letters of Intent and 268 *Morcellement* Permits issued in 2015-2016.

Madam Speaker, in order to do away with cumbersome procedures, the *Morcellement* Act will be further amended so that a *Morcellement* Permit is not required for excision of land for a portion of 4 hectares for application where there is no material change to the use of the land. In such cases only, the approval of the local authority will be required.

Madam Speaker, I shall now dwell on the development carried out on State lands. Land is central to the national development process. However, in many cases, State lands are not available or are not suitable for Government projects. In such cases, my Ministry has to identify privately-owned lands for acquisition. Land acquisition is a complex and cumbersome procedure. However, my Ministry has been able to respond positively to the acquisition of land to implement development projects such as the Metro Express Project, land under 2,000 *arpents* scheme for housing projects, Phoenix Interchange Project and so on.

My Ministry has given high priority to the Metro Express Project which is of national interest and 100 portions of land required for the project have already been acquired and vested in the Ministry of the Public Infrastructure and Land Transport.

Madam Speaker, for the period 01 July 2016 to 02 June 2017, a total area of 167 *arpents* has been acquired for other various major projects. For the same period, a total compensation of some Rs502 m. - nearly half a billion - has been paid for land acquisition,

Regarding allocation of State land, my Ministry is mandated to ensure that there is judicious use of State lands, including those which have been acquired.

Since November 2015, my Ministry has set up a new policy framework for the allocation of State lands for development projects in a fair and transparent manner and the list of leases granted is regularly posted on my Ministry's website. There is complete transparency.

Since November 2015 to date, several Letters of Reservation have been issued for major projects with investment totalling some Rs16 billion.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned in my last year's speech, some potential sites could not be opened up for development due to lack of infrastructure. Accordingly, my Ministry has been working on a cost-sharing mechanism in consultation with the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Board of Investment.

I am proud to announce that, at long last, the cost sharing mechanism for State land in Les Salines Black River has been finalised. The Leader of the Opposition, then Minister of Tourism, in 2009, started the project, but, unfortunately, he has not been able to go forward with the project. Since 2009, this case has been pending and, now, this Government has the courage and the idea and has been able to finalise it. This exercise started years ago, as I mentioned, and it is only now, within two years, that my Ministry has been able to finalise such a complex exercise. The total cost of the infrastructure and other associated amenities like electricity and water will amount to some Rs485 m. Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd has already awarded the contract for the infrastructural works for the amount of some Rs380 m. and works are expected to start shortly, in a few days.

The existing promoters have already agreed to participate in the cost of sharing in 2009 and they refused. Now, they accept the cost sharing and they will contribute Rs290 m. while Government share will be Rs193 m., including share of uncommitted lands which have yet to be allocated to prospective promoters, a Government project and a public beach. The Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has already advanced necessary funding for this project.

Investment to the tune of Rs25 m. is expected to be injected in the private projects at Black River, Les Salines.

Madam Speaker, the Jin Fei Project, *l'éléphant blanc de Navin Ramgoolam et Rama Sithanen, aujourd'hui, c'est rempli avec des chiens errants*. I would advise my friend not to go there for a visit, especially Constituency No. 3. Do not go there! We have *des chiens errants* there!

(Interruptions)

Oui, un dépotoir! Vous avez raison! C'est zot ancien kamarad kinn fer ça !

(Interruptions)

It is good to know!

Around 2006, the former PTR-PMSD Government allocated 500 *arpents* of State land to the Jinfei Company for the development of a vast industrial and mixed use project. However, no major development has materialised.

Subsequently, this Government has retrieved - I am a specialist on retrieving the land. Everybody knows that - 325 *arpents* of State land from the company and my Ministry in consultation with the Board of Investment and Landscape (Mauritius) Ltd. has prepared a Master Plan for the development of the 325 *arpents*. In a few weeks, we are coming forward with this Master Plan.

The vision is to create a Business and Industrial Park at Riche Terre, which would be a great place for industry and business with innovative design and responsible property management. Following a joint exercise carried out by my Ministry, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and the Board of Investment, 37 projects - local people - ranging from warehousing and logistics, manufacturing, hospitality to renewable energy were found responsive. 37!

Madam Speaker, in the same region, Balaclava is also set to witness major developments in the hospitality sector with significant investments in eight hotels and bungalow complex projects to be implemented over a total of 45 *arpents* of State land.

Madam Speaker, in Palmar, my Ministry is also reviewing the Master Plan for the former Livestock Breeding Station - everybody is aware that I have retrieved 30 *arpents* from la *reine* de l'Italie at Palmar - over a site of 310 *arpents* located opposite the Palmar Public Beach for tourism related projects, commercial and mixed use projects. A similar cost

sharing mechanism as used for Black River, Les Salines, will be replicated for the State land at Palmar.

Madam Speaker, I will now touch upon the Land Surveyor's Council. The Cadastral Survey Act was enacted in 2011 to provide, *inter alia*, for the introduction of new standards in the conduct of land surveying in Mauritius. I have to answer a lot of Parliamentary Questions where I agree with my hon. friends that it is high time to change. The enforcement of these survey standards require the setting up of a regulatory body for the Surveyors.

As pointed out in this year's Budget, section 52 of the Professional Land Surveyor's Council Act 2014 will be proclaimed to enable the setting up of the Land Surveyor's Council. It is indeed high time to have a professional body, established by the law, to regulate, control and maintain discipline in the profession of land surveyors. It is expected that, by the end of this year, the Council will be operational for the first time.

My Ministry is also coming up with the establishment of a Council for Professional Planners. It will be mandated to register planners, make rules and regulations for the profession, and maintain a high standard of conduct.

Madam Speaker, I have already raised the issue of the squatters in the PNQ. In fact, there was some misunderstanding. I got the draft paper. There has been a mistake. I know. I have already talked extensively about actions regarding regularisation of squatters in my reply to the Private Notice Question of the Leader of the Opposition. As I have indicated previously, Government is committed to applying rigorously but humanely a series of measures to ease the situation of those persons who are illegally occupying State land. In various statements, I informed the House that I would regularise all pre-July 2015 squatters. In the context of « *Un toit pour tout un chacun* », *j'ai tenu ma parole et j'ai entrepris cette tâche avec toute la compassion du monde*. Madam Speaker, I can assure the House, till December of this year, we are going to - not only in the City, but in the whole island - deal with all the squatters and bring the necessary solution; a humane solution. It is for the first time in the history of the country.

Madam Speaker, for LAVIMS, my Ministry has also embarked on a major project for the replacement of the LAVIMS hardware. The current LAVIMS hardware dates back to year 2009 and is now due for replacement. The replacement of the hardware will enable LAVIMS to return to a state where the equipment is fully under warranty. This will also provide a suitable opportunity to align the current support and maintenance with the warranty periods.

Madam Speaker, people have the tendency to forget the hydrography, which does exist in my Ministry. We do not deal only with land, but also with sea. With an Exclusive

Economic Zone of 2.3 million square kilometres, the Vision 2030 document has identified development of Ocean industry as one of the core areas that will transform our economy. In that perspective, the Hydrographic Unit of my Ministry has been carrying out surveys in our waters for various projects of major importance, including Round, Serpent, Flat and Gabriel Islands in the North East of Mauritius, Rodrigues and Agalega. The Hydrographic Survey of Blue Bay Marine Park has been completed to fulfil requirements of multiple stakeholders.

Under the ambitious plan to survey navigational passes around the island, 18 passes, including adjoining lagoons, have been surveyed till now. The survey will contribute towards production/update of nautical products and datasets for modelling coastal processes.

Through consistent efforts over the past years, all seven navigational charts of Mauritius have been accorded International Status. The International Hydrographic Organisation has included these charts in the catalogue. These products, including electronic charts, are available to Mariners.

Madam Speaker, before I conclude, allow me to compare the achievements of this Government to those of previous Governments in respect of my portfolio -

- The houses being delivered are no longer “*boite zalimet*”, I remember, as described by *Père Labour* in 2012. Our units are now, as I mentioned, 50 square metres instead of the 39 square metres of Navinchandra Ramgoolam.
- We are no longer developing large NHDC housing estates with a population of 1,000 housing units - I just mentioned - comprising approximately 4,000 residents like La Tour Koenig, Cité La Cure and Camp Levieux, where beneficiaries have been dumped in suburb areas.
- Instead, we are limiting housing estates to manageable neighbourhood estates.
- The housing projects are implemented near built-up areas and other facilities such as transport system, schools, healthcare and job opportunities.
- From 2005 to 2014, - it is to be noted - only 2,532 housing units have been constructed. This Government will, by the end of 2019, within only five years, complete the construction of nearly 10,000 housing units.
- Procedures for acquisition of land in Moka District - hon. Prime Minister, we are not forgetting you, you deserve it - on which stand ex-CHA units; no longer outstanding. Due to our unflinching efforts, these have now been finalised with ENL. Now, 389 families living in these ex-CHA units in Cité Catherine, Verdun and Telfair will be able to purchase their plot of land.

- Appropriate actions have been initiated to finalise the acquisition of land from private owners on which stand 1,245 ex-CHA housing units spread over 17 other regions such as Goodlands, Argy, Quatre Cocos and Bel Ombre, amongst others.

Sale of State land from January 2015 to date, 3,021 portions of State land of up to 10 *perches* on which stands a residential unit have been sold to the sitting lessees. Development Projects, since 2015, my Ministry has put in place measures to remove bottlenecks, thus facilitating the implementation of various major projects as follows -

- The implementation of an access distributor at Les Salines, Black River, will open up the whole area for development, namely, five hotel projects and a major real estate development with an investment of Rs25 billion.
- In addition, another six hotel projects will be implemented in the regions of Balaclava, St. Felix and Bel Ombre by the following promoters – Whitewater Consulting Services Ltd, Colonies Capital Ltd, Brabant Co. Ltd, Clear Ocean Co Ltd, KPMM (Mauritius) Ltd and West Coast Leisure Ltd.

Undoubtedly, these projects will bring in Foreign Direct Investment, direct and indirect jobs.

Madam Speaker, I wish to stress on the fact that my Ministry has been closely monitoring the various components of the social housing programmes and I am happy to announce that for financial year 2016/2017, more than 80% of the capital budget earmarked for housing projects has already been utilised. Moreover, 82% of the overall capital budget has been used under the various programmes of my Ministry and 94% of the recurrent budget has been utilised. On the other hand, revenue collected stands at Rs840 m. as at May 2017.

Madam Speaker, I will conclude by extending my appreciation to the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Pravind Jugnauth for having walked the talk.

He has presented a budget which has encompassed a series of measures to attract investment, create jobs, improve the quality of life, redefine a new social structure and strengthen our economy.

We have the capacity of reaching new heights. The Prime Minister has shown us that we can and we will rise to the challenge of our ambitions. Let me tell you, the Prime Minister has mentioned that he is going to preside a meeting and I can assure the House, all that has

been said, all that which has been provided in budget, we are going to implement it. I can say that, for my Ministry, 94 % has already been implemented.

Next year, you come and you tell this Prime Minister: '*péna sapé, pas de pitié pour les canards boiteux*'. We are going to implement; all the Ministers of my good friend, the Deputy Prime Minister, we are going to work night and day to help the Prime Minister and the country, we are going to implement what has been said in our Budget by the Prime Minister. While the Leader of the Opposition and the other Members of the other side of the House are saying "daylight dreaming exercise", this Government will prove that we do dream, but we have the capacity and we are committed to transform our dreams into reality.

Madam Speaker, I thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 1.15 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.27 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Mr T. Henry (Fourth Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Merci, M. le président. Tout d'abord, je voudrais répondre à certaines attaques des honorables membres de la majorité qui ont critiqué les commentaires des honorables membres de l'opposition au sujet de ce budget, allant même jusqu'à tomber dans la bassesse, la démagogie; tenant des propos communaux, jusqu'à reculer à l'époque de l'indépendance, M. le président. Cela démontre qu'ils n'ont pas d'arguments pour défendre ce budget. Laissez-moi leur rafraîchir la mémoire.

Il ne faut pas qu'ils oublient les épisodes comme le fameux 'démon'; le G.N. 114; l'époque des 'tentes bazar' remplies de roupies; des *Amsterdam Boys*. Viennent s'ajouter au palmarès, les scandales courants que nous découvrons tous les jours à travers la presse; tels que la corruption; les *cover-up* et autre trafic d'influence. Cela démontre, M. le président, le sérieux de ce gouvernement "l'imposte".

Hier, malheureusement, je n'ai pas pu être là pour écouter l'honorable Gayan mais j'ai pu le suivre grâce à l'express.mu. Tout en écoutant son discours, je lisais les commentaires des internautes. M. le président, je n'ose même pas lire, là, devant cette Chambre, les commentaires qu'il y avait dessus. C'est une honte pour l'honorable Gayan! Je ne vais pas m'attarder dessus car le jugement dernier politique arrivera très bientôt pour lui. Quant à mon ami, l'honorable Aliphon, il était comme un donneur de leçon et il disait que

l'honorable *leader* de l'opposition a mal lu les journaux. Il ne faut pas oublier que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval est un expert-comptable. Heureusement que le ridicule ne tue pas !

(Interruptions)

Attendez ! C'est à moi de parler ! Je vous ai écouté, donnez-moi la chance de m'exprimer !

(Interruptions)

L'honorable Guito Lepoigneur a expliqué, pendant son discours, les problèmes qu'il y avait dans sa circonscription. C'est comme si l'honorable Aliphon s'est trompé entre la circonscription 19 et 20. Mais moi ce que je voudrais dire à l'honorable Aliphon, ici, au sujet du '*Petroleum Hub*', je lui conseille d'aller organiser une réunion à Albion pour dire aux habitants d'Albion qu'il a donné son *green light*. C'est comme il a dit dans son discours. S'il a besoin d'un *sponsor* pour la réunion, il n'a qu'à aller voir la paroisse d'Albion. A bon entendeur, salut !

(Interruptions)

M. le président...

(Interruptions)

S'il vous plaît, messieurs, un peu de dignité. Il faut se calmer. Il ne faut pas s'exciter comme ça.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon!

Mr Henry: Si ça fait mal, tant mieux. M. le président, je me rejoins donc aux membres de ce côté de la Chambre pour dire combien la population a été très déçue...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon, please allow the hon. Member to make his speech.

Mr Henry: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. Je disais donc je me rejoins aux membres de ce côté de la Chambre pour dire combien la population a été très déçue et se sent bernée par ce budget 2017/2018. Bernée car les promesses faites par le Premier ministre lors des consultations pré-budgétaires qui n'ont pas été tenues !

Je prends par exemple les victimes de la *BAI* pour qui ce budget n'apporte rien, pas de proposition et encore moins de solutions. Leur unique consultation est qu'ils ne sont pas les seuls laissés-pour-compte par le Premier ministre et Ministre des Finances.

Parlons aussi des effets d'annonce, des promesses populistes, telles que la *Negative Income Tax*. Est-ce que la promesse de payer un maximum de 1,000 roupies aux salariés touchant moins de 10,000 roupies sera tenue, voire même toujours valable en juin 2018?

Le gouvernement a, à maintes reprises, déjà parlé de son intention de venir de l'avant avec un *Minimum Wage* en janvier 2018. Ce salaire minimum ne rendra-t-il pas caduque cette promesse budgétaire?

M. le président, le secteur financier est indéniablement un pilier de notre économie, pourtant le Premier ministre et Ministre des Finances semble n'avoir rien apporté à ce secteur, hormis la promesse d'un *Blueprint*. Quand cette proposition sera-t-elle prête? Et pourrons nous respecter la date butoir établie par l'Union Européenne pour nous aligner à ses directives? Nous sommes déjà en juin, et l'échéance a été fixée à la fin de cette année calendaire. Si nous ne nous alignons pas à ces directives M. le président, c'est le secteur d'activités dans son ensemble qui sera mis en péril car Maurice risque de se trouver sur la liste noire de cette instance. Ce sont 20,000 emplois de ce secteur qui sont menacés – emplois composés majoritairement de jeunes.

Autre manquement majeur de ce budget, M. le président, rien sur la stratégie économique à adopter par rapport au vieillissement de la population qu'annoncent tous nos statisticiens. Ce gouvernement a-t-il des stratégies ou même des idées afin de faire face à cette situation ?

Comment, M. le président, pouvons-nous croire dans l'aboutissement des promesses mirobolantes faites dans ce budget, alors que de nombreuses promesses faites dans le budget 2016/2017 attendent toujours à être honorées? Il y a de nombreux exemples flagrants, tels que l'achat d'imprimantes 3D pour les PME ou encore la construction de logements sociaux. Comment la population peut-elle avoir confiance en un gouvernement qui ne tient pas ses promesses?

M. le président, je vais maintenant aborder un sujet qui me tient particulièrement à cœur, c'est celui de l'Art et de la Culture, le ministère qu'a occupé mon ami, l'honorable Baboo. Je voudrais le féliciter pour l'aboutissement de ses projets comme l'accès du

Montagne Le Morne qui est aujourd'hui public, pour l'inscription du *Séga Tipik* et le *Geet Gawai* comme '*Intangible World Heritage*'.

(*Interruptions*)

Cela a été dit mon ami, il faut écouter.

(*Interruptions*)

Non, *Séga Tipik* je l'ai dit en premier. D'avoir commencé l'élaboration de lois telles que *The Artist Bill*, *The Film Commission Bill* aussi bien que le *Copyright Bill*, M. le président.

Alors que depuis le départ de celui-ci, c'est une catastrophe, M. le président. Plusieurs corps paraétatiques, tels que la *National Library*, le *National Heritage Fund*, le *Morne Heritage Trust Fund*, le *Nelson Mandela Centre for African Culture* sont toujours sans *Chairman* après six mois. Cela démontre le sérieux avec lequel est géré ce ministère.

M. le président, je me fais le porte-parole de ces nombreux artistes qui m'ont approché pour me faire part de leur déception. Il y a déjà eu dans la presse un article qui fait état de cette frustration de nos artistes - chanteurs, peintres, scénaristes ou chorégraphes, tous sont déçus. Ils avaient mis beaucoup d'espoir dans leur rencontre pré-budgétaire avec le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances. C'est malheureux de voir que cela n'a pas servi à grand-chose. Par exemple, ils avaient demandé un amendement à l'*IBA* concernant le quota de diffusion de musique. Aujourd'hui, sur nos ondes, il n'y a que 20% de musique locale diffusée, ce qui est un grand manque à gagner pour nos artistes locaux, M. le président.

Vous vous rendez compte, M. le président, que 80% des recettes sur les droits d'auteur vont à l'étranger. Certes, les Mauriciens aiment la musique internationale, cependant, c'est le rôle du gouvernement de proposer des solutions ou des initiatives afin d'encourager et de promouvoir les artistes locaux.

Une autre aberration, qui n'a tristement pas été abordée par ce récent budget, est la redevance pour les droits d'auteur qui est inchangée depuis plus de 25 ans. C'est tout simplement inconcevable qu'aujourd'hui, en 2017, les royalties par diffusion sont de 68 sous. C'est ridicule et franchement aberrant que la demande de révision formulée par les artistes mauriciens n'ait pas été entendue.

Le *Copyright Bill* est un autre oublié de ce budget présenté par le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances. Verra-t-on un jour la révision tant attendue de ce cadre légal? Déjà travaillé et prêt à être présenté ! Alors pourquoi tout ce temps ? Six mois, M. le président !

Concernant le *National Fund* annoncé dans ce budget, qui fait provision de R 50 millions pour les événements, les artistes se posent légitimement certaines questions notamment sur la gestion de ce même fonds. Qui sera responsable ? Est-ce le ministère? Pourquoi ne pas avoir mis sur pied un conseil indépendant? Les artistes avaient d'ailleurs formulé une requête pour la création d'un *Art Council*, proposition malheureusement rejetée. Cet *Art Council* aurait certainement pu gérer efficacement, de manière transparente ces R 50 millions.

M. le président, je tiens ici à souligner que j'ai relevé deux mesures positives dans cet exercice budgétaire. Ces deux mesures sont la création d'un *annual national award ceremony* pour reconnaître les talents de nos artistes locaux et la rénovation du Plaza et de l'Hôtel de Ville de Curepipe qui sont aujourd'hui dans un état de délabrement extrême. Malheureusement, le théâtre de Port Louis, cette icône du patrimoine culturel mauricien, a été oublié.

Une autre requête, M. le président, que les artistes avaient à cœur est la construction d'un Palais des Arts où nos talents locaux auraient pu se produire. Or, dans ce budget, seulement un terrain a été '*earmarked*' à Côte d'Or City, Highlands. La première pierre de cette cité n'a pas encore été posée. A quand le Palais des Arts? Que doivent faire nos artistes en attendant ? C'est une urgence, M. le président.

La mise sur pied d'un comité pour étudier le Traité de Beijing est une autre requête formulée par nos talents locaux qui n'a pas été entendue par le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances. Pour rappel, le ministère des Affaires Etrangères est en possession de ce traité. Il est grand temps de gérer efficacement les retombées financières du domaine de l'audiovisuel afin d'encourager une augmentation de nombre de productions locales et, par ricochet, la création d'emplois dans ce secteur.

Quant au Village des Arts à Batterie de L'harmonie à Rivière Noire, c'est une très bonne chose. C'est une jolie place mais, M. le président, il n'y a pas d'accès pour aller là-bas. C'est fermé. C'est entouré de projets d'hôtels des *IRS*. Est-ce qu'il faudra attendre que tous

ces projets se concrétisent afin d'avoir accès à ce site? C'est pour quand? On ne verra pas cela l'année prochaine. C'est triste. M. le président.

Je fais un appel au Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour qu'il renoue le dialogue avec les artistes. Il n'est pas trop tard. Je l'invite à s'asseoir avec eux autour d'une table afin de trouver un consensus et une manière d'avancer tous ensemble.

Je lance aussi un appel à l'actuel ministre des Arts et de la Culture. Espérons qu'il sera cette fois à la hauteur de ses responsabilités et des attentes placées en lui afin qu'il fasse mieux qu'au ministère de l'Intégration sociale. Je dois malheureusement dire qu'il a laissé ce ministère dans un tel état que certains deviennent 'gaga'.

(Interruptions)

Prenons, comme exemple, le fonctionnement du CSR, M. le président. Les ONG sont dans le flou total. Certaines de ces organisations qui font un travail fort louable auprès des démunis et des laissés-pour-compte envisagent aujourd'hui de mettre la clef sous le paillasson tellement ils sont perdus. J'ai un exemple bien concret pour ceux qui doutent encore de la situation désastreuse, M. le président, dans laquelle nous sommes aujourd'hui.

Caritas, M. le président, avait pour habitude de donner un repas aux enfants défavorisés des écoles de Plaine Magnien, Le Bouchon. À cause du retard dans l'implémentation du CSR, Caritas a dû cesser la distribution de ces repas. Le résultat est que certains enfants ne vont pas régulièrement à l'école et ceux et celles qui préparaient ces repas se retrouvent au chômage, M. le président.

M. le président, je note qu'une somme de 1 milliard 85 millions de roupies a été allouée à la NDU. Le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a énuméré des projets prioritaires. La somme restante, comment sera-t-elle répartie? Par circonscription? Sachant que, rien que dans la circonscription No.12, M. le président, Mahébourg/Plaine Magnien, il y a de nombreux projets d'envergure. Cette somme sera-t-elle suffisante?

Dans la circonscription No. 12, il y a une nécessité pour la création de drains à Trois Boutiques, Cité Paul Langlois à Plaine Magnien et Ville Noire ou encore l'asphaltage de kilomètres de route à travers la circonscription. Au-delà de ces travaux, la foire de Plaine Magnien n'a toujours pas de toit. L'hôpital de Mahébourg a grand besoin d'être rénové et

mieux équipé pour répondre aux besoins des habitants de la circonscription. J'espère que le ministre de la Santé sera sensible à cet appel.

Dans une déclaration, M. le président, à la presse, le ministre des Collectivités locales, député de la circonscription No.12, a annoncé la réhabilitation du *Mahebourg Waterfront* et de Bateau Roche à Remy Ollier. Des plages artificielles vont être créées selon lui. Ces projets sont-ils fiables, connaissant les problèmes d'érosion de nos plages? Est-ce qu'un montant a été alloué dans ce budget pour ces deux projets? Question sans réponse! Qui sera responsable de ce projet? Est-ce qu'une étude environnementale a été faite avant cette annonce? Il y a encore énormément de points d'interrogation autour de ces deux projets.

Ce matin à la *PNQ* du Leader de l'Opposition sur les squatters à travers Maurice, dans notre circonscription No.12, M. le président, on a le cas des habitants de Camp Carol. L'année dernière, moi-même personnellement, j'étais avec mon collègue, l'honorable Mahen Jhugroo, le Vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Soodhun et on a remis soi-disant ...

(Interruptions)

... leur contrat de terrain avec...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, allow me to hear the speech of hon. Henry!

Mr Henry: On leur a tous remis un papier à l'effet que c'était leur contrat de terrain. Et même le Vice-premier ministre est allé loin dans ses propos en disant que dans six mois tout sera réglé et il n'y aura plus de problème. Ça fait un an, M. le président, et rien n'a été fait! Je vais lui demander d'aller voir ces gens...

(Interruptions)

Oui, de faire un *statement* ! Faites un *statement*, ces gens-là peuvent venir écouter votre *statement*, l'honorable Vice-Premier ministre! Ils ont donné des papiers pour aller chez le notaire, pour aller commencer leurs régularisations, mais malheureusement tout est bloqué au ministère de *Housing and Lands*. Donc, je fais un appel au ministre de s'occuper de ce dossier avant qu'il parte parce que c'est une promesse qu'on a fait et ça fait un an que ces gens attendent leurs contrats, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Pour conclure, M. le président, je dirai que ce budget 2017-2018 est un budget '*menti menti*', sans vision, sans envergure et sans aucune compréhension des réelles problématiques auxquelles font face les mauriciens aujourd'hui.

A entendre les orateurs de l'autre côté de la Chambre, tout va bien, il n'y a aucun problème dans notre pays, alors que notre pays est au bord d'un précipice. Le syndrome de *tout korek, tout korek !* Alors que tous les jours, comme j'ai dit auparavant, on entend toutes sortes de problèmes de corruption. Notre honorable Vice-premier ministre est au centre d'un scandale.

(Interruptions)

Quant au *Deputy Prime Minister*, ça ne vaut même pas la peine de parler de lui! Tout à l'heure, ils ont parlé de Jin Fei, je lui demanderai de ne pas passer par là-bas parce que c'est dangereux pour lui. Il y a un truc qui me tient à cœur, que je voudrais dire dans cette Chambre aujourd'hui, c'est que ce gouvernement a sali la mémoire de Sir Gaëtan Duval. Nous savons qu'il y a un commissaire frustré à Rodrigues. Mais ce gouvernement a osé faire cela à Sir Gaëtan Duval. Nous savons tous la contribution de Sir Gaëtan Duval à Rodrigues concernant le logement, l'électricité et surtout, le plus important, M. le président, le droit de vote à Rodrigues.

Mais c'est triste de voir aujourd'hui que certains membres de ce gouvernement, qui disaient courir pieds nus à côté de la voiture de Sir Gaëtan Duval, qui ont soutenu Sir Gaëtan Duval pendant tout son parcours politique et qui étaient proche de la famille...

(Interruptions)

Aujourd'hui, cette même personne est complice de ce crime, M. le président. C'est vraiment triste pour lui aujourd'hui. Mais je suis sûr que ce gouvernement ne fera pas long feu parce que je me joins au Leader de l'Opposition pour demander au Premier ministre de suivre le conseil de son homologue de l'Inde, de dissoudre ce Parlement, d'organiser des élections générales anticipées dans les plus brefs délais. Il y va de la survie de notre pays, M. le président. Vive l'Ile Maurice !

Merci, M. le président!

(2.54 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the outset, let me congratulate the hon. Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members! Please!

Dr. Sorefan: ... and Minister of Finance for his laudable budget. It is a budget that makes many Mauritians feel good in their skin. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me refute a few issues that have been spelt out by some Members of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition said in his speech that only tourism got better since he was the Minister of Tourism before and that the tourism sector is feeling his departure, meaning to say that he was the only Minister who did a great job. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what about ex-Minister, hon. Mrs Perraud? She also did some work, I am sure...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: She tried her best...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode! I am warning you now!

Dr. Sorefan: But her own Leader did not agree. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the only thing that I will say about her, is that to get a smile from her is very, very difficult.

(Interruptions)

Then, what about my good friend, ex-Minister, hon. Baboo? He also, as per his Leader, did not do anything when he was in Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud, Please!

Dr. Sorefan: I am sure...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Dr. Sorefan: I am sure he tried his best. The only thing that he suffered was that there was *diable* in his Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Diable! That is what he said. I am only hoping that the *diable* has not followed him in the Opposition. What I have recently gathered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that there are many...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Dr. Sorefan: ... internal problems within the PMSD.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur! Allow me, now, to listen to hon. Dr. Sorefan!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Prime Minister mentioned in this Budget about projects in Curepipe, like swimming pool, Hotel de Ville, and others, the human body reaction of hon. Mrs Malini Sewocksingh was applauding. She was applauding! You know what happened? The Leader of the Opposition, her leader, stopped her and scolded her. That is what happened. Probably, that is what hon. Minister Wong Yen Cheong was saying, how he was not allowed to voice his opinion in the PMSD Party.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Sorefan: This is the same kind of leadership that I had to endure with my previous Parties. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, I am in a Party where I am free to voice my opinion. I am in my skin, I am happy. Let me say what the Leader of Opposition said on drugs ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Dr. Sorefan: He does not know the medical statistics ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Dr. Sorefan: When he came on drugs, he said synthetic drugs have gone to 50%. This 50% of synthetic drugs that he said is going down is a good sign that the young people are not calling for more synthetic drugs because it is very devastating. They have experienced it. That is why it is going down. Regarding hard drugs, he said the price is the same. Well, sorry, I do not meet anyone to know what the price is. To tell you frankly, I do not know. But he seems to know.

(Interruptions)

I do not know. Probably, I will go and check with them what the price is. And he is saying the price is stable, meaning that there are lots of drugs around, and that is why the price of drugs are normal. But the demand of drugs is going down, that is why the price is not going up and this is a good sign. Medical statistics! Well, they are expert in drugs, let them go!

Drug is going down. Our hon. Prime Minister is taking really the bull by the horn on drugs traffickers. Further, the drug will go down, there won't be any demand; the price will go down and down. It will not go up. I don't know why he compares that with tomatoes and potatoes in the market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition mentioned law and order, how Police officers should be well equipped and he gave the example of Singapore. Well, let me say, I agree with him, but if we had Policemen like in Singapore, could you imagine what would have happened at the accident site where a Member of his party killed somebody, he would have been arrested on the spot. He would not have time to run away. I will not go in the social aspect of his family because I will be too personal. I know what is going on when such things happen. What about the son-in-law who killed two policemen within nine months? The son-in-law, now, I understand, is an ex-son-in-law. You know, he has got two licences from the Tourism Authority. For one licence, the company's name is...

(Interruptions)

Listen to this! The name of the first company is 'Born to Sail' and the second one is 'Born to Fly' and, probably, we will give him a licence for creating another company, free of charge, it will be 'Born to Kill', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now, I will dwell, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on what hon. Uteem said, that we cannot finance this Budget from the Build Mauritius Fund, the National Resilient Fund to the National Budget as stipulated in section 33(a). Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not an expert in financial issues, but the little that I know tells me that it is common sense that we can...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Yes, you are an expert in it! Why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It is because Build Mauritius Fund and...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem, allow the hon. Member to make his speech. Continue!

Dr. Sorefan: ... Resilient Fund; both funds were set up from money from a previous Budget. If they are dormant, they can always be brought back to the Budget.

In this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, paragraph 39 for academic research, a fund has been created to the tune of Rs50 m. So, all funds created can always be re-injected in future Budgets. So, hon. Uteem's argument to me does not hold good.

Another issue raised by hon. Uteem was on poverty. He said that, at one point in time, Government was helping about 13,000 households and now only 8,000 households are being helped. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us say, if now this Government was granting help to about 18,000 households, you would know what the hon. Member would have said, that poverty has increased. But he said this Government is now granting aid only to 8,000, that means poverty is regressing because the 5,000 households are out of the requirement list for financial grant.

Hon. Barbier, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with all the songs of *parole, et parole et parole*. I would say to the Opposition: '*tapaze et tapaze et tapaze* of the Opposition'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Barbier said that taxes on alcohol and cigarettes are financing this Budget to the tune of about Rs10 billion and that this Government is enduringly preventing the lower group from having their - I don't know the word he used.

Well, may I inform the hon. Member that cigarettes and alcohol are the main evils that cause many acute and chronic diseases that cost the Ministry of Health billion of rupees to treat. It is a worldwide trend to increase taxes on alcohol and cigarettes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Apart from health, the hon. Member forgot the social problem caused by the drunkards. We have seen divorce, battered women and children, fatal accidents. Have we forgotten about the fact that money was given to buy books to the vulnerable groups recently? What happened? Fathers took the money buy alcoholic drinks! Apart from the Ministry of Health, Mr Deputy Speaker, subsidising all the treatment...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval, please don't make comments!

Dr. Sorefan: There are other Ministries that are helping those who are suffering due to cigarettes and alcohol, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, I have listened carefully to you. Allow the hon. Member to make his speech!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to clarify some issues of this Budget. Most of the hon. Members of the Opposition are saying that this Budget is a Budget *décevant*, full of *confettis*. All these, we heard before, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the last Budget, the same words! Now, according to them, we have a Budget *menti menti*. Like I said, *parole et parole!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these kinds of words are from people who are *fer blanc vide ki faire bokou tapaz*. Some of them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are criticising the growth rate. Can we compare with other countries for the year 2015? For Mauritius, it was about 3.5% as well as for many countries of the middle economies. For the middle economies, it is around 3.8%. For the upper middle income, it is 3.3%. For the Arab world, it is 3.2%. For the Central Europe, it is 3.6%. For the Euro area, it is 2%. High income groups: Australia 2.2%, China which is doing well, 6.9%, France 1.3% and India, doing very well, we all know, is 7.9%. We

are comparing ourselves with Singapore. Singapore is 2%, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Germany 1.7%! Japan 1.2%! New Zealand 3.4%! USA 2.2%!

As we can see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Mauritius has done quite well in this world of turmoil economies. We are within the average with other countries even better compared to some high income countries. We are forecasting 4.1% for 2017 and 2018. Seeing the gradual trend of Mauritius for the last three years, I can say we would achieve the 4.1% or even better. Why not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Let us be positive! If we don't know it now, it can happen any time.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now talk about economy and social benefit of this Budget. Metro Express, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, provides a great capacity in cost option that is available from just buses. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would request Government, through the Prime Minister, to initiate and promote the new economic paradigms, that is, the Gross national happiness to go hand in hand with the Gross Domestic Product.

Mauritius ranks 64, going up from rank 66, according to the World Happiness Report from 150 countries. We must congratulate the king of Bhutan for having initiated this new economic paradigm. The World Happiness Report takes in consideration real GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity and perception of corruption. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was talking about the Metro Express, the social benefit. It provides a high-capacity public transport option at lower cost. It provides faster journey times than buses operating in mixed traffic, more reliable journey time due to high level of priority decongestion benefit, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and in terms of cost fuel saving which today costs the country Rs4 billion. It guarantees full accessibility with level boarding and alighting at every stop. It increases social inclusion by linking disadvantaged areas, provides local environment benefits from electric traction, reduces noise, vibration and pollution. It will create a modern and dynamic image, generating civil pride and attracting investment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude on the Metro Express, it is unfortunate that the characteristics and benefits of Metro Express are frequently underestimated in decision-making.

Metro Express will be an efficient means of transport, particularly efficient, because Metro Express is synonymous with reliable public transport. Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, Metro Express will be a collective transport. It is a model shift from individual to collective transport, which forms the foundation of sustainable transport, which is more efficient for all

green issues such as energy consumption and greenhouse emission. Metro Express has an efficient mode of public transport which contributes to development and sustainable operation of collective transport in our towns.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Dr. Sorefan: Metro Express...

The Deputy Speaker: I am warning you!

Dr. Sorefan: ... will be a proven force for economic growth, will contribute to regeneration of the economy, will create job associated with the construction, operation and maintenance of the Metro Express, will increase employment in our towns where officers can be more efficiently serviced. Metro Express, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is about much more than a way to get from point A to point B. It is about good and prudent management, it is about smart investment and small growth. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Metro Express is about making our great towns even greater, achieving vision for a cleaner, more efficient, more prosperous ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sawmynaden!

Dr. Sorefan: ...and more attractive town will improve our communities and our quality of life. It will make Mauritius an even better place to live, work and play. It will truly be a world class system for our town, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, improve bus rapid transport would not deliver the economic, social and environment benefits. Some people are talking about bus lane, but can we visualise bus lane at Royal Roads, say, from Quatre Bornes to Port Louis via Rose Hill? If we do go for bus lane, our A1 road is too narrow. By the way, in England, especially in Liverpool, they have gone away with bus lane because they have found that bus lanes are used by only four or five buses every 15 minutes. Cars are not allowed to drive on bus lanes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now that Government is going ahead with the Metro Express, I wonder what will happen to the Leader of the book, I mean Facebook Party

cybernating in the cloud as a sleeping, roaring cloned lion in a yellow dessert, waiting to go for the kill with a parasitic PMSD Party.

One thing he doesn't know, that all clone animals are born...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval! Allow the hon. Member to make his speech!

Dr. Sorefan: ... with a physical handicap. Their lifespan is very short; they die by getting old within two years. Will he resign as MP as this Government is definitely going ahead with Metro Express?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Ameer Meea! Allow the hon. Member to make his speech!

Mr Ameer Meea: He is imputing improper motives!

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member is raising a point of order? Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Deputy Speaker, the hon. Member is imputing improper motive on an hon. Member who is not here and on his character. He said that any clone animal which he referred to has a handicap. So, I am going to ask him to withdraw what he just said.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Dr. Sorefan! You have heard the comment?

Dr. Sorefan: Well, I think the hon. Member has misunderstood, I said clone animal without referring to the hon. Member as a clone animal.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay!

Dr. Sorefan: When I finish, you go to the Hansard. You have the habit of reading Hansard, you go and understand! This is science, you don't know!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I have taken note of your explanation, please, resume your speech.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Whatever you call me, *transfuge* or not, I am a human being, I am a politician, I am here to help Government and to help the people for a good job.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Many projects have been mentioned in this project, namely –

- upgrading educational hardware and infrastructure to the tune of Rs310 m.
- works at University of Technology, Mauritius, Polytechnics to the tune of Rs130 m.
- construction of both the Jumbo/Phoenix roundabout and the A1/M1 Bridge;
- new roads at La Vigie and La Brasserie;
- flyover to connect M1 to Terre Rouge-Verdun motorway, and
- Côte d’Or City at Highlands.

Many subsidies to institutions and others, without forgetting the help to artists and sport athletes that no one from the Opposition dares to talk of how good the Budget makes allowance for our athletes. That is why they just hide the good things. They don’t talk about them. And, here, the specialist in that subject is my good friend, hon. Barbier. He dares not mention any words on this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many of the incentives mentioned in this Budget will undoubtedly create a good feeling among the population and make them feel happy. Many, many projects, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are in the budget booklet. The Oppositions are blind and pretend to be illiterate because they can’t and don’t want to accept the good social measures. Like Professor Abdul Kalam said, and I quote –

“A positive mind finds opportunity in everything. A negative mind finds fault in everything.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the positiveness on this side of the House and that of the population of Mauritius has and will neutralise the negativity of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words on health. This Government is spending a huge sum, about Rs1.6 billion. I am pleased for the recruitment of more staff. I would suggest to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life to consider recruiting some more registered doctors as has been done last week. Most welcoming for the future, three new Mediclinics, two new Community Health Centres; we shall have two linear accelerators, without forgetting 5 new SAMU ambulances and many others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have a few suggestions that the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life could consider from his financial Budget. To make it compulsory for all women above 50 years old to have mammography, of course, free of charge, because we have a high prevalence of breast cancer. Early lesions when treated have a very good prognosis and are less costly.

Another suggestion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life is to consider coming with free distribution of low dose...

(Interruptions)

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

Dr. Sorefan: ...75mg of aspirin to all those above 40 years. Why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This is because of a high prevalence of cardiovascular accident. Those who face CVA are leading a very unsociable life and also costly to the Ministry. As provision has been made for medicine to the tune of Rs1 billion, including drugs and vaccines, I don't think my two proposals will offset the finance of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. We must not forget, prevention is better than cure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Blue economy, the Ocean is everybody's business. The Ocean is probably, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the biggest business in the world. Not surprising, as the Ocean covers about 70% of the world; it provides half the oxygen we breathe. It absorbs a quarter of our CO₂ emission and puts food on our plates, but it is in danger, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You may not be able to see it from above the surface, but the threats are many and the risks are real. Corals are dying. Pollution is causing dead zones. Climate

change is heating our ocean making it more acidic and too many boats are chasing fewer and fewer fish.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ocean is like the earth circulatory system. It provides us with food, freshwater, energy, medicine and the oxygen in every second breath we take.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, keeping the above in mind, the ocean economy can be exploited to boost export and create quality employment opportunities and many other mentioned in the budget. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quote a saying –

“No man is an island. No island is the world. The world does not need us. We need the world.”

Likewise Mauritius does not need us, we need Mauritius. So, the ocean does not need us, we need the ocean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We must, with caution, exploit the ocean.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words about road infrastructure. It is really unprecedented to acknowledge so many durable road projects, not like those of the past Government. We all know about Ring Road 1, Verdun-Terre Rouge. With all the projects from the Ministry of Infrastructure in the pipeline, Mauritius, like hon. Bodha said, will be a *chantier* as from a few months. Can we visualise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if all the projects for some reasons get started at the same time? The Metro Express, Urban Station, A1/M1 Bridge, the Jumbo/Dowlut roundabout, the Port Louis Immigration Development and many others! Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to cite an issue on India. What I have loved most about Clean India is that it identified a big problem, got everyone working on it and using measurement to show where things need to be done differently. Just as the old saying goes ‘what gets measured gets done.’ If you don’t get ambitious target and charge your progress, you end up settling for business as usual and in this case business as usual would mean poor sanitation keeps killing more than half a million Indians every year in India.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, those visions, the ones I mentioned above, was from the Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi. What we can learn from the hon. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is that he teaches us not to do business as usual, to set up ambition targets and that is what our hon. Prime Minister has done through this budget. Very ambitious targets and he means business so as not to do business as usual.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a few words on hard drugs that are presently causing lots of distress to the family. Some are living life worst than hell, the parents mainly. Naming and shaming those involved in drugs importation and trafficking is important, without forgetting corruption. Laws must be enforced and rule breakers must be punished. This is an essential part of the process of governance and efforts to build trust between those in power and the citizens. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Prime Minister should be named and famed, as a leader with integrity, for fighting drugs traffickers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many, in this House, have talked a lot about Betamax, the Rs4.5 billion or so keep resonating in my ears, I will try to do some calculation. From 2012 to 2014, we have paid Betamax Rs4 billion, say, we have to pay the award to the tune of Rs5 billion; in all, Betamax will get Rs9 billion. Now, for a 15-year contract, the total sum that would have been paid would be around Rs30 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we now know that STC is making a profit of about Rs600 m. per year. At this rate, the thirteen years left will total Rs7.8 billion profit. In all, we will make a total saving of Rs37.8 billion out of which if we pay Rs5 billion for the award, STC will undoubtedly make a saving of Rs32 billion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. To me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even if we have to pay the award we will still in the long run make a huge saving.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now show how much we have lost by the previous Government, PTR/PMSD Government - Bagatelle Dam Rs3 billion; Ring Road Phase I the Ministry will have to pay Rs400 m., Verdun-Terre Rouge landslide Rs800 m.; Northbound crack road more than Rs800 m.; totalling to Rs5 billion.

We must not forget the famous flamingo project which probably many do not know. The flamingo project of SBM when the Leader of the Opposition was a Minister of Finance, Rs7 billion were paid and the project has been scrapped. What more! These Rs7 billion not yet capitalised. If they decide to capitalise, say, Rs1 billion every year, this Government will lose dividend every year to the tune of Rs800 m. As we know, the Government has 80% stake in SBM. In seven years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that will make Rs5.6 billion lost to this Government. If we add it to Rs5 billion lost above, it will come to Rs10.6 billion. If the Government decides to pay the BAI and Bramer, from what I understand, it will be around Rs9 billion and there are also the costs overrun by NDU project, Verdun-Phoenix another Rs2 billion. In all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it comes to Rs21.6 billion that the tax payers have

to pay and will pay because of the last regime. Now, they are shouting from every corner that taxpayers will have to pay for Rs5 billion award to Betamax.

Hon. Joe Lesjongard has clarified the matter yesterday; all the *maldonnes*, since the beginning of the project. The conflict of interest, this is what PTR and PMSD did, and today they are claiming to be Saint Navin, Saint Xavier.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Dr. Sorefan: Before concluding, I would like to say a few words on my Constituency about projects going on. I am glad that work is still going on at Petit Camp after my intervention in this House, at adjournment time.

The sewage work at Highlands, near the mosque had been long overdue. I don't know how many times the Secretary of *Parti travailliste* visited the place, nothing was done. But I am pleased that this Government has voted a sum of Rs80 m. and work will start soon after awarding tender very shortly.

The swimming pool at Phoenix, long waited for. Major works at Jumbo Phoenix; many projects have been mentioned by hon. Benydin. I wish to put on record the good work of the Mayor, the Councillors and the Chief Executive of the Municipality of Vacoas-Phoenix for the good work executed and which will be executed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will end by this saying; we envision a society where citizens are informed. This Government is open and responsive and there is a citizen engagement which advances the public wellbeing.

To the hon. Prime Minister, congratulations! It's a very good Budget. We can have a good implementation of a good Budget. We can't have a good implementation of a bad Budget, but we can and we should have a very good implementation of this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a good implementation it is mandatory to have a budgetary accounting, defining and monitoring commitments, managing payables and arrears issues. Personal budgetary management should aim at fostering efficiency in delivering public services, procurement and lastly, direction from improving Budget execution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, public officers should not execute business as usual. Ministers are responsible for their officers to execute this Budget differently to succeed. In so doing, like we have elaborated in the past, it is easy to do business in Mauritius, so be it. With the help of Almighty, I pray in this month of Ramadan that no budgetary mountains will be difficult to execute. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. François!

(3:39 p.m.)

Mr F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a pleasure for me to rise today on behalf of the people I represent from Rodrigues, to speak on the present Budget debate with an inspiring theme - 'Rising to the Challenge of our ambitions' as presented by the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance.

Government, through this Budget, has set its priorities and projects through the various policies and objectives which, in certain cases, require to take bold decisions for the nation; decisions by creating opportunities and conditions that allow our people to seize opportunity to improve their social and economic condition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I welcome the decision to set up the following two institutions, namely an Economic and Development Board and a National Economic and Social Council.

This will accentuate the confidence between Government, the people and businesses both at national, local and international levels and will reinforce specially a new participatory democratic approach of our Republic.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are facing today the reality of climate change. I was with my colleague, hon. Dayal, in Paris, in 2015, where we presented the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) for the Republic of Mauritius to look into the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. This INDC which, after COP21, became the determined contributions of our Republic which, I am sure, hon. Sinatambou will enlighten us about what is the situation today as the world prepares for COP23 in Bonn in November this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I refer to the United Nations in 2015 where it was reported that despite the attention paid to agricultural development and food security over the past

decades, there are about 800 million people undernourished and one billion people malnourished in the world. At the same time, more than 1.4 billion people or adults are overweight and one third of all food produced is wasted.

I am relating to agriculture. Agriculture a vital sector of our Republic and is particularly vulnerable to climate change because different crops and animals thrive in different conditions. The question of food security remains a priority objective for our Republic.

We have just faced the damaging and heartbreaking disaster of Foot and Mouth Disease. Here, I welcome the decision of Government to come with a National Biodiversity Plan to reduce risk and remain free from pest and diseases for safeguarding our valuable agricultural resources. By the way, farmers from Rodrigues are asking when the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security will remove the FMD embargo on Rodrigues because there is a surplus of livestock in Rodrigues at present.

On the same line on climate change planning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the issue of land use planning along with the challenges and opportunities of productivity, sustainability and livability are part of a dynamic system that we are facing today through land development.

As Mauritius is addressing a new public transport system, the Metro Express, I hope it will address the three key elements of Productivity, Sustainability and Livability, that is, congestion, improvement of access to jobs and opportunity, and as I said, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and will increase affordable access to facilities. The Metro Express Project shall be an opportunity for a review of planning and livelihoods in the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Rodrigues, we are very much concerned with the climatic change challenges in front of us today, especially the Commissioner responsible for Environment, Commissioner Richard Payendee, who is initiating various green projects, among which is the implementation of a pilot Eco-Village Project for this year, the consolidation of Marine Protected Areas within the ambit of Ocean Economy and renewable energy policy.

Another subject, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the statistics on cancer with regard to health are alarming. I have met NGOs like *Lumière et Vie* in Rodrigues, Breast Cancer Care, Link to Life, who are engaged in that direction of the fight against cancer and they all need our continuous support. I visited and I have seen the sufferings of our patients regularly in hospitals, in Jawaharlal Nehru and Dr. Jeetoo Hospitals. Our Republic has the responsibility

to deal seriously with cancer and the construction of a new cancer hospital, as announced by the hon. Prime Minister, is a very positive measure.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is also focused on helping our vulnerable people to lead more successful lives, to improve the safety of family violence victims and stop family violence escalating in our society. The Social Investment Programme for housing is part of the answer. We just heard the answers of hon. Soodhun this morning during the PNQ.

On the same line, there is also a problem of Sale by Levy, which operates as a sort of mafia, as mentioned by an hon. Member in this House. Insofar as Rodrigues is concerned, I have discussed with the Attorney General and will humbly request him to see with the Judiciary that the Supreme Court held special session for cases of Sale by Levy for Rodrigues in Rodrigues and not in Port Louis.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, live broadcasting is a reality for our Parliament. The live and online relationship between us politicians and our citizens offers us, politicians, an extraordinary opportunity to be closer to our constituency, constituents, of the people who voted for us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our next challenge is to seriously consider electronic voting during elections. I am sure the Electoral Commission will endorse this project as we are embarking in this new digital era.

Un mot sur le sport, M. le président. J'ai eu la chance d'avoir comme voisin un champion du monde, en l'occurrence le boxeur Fackson Perrine, à Rodrigues. J'ai vu la difficulté des athlètes de haut niveau. Je peux vous dire, qu'aujourd'hui, le nouveau projet de reconnaissance et de soutenir nos athlètes est une très bonne chose.

Quelques semaines de cela, en présence de l'honorable ministre Toussaint, j'ai assisté aux Jeux inter-collèges à Rodrigues, avec environ 5,000 jeunes, au stade de Camp du Roi et je peux vous dire, M. le président, Rodrigues est et reste une pépinière d'athlètes pour la République de Maurice, ce qui implique davantage d'investissements dans le domaine du sport à Rodrigues.

M. le président, je note ici, avec intérêt, la volonté de l'honorable ministre et du Premier ministre pour la tenue d'au moins trois activités sportives à Rodrigues lors des prochains Jeux des Iles en 2019.

Coming now to Law and Order, as always I will make a humble plea that Rodrigues have the required quota in the new Police constable recruitment as announced in the Budget.

It is also provided in this Budget for the construction of the Grande Montagne and Petit Gabriel Police stations in Rodrigues, which are long overdue.

I have also noticed that the Police Head Quarters at Port Mathurin is overcrowded, a decentralisation of certain activities must be envisaged and in the same line, I hope that the Police Force in Rodrigues will have additional staff such as Police attendant for the smooth running of Police stations thereat. I do congratulate the Police officers there who are doing a very good job for the security of our people and the people of Rodrigues.

I will say one line, broadly, on politics, on a philosophical point of view. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in an era where people want to see politicians with high credibility, seriousness and strong commitment to the people and to serve the people.

Our Republic, certainly, values a dynamic and participatory political culture that can build a democratic bridge between citizens and their elected representatives. Today, I am concerned with the disrepute comments on social media and in the Republic, at large, against politicians. We, politicians, who have been elected to serve the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said so, this brings me to a new chapter on our Youth and politics in our Republic. The great Mahatma Gandhi once said and I quote -

“Men often become what they believe themselves to be. If I believe I cannot do something, it makes me incapable of doing it. But when I believe I can, then I acquire the ability to do it even if I didn’t have it in the beginning”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will recall last year, Madam Speaker set up a Gender Caucus for our Parliament.

However, for the last 7 years I have been in Parliament, in this House, in this August Assembly, I feel that our Republic needs to continuously produce young breed of national leaders who are prepared for sacrifices, being misunderstood and accepting the many sufferings of politics. Those young leaders are ready to transform any challenges, humiliation or defeat into a triumphant future victory.

As we advance in the future, we, young elected leaders, must be seen to be characterised by our mission to serve as political role models and inspirations for our country and the youth out there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as this budget theme puts it right, “Rising to the challenge of our ambitions”, I would like to seize this opportunity to humbly propose that our Parliament looks into the setting up of a National Young Elected Leaders Caucus, as a New National Goal, in preparation of the next generation politician, to create a better society.

You will agree with me that many of our youngsters are not interested in politics. My question is: what do we do today to make the difference without any political parties’ biases? I have to specify on that.

This Caucus, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, must have as objectives -

- (i) to inspire and attract more interested young next generation people to participate in politics and Government affairs, and
- (ii) to help early identification of tomorrow’s leaders, in creating special prospects to help them meet the demands of public lives and enhances effectiveness and leadership potential.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not many of us, as young person, come from political families with available role models and mentors to help pave the way forward for a variety of educational and apprenticeship programmes designed to inspire and cultivate future political leadership.

The proposed National Young Elected Leaders Caucus target shall be among young National Assembly Members, young Rodrigues Regional Assembly Members, young Mayors and Council members in Municipalities, amongst others. This is part of the future of our nation.

M. le président, avant de m’attarder sur Rodrigues, je salue la décision du Premier ministre, ministre des Finances pour créer une vraie économie culturelle pour soulager et encourager nos artistes. Quelle inspiration quand j’entends le chanteur comme Mr SNYP chantait pour « faire reconnaître l’Ile Rodrigues », et les efforts quotidiens de ces artistes, très souvent multi-talentueux ! Je vous dis respect, mesdames et messieurs, les artistes.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to lay emphasis on Rodrigues. Right at the outset, I have to say that Rodrigues has made great social, environmental, political and economic progress. As regards the budget exercise, one may ask what is the budget quantum allocation to Rodrigues Regional Assembly and what is the formula applied by the central

Government to determine this allocation? Is the allocated budget amount received by the Regional Assembly justifiable? There are so many questions.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say that section 46 of the Regional Assembly Act 2001 stipulates the criteria to be considered for allocation of financial resources to Rodrigues. It states that this must be done by considering the draft estimates approved by the Regional Assembly, Cabinet shall give due consideration to the financial and development needs of Rodrigues in the context of Mauritius and shall, for a fair allocation of financial resources to Rodrigues, take into account, amongst others, a few points -

- (i) Rodrigues' isolation from the principal national growth centres;
- (ii) the absence of the multiplier effect from expenditures and investments (private and public) made in the Island of Rodrigues;
- (iii) the special needs of Rodrigues in terms of accelerated development and so on.

It is important, for me, to say this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so that my hon. friends and the people at large understand this process of Central Government together with the autonomy of Rodrigues within the Republic of Mauritius.

Let me revisit the Capital Investment trend of Rodrigues, I will just name a few –

2012	360,000
2014	400,000
JULY16- JUNE17	775,000
JULY17- JUNE18	835,000

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this 2017/2018 Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance is allocating a total of Rs4.591 billion to Rodrigues from which Rs3.525 billion for Regional Assembly from Ministry of Defence and Rodrigues, and Rs1.066 billion from other Ministries and organisations.

You will note that the Central Government as a facilitator, a regulator and a service provider in its 3-year Strategic Plan 2017/2018 – 2019/2020, through the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, has proposed 4 key capital projects, which are -

- (i) Port Expansion with a provision of Rs33 m. for 2017/2018 for the Port Mathurin Master Plan Consultancy Services, Marina and Extension at Pte Monnier and Pte l'Herbe;
- (ii) Airport Expansion where Terminal and Geotechnical and Feasibility Studies are underway. I note by the way, the authentication of the Plaine Corail Airport is a landmark decision for our local identity and due respect to the Rodriguans electorate who voted OPR and our electoral manifesto. It's just a legitimate decision. *Quelle beauté d'entendre Plaine Corail Airport!* The Prime Minister has maintained the holiday package and subsidy on airfares on the Rodrigues/Mauritius route to sustain our tourism industry;
- (iii) IT Connectivity – Optical Undersea Fibre cable is a must that will unlock part of the economic development of Rodrigues with jobs forecast, and
- (iv) Social Housing and Rehabilitation Projects (with the revolutionary Housing measures for the Rodriguan avec le slogan '*Enn Fami Enn Bon Lacase*' and, amongst others, which are enunciated in the PISP for the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, that is, education sector, water sector, community and road development and others.

M. le président, sur une note philosophique, l'île Rodrigues autonome dans toute son authenticité et spécificité mérite un discernement profond pour ceux qui n'ont pas compris les évolutions de la société Rodriguaise. Je leur dit: 'Rodrigues est debout et en marche'. Nous avons à Rodrigues, dans notre vision, de faire de Rodrigues une île écologique et durable ; cette volonté de faire de Rodrigues une terre de respect, une terre des valeurs, et une terre autrement même si certains nous traitent de frustrés ou de loups-garous.

M. le président, à Rodrigues, nous avons une belle histoire sociale et politique et, en termes économiques, nous faisons face à une situation difficile pour équilibrer l'économie et le processus de développement durable. Nous voulons le progrès de Rodrigues sans que nous subissions les conséquences des modèles économiques traditionnels. Ici, je tiens au nom des Rodriguais, vivant à Rodrigues et Maurice, à remercier les différents gouvernements mauriciens notamment Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Paul Raymond Bérenger, Navin Ramgoolam et les différents ministres des finances, aujourd'hui le Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth ; tous ceux qui ont contribué au développement de Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said so, let me seize this opportunity to thank the actual hon. Leader of Opposition, who, in one of his Budget Speeches, either 2013 or 2014, announced –

“A game changing measure for Rodrigues - a development that will make a notable transformation in the life of every Rodriguan”.

He continues –

“We are creating that turning point for Rodrigues by connecting its people (...)”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it will significantly bridge the digital gap for Rodrigues. In his speech, he estimated the cost of this ground-breaking venture for connecting Rodrigues amounting to Rs600 m. He said –

“Government will provide financing, which will be reimbursed over twenty years. The Universal Service Fund (USF) will provide a grant to service the loan on the same level as in Mauritius.”

We have been through so many propagandas from local politicians especially the MR party in Rodrigues. I remember I did ask the then Minister of Finance, where is the Budget item vote for the Rs600 m. and whether it was just an ‘*effet d’annonce*’.

M. le président, je ne voudrais pas m’attarder ou prendre le temps de la Chambre pour approfondir ma réflexion là-dessus, mais je dois signaler ici - parce que je suis dans un processus économique, sociale et politique - avant les années 1970, les époques où Rodrigues était même considérée comme le grenier de Maurice, Rodrigues avait pour certaines années une balance commerciale excédentaire avec Maurice *c'est-à-dire que Rodrigues exportait plus qu'elle n'importait*.

Il faut noter que l'économie de Rodrigues se transforme à grande vitesse depuis les trois dernières années ou décennies. Le nombre d'entreprises privées ne cesse d'augmenter, leur chiffre d'affaires augmente, leur nombre d'emplois augmente ainsi que leur valeur ajoutée.

M. le président, savez-vous qu’aujourd’hui il y a un manque de main d’œuvre qualifié dans le secteur de la construction et pour d’autres métiers à Rodrigues. Rodrigues a besoin de plus de mains d’œuvres qualifiés et formées pour le marché du travail. Ici, je salue, la décision du Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour l’amélioration des infrastructures à Le Chou Training Centre à Rodrigues pour aider à dispenser des cours plus avancés pour former ces jeunes Rodriguais.

M. le président, les chiffres de l'emploi de 2015, de *Mauritius Statistics*, montrent que

seulement 3,000 emplois sont du secteur public sur près de 18,000 emplois à Rodrigues. Cela veut dire que la majorité des emplois, soit environ 15,000, à Rodrigues est générée par le secteur privé. Et on parle qu'il n'y a rien à Rodrigues. On parle qu'il y a zéro économie, zéro développement.

Permettez-moi, de citer quelques lignes du discours du Leader de l'opposition à cette époque, *Deputy Prime Minister*, le 12 mars 2015 à Camp du Roi, à Rodrigues et comme l'invité d'honneur de l'Assemblée Régionale de Rodrigues pour marquer le 48^{ème} anniversaire de l'Indépendance et la 4^{ème} anniversaire de la République de Maurice. Il a déclaré, et je cite –

« Qu'après la session de Rodrigues au statut d'autonomie, je suis heureux de constater l'énorme progrès que l'île a fait dans divers secteurs. Rodrigues faisant partie intégrante de la République, le gouvernement central lui accordera tout l'appui nécessaire dans son développement. L'autonomie de Rodrigues est un énorme succès et cela a contribué au bien-être des Rodriguais. »

Quelle contradiction!

M. le président, comme énoncé à Rodrigues par Serge Clair, Leader de l'OPR, mon Leader et Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues lors de son discours budgétaire à Rodrigues. Serge Clair a dit -

« Rodrigues est prête pour entrer dans une nouvelle ère de son développement et à franchir une nouvelle étape. »

M. le président, permettez-moi d'informer la Chambre que le gouvernement régional à Rodrigues - le gouvernement OPR je dois dire - a élaboré sa vision le 03 mars dernier à travers ses engagements pour les cinq ans à venir sous le thème: « Continuons à bâtir une île Rodrigues de nos rêves. » Je dois partager cela avec la Chambre après tout ce que j'ai entendu ici dans certains titres de presse.

Permettez-moi de partager à la Chambre quelques-uns de ces engagements du gouvernement régional. Je félicite d'ailleurs les Commissaires à Rodrigues -

- (a) protéger, formaliser et créer des emplois durables et décents. M. le président, Rodrigues vise à créer 4,000 emplois d'ici 2022, dans sa vision pour cinq ans, mais dans son discours 2017-2018, il y a fait provision pour la création d'au moins 950 nouveaux emplois, et
- (b) faire progresser notre économie à travers des industries, l'innovation et l'entrepreneuriat.

Today, I am proud to say that Rodriguan entrepreneurs have access to finance in the MauBank, DBM, and they are being encouraged to ensure the optimal use of local production through numerous initiatives to promote entrepreneurship in Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), I am happy to note that the hon. Minister, my good friend Bholah, during his mission in Rodrigues two weeks ago, had discussion with Mrs Gaspard-Pierrelouis, Commissioner for Industrial Development & Others, to vest SMEDA to RRA, which will become a training arm for the empowerment of entrepreneurs in Rodrigues, thus creating more entrepreneurs as a multiplier effect on the economy and employment rate in Rodrigues. I will humbly encourage the hon. Minister to consider and finalise matters in that direction.

M. le président, les opérateurs du transport public à Rodrigues, lors de la dernière consultation budgétaire avec le ministre des Finances, ont fait part de leurs difficultés concernant le renouvellement de leur flotte d'autobus. Le Premier ministre a été à l'écoute et a fait une provision spéciale dans ce budget d'un montant de R 7 millions sous le "*Bus Modernisation Scheme*" pour Rodrigues.

Je félicite le Premier ministre qui est resté très fidèle à sa parole envers les opérateurs de bus à Rodrigues, un pilier important de notre économie. Parmi d'autres engagements - il faut les citer aussi pour que la population et les honorables membres prennent connaissance -, consolider le secteur de l'eau, développer les projets d'infrastructures, inciter le développement du capital humain, assurer une gestion durable de nos ressources naturelles et lutter contre le changement climatique - que j'ai déjà mentionné -, répondre aux aspirations pressantes de notre jeunesse rodriguaise. Je redis cela, répondre aux aspirations pressantes de notre jeunesse rodriguaise.

M. le président, comme vous le savez, ce n'est pas dans mes habitudes de procéder à des répliques de quiconque ici, mais certains politiciens ont tout récemment critiqué sévèrement Rodrigues et aujourd'hui même, ce matin, on parle de Chef commissaire frustré. Et de plus, lundi dernier, dans son allocution, la réaction du *leader* de l'opposition par rapport à Rodrigues en dit long sur leur état d'esprit à l'égard de Rodrigues.

Permettez-moi de citer quelques lignes de ce qu'il a dit, *in his statement, about Rodriguans as a source of problem of poverty alleviation in Mauritius* –

"The problem about poverty alleviation and the problem of squatters will not get solved by itself because many of the squatters are, in fact, people who fled from Rodrigues."

As if Rodrigues, today, is a land of terror. People are fleeing from Rodrigues.

He continues -

“Thereafter 50 years of independence, there is still not an economy; we are speaking of only tourism - such and such -, Rs100 m. a month from the National Budget - this number is not even correct - and that there is no water, nothing to support an economy - such and such - when you see people who have to flee from Rodrigues - the word flee again, as hon. Leopold said it - to come here. And where do these people live? They live as squatters, with no water, no electricity, under leaking roof en tôle. That is the situation.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is true that there is movement of people between the two islands. This is a fact. However, there are two phrases again that have been used to qualify such movement, namely, *“people have fled from Rodrigues”, as if we are in Syria and Kosovo and, secondly also, “there is - I read that somewhere - an influx of Rodriguans to Mauritius”.*

That is not correct and exact.

M. le président, je note que certains Rodriguais ont fait un choix pour vivre et travailler à Maurice, même si certains sont des propriétaires à Rodrigues. Et d’ailleurs, il faut souligner, qu’à Rodrigues, il n’y a personne qui dort dans la rue ou le ventre vide le soir.

Une somme de R 100 millions est prévue pour le « *Housing and Rehabilitation Projects* » dans le budget de Rodrigues, qui est dirigé par le Commissaire Daniel Baptiste qui est responsable de la Sécurité sociale. Il faut souligner que l’Etat mauricien a la responsabilité de regarder en face les difficultés de la société mauricienne et à intégrer nos concitoyens les plus faibles ou démunis. M. le président, je souhaite que le gouvernement central aussi, en collaboration avec les ONG, institutionnalise la mise en place d’une « *Maison de Rodrigues ou une structure pour Rodrigues* » comme point d’accueil pour nos sœurs et frères de passage ou qui vivent ici à Maurice depuis longtemps.

En passant, je salue l’engagement de l’ONG *SOLIDARITE RODRIGUES*, créée sous le leadership de Fock Seng Ho Tu Nam et des Rodriguais de bonne volonté, comme Claudette Baptiste, Jogime François, Margeot Ravina et tant d’autres qui vivent à Maurice depuis 10, 15, 20 ou 30 ans. Et d’après un recensement de la NEF, les Rodriguais qui vivent depuis plus de 16 ans à Maurice veulent tout simplement que le gouvernement mauricien régularise leur situation et leur donne les supports nécessaires pour une meilleure qualité de vie, comme mentionnait l’honorable Joe Lesjongard. And I listened well to what hon. Soodhun said previously. Of course, we are Mauritians; we are part of the Republic of Mauritius, as well said by hon. Léopold, the other day, in his speech.

D'ailleurs, je conseillerai à ceux qui n'ont pas été à Rodrigues pendant les cinq ou dix dernières années, d'aller visiter Rodrigues pour mieux comprendre cette île et son peuple. Je dois ajouter que je forme partie de cette génération de politiciens de Rodrigues qui croit dans le progrès de Rodrigues. M. le président, sincèrement - de nouveau je redis ça -, je dois remercier les gouvernements successifs - il faut le dire - qui, d'une façon ou d'une autre, ont contribué et ont dévolu les attentions à Rodrigues, sachant très bien que Rodrigues a encore un long chemin à faire en quête de son développement intégral et durable ; un long chemin.

Et, en passant, avant-hier, sur les ondes de la MBC, le leader de la Minorité à Rodrigues, lui qui était ministre de la Pêche pendant cinq ans, est venu se ridiculiser en demandant une série de mesures budgétaires pour Rodrigues. Et ma question : qu'est-ce qu'il a fait pour Rodrigues quand il était ministre au gouvernement central entre 2010 et 2014 ?

M. le président, rien, zéro, *même pas en la moitié bloc* ! Ce parti politique, le MR, à Rodrigues, qui est toujours en perte de popularité politique et qui n'est plus présent ici, dans cette auguste Assemblée ; historiquement, ils ne sont plus présents ici, parce que l'OPR, l'honorable Léopold et moi, nous l'avons platement battu lors des dernières élections législatives à Rodrigues et tout récemment au niveau régional, frôlant un 12-0 dans les six régions. Et je dirai que ce sera pareil pour les prochaines élections. Et j'invite aussi ce parti politique qui veut nous affronter à Rodrigues et conquérir Rodrigues de venir à Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in our unique development vision, those who pretend to know more what the Rodriguans aspire to be should bear in mind that nothing will stop us from achieving our sustainable vision for Rodrigues.

Aujourd'hui, la situation de notre pays nous conduit à parler de Rodrigues comme un exemple. J'ai déjà mentionné ici, dans cette auguste Assemblée, que c'est la responsabilité de l'État mauricien, ensemble avec l'Assemblée régionale, de travailler au développement de Rodrigues. Mais il faut comprendre et respecter les réalités et spécificités de Rodrigues et son autonomie - et je répète - et de ne pas simplement se comporter comme des donneurs de leçons ou des challengers.

M. le président, permettez-moi de dire quelques mots sur la NDU dans sa stratégie nationale pour la République de Maurice, qui met en œuvre des projets de drains, approuvés et en collaboration avec l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues sous ma direction comme PPS.

En ce moment, cinq projets de drains sont en cours d'être complétés notamment la réfection des drains dans la capitale de Rodrigues à Port Mathurin - Phase 1, Lataniers, Petit Gabriel, Allée Tamarin, St Gabriel, Pas Jérôme et Fond Baie aux Huîtres.

Des projets qui contribuent au soulagement de la population dans les différentes régions de Rodrigues. D'autres projets de drains et ponts sont à venir incessamment à Camp Du Roi, Anse Ali, Grand la Fouche (Mangues), Rivière Cocos, Port Mathurin - Phase 2, Pont Sud Est, Baie Malgache, Grand' Baie et Baie Topaze, entre autres.

(Interruptions)

No, it is coming ! Je dois souligner ici que les projets pour l'année financière 2016/2017 sont en retard vu les problèmes de *procurement for consultancy services*. *Here, I have to say that there is need for a review of the Procurement Act - we are wasting too much time -* pour soulager la population. Ce budget 2017-2018, M. le président, prévoit de nouveau une somme de R 50 millions pour des projets de drain à Rodrigues.

Before concluding, let me say a few words for our Chagossian and Agalean brothers and sisters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As a brother of the Chagossian people, let me reiterate the unconditional support of the people of Rodrigues in the fight of our Republic to claim back the sovereignty of Chagos.

(Interruptions)

I sincerely wish that one day the Chagossian people will fully reconnect with their motherland. I wish the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a fruitful mission in that regard in UN, next week. For our brothers and sisters of Agalega, I believe it is a new era of development for them, and this testifies that our Republic's common interest is stepping into a New Dimension Island State Development, and together we will succeed.

M. le président, pour conclure, la République de Maurice est dans une transition sociale et économique. La société mauricienne dans son processus progressiste doit continuellement agir pour l'urgence écologique, - *that is why I started with climate change* - l'égalité de chance, l'innovation et une vision intégrée de l'avenir.

M. le président, voilà cette volonté qui transpire dans ce budget 2017/2018 du Premier ministre, ministre des Finances, l'honorable Pravind Kumar Jugnauth. Je félicite l'honorable Premier ministre et je souhaite un bon travail à tout un chacun pour le progrès de la République de Maurice, Rodrigues, Agaléga, St Brandon et toutes les îles.

M. le président, je crois que j'ai bien parlé, j'ai parlé un peu longtemps. Sur ces notes, je vous remercie pour votre attention.

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daareewoo !

(4.23 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Good intervention of our friend, hon. François, who has elaborated on the measures found in the Budget 2017-2018 for Rodrigues. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many of my colleagues, on this side of the House, have already intervened in this budgetary exercise. I will try as much as possible to be concise and not to repeat myself.

It is, indeed, an honour and a privilege to have been provided with an opportunity to participate in this budgetary exercise. Allow me to join my friends, on this side of the House, to congratulate most warmly the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development on presenting such an innovative, growth-oriented and farsighted budget.

At the very outset of my speech, I wish to place on record that this present budget has been crafted with due care and attention and I will, in the course of my intervention, show this aspect. Therefore, I am quite surprised by the harsh and unfair comments made by some hon. Members of the Opposition side. Some hon. Members have simply digressed from the subject matter to rather comment on issues not related to this process. As such, you will agree with me that it defeats the whole purpose of this particular exercise.

In my humble opinion, our role, be it on this side of the House or on the other, is to focus and comment mainly on the budgetary provisions and measures. It is surprising also to note that some hon. Members have described this particular budget as lacking vision and substance. While I listened to the intervention of hon. Members of the Opposition side, I cannot but smile because I see things differently. I see positive and strong policies ahead for the welfare and well-being of our Mauritian people. I did not see the Budget lacking vision and substance, instead, I see opportunities. After all, I think it depends largely on the pair of glasses through which a person views the Budget. If the glasses are dark, of course, you will only see negative aspects of the budget. But with a positive outlook, with a positive approach, you see things differently. You see that the Budget contains many good things and good measures. For me, this is as simple as this particular reflection.

If you ask me how do I find the Budget? I will tell you the following: it is a very good Budget and I am proud of it. It is an optimistic Budget paving the way to a brighter future. It is a budget which has been drafted responsibly, full of substance and vision. It caters for the needs of the poor and lives up to the expectations of all segments of our society. It is a successful budget. It is a Budget in the right direction leading to economic growth, reduction of poverty and unemployment. It is a Budget with a more efficient social welfare system.

The Budget reflects a clear vision of what we want for our country. Allow me to

highlight that the business of the Government is to govern. Voters have elected us to bring strong and positive policies to promote development and to enhance the quality of life of our people. This is exactly what we have been doing so far. Let me remind hon. Members of Parliament that we came to Government at a time when there was a deadlock; things were not moving in the right direction. Today, we see hope, optimism, and positivity. This is the true feeling of the nation. I personally feel that this Budget will benefit, to a large extent, those who are most vulnerable and at the bottom of the ladder. This Budget, as I see and understand it, is one of the most humane Budgets. This is the way I see and understand the Budget.

At this stage, I think it is good to highlight one important aspect, the pre-budgetary consultation which has been carried out by our Prime Minister. Prior to finalising and approving the said Budget, our Prime Minister took the pain of having consultations with not only all Ministries and PPS, but also with several stakeholders to express their views, comments and suggestions. These stakeholders include agro, livestock and others, business Mauritius, consumer association, civil societies and women association, local artists, trade unions, small planters and co, SMEs and Youth Association and Environment.

Therefore, I can tell you that this Budget reflects to a great extent the contribution of all those who have been directly involve in the consultation process. This valuable exercise is very much appreciated. In fact, there have been dialogues, communication and constructive exchanges and the credit goes to our Prime Minister.

Allow me now to turn to other issues. We welcome the decision of increasing the income exemption threshold. Government has pledged to assist low-income households in all aspects of their lives. Rs700 m. will be invested in solar home project which will comprise the installation of 10,000 roof top solar panels over the next five years for low income households in the social tariff category. In addition, the water tank scheme will be extended for another year and the income eligibility ceiling has been raised for the grant under this scheme from Rs15,000 to Rs25,000.

This Budget is far-reaching in its strategies equipped with its three-strategic plan. The measures are meant to be implemented realistically over a span of time. This is a stark example of our Government farsightedness. The establishment of a National Economic and Social Council to address all those socio economic issues through multi-party dialogues will surely enhance communication between the Private Sector and the Civil Sector.

To provide attainable solutions to social issues, one has to analyse and understand at the same time the source of the problems. In this vein, the Nation Economic and Social Council will act as an essential bridge.

The present Government is conscious of the interest of the Mauritian youth in skills development. It is important that we get young Mauritians into the job market and/or training. Our youth represents the future of our country. Therefore, it is important that we invest in empowering them. This is one of our priorities, and it is good that the Budget has given due consideration to our youngsters. They have not at all been neglected in the present Budget.

Rs310 m. has been reinvest for the upgrading for the educational hardware and infrastructure in training institutions and Rs130 m. for the financing of the operation costs of polytechnics. Youngsters will also benefit from introductory courses on coding with a view to qualifying them for integration in a full-fledged digital economy. I am sure my colleagues, hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun and hon. Callichurn will elaborate more on the opportunities available to our youth following the presentation of the Budget.

The ease of doing business in Mauritius is a green light for investors, the easier it is to do business in Mauritius the greater is the investor confidence. I have noted that several provisions have been made in the Budget to further boost the confidence of investors, thereby increasing investment. There will be decreasing costs for businesses to connect to electricity network. There will be exemption to obtain building and land use permit for the setting up of green houses. Government will be guarantying loans made to small and medium enterprises under the two financing schemes operated by commercial banks. Interest rate on loans to micro enterprises has been brought down from 6% to 3%; this initiative will no doubt boost entrepreneurship.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the other hand, we should not forget that we intend to construct a supporting pillar to our economic foundation, the pillar representing our Ocean Economy. We are not oblivious to the fact that unemployment rate has riddled out of control. In order to create more employment we need to innovate. This Budget encourages us to further exploit our marine resources. Fishing rights permits will be extended from one year to five years for fishing vessels which fly the Mauritian flag.

Sea based coral farms will be set up. Government has also announced income tax holiday for the exploitation and use of deep ocean water for the provision of air conditioning installation, facilities and services. These represent but the launching pad to the discovery, yet

another economic pillar which will certainly be a way to provide employment for many of our citizens. I will not dwell further on this particular measure. I am sure my hon. Friend Mr Koonjoo, will provide more information on this particular aspect.

This Budget envisions to remove unnecessary hurdles from the lives of our citizens. Mauritius is going green and the budgetary provisions are adding substance to every walk of our life. Apart from the specific budgetary measures I have referred to, there are so many other provisions which have been made to cater for the needs of every citizen. Each and every sector has been taken on board. The Government has even taken on board the creative industry, encouraging and motivating artists to touch higher levels of achievements. An Annual National Award Ceremony will be organised for the recognition of the achievements of our local artists.

Moreover, concerning my own constituency, Constituency No. 19, I am pleased that we are about to embark on the third phase of the Plaza renovation project. An amount of Rs300 m. has been earmarked for the renovation of the Plaza Theatre Building. It is to be noted that the second phase was completed in November 2016 for the cost of Rs112 m.

Plaza, we must not forget, is an historical emblem of culture. How can we forget that Plaza used to be the pride of Beau Bassin and Rose Hill? I am happy that Plaza has started living glorious days again. This has brought a new dynamism to the town, which I must say, has been somehow neglected during the last decade.

Last year, a Community Centre was open in Trèfles, and the present Budget makes provision for the construction of a Mediclinic in Stanley. I am sure the community of Rodrigues will definitely derive the benefits and in the names of the inhabitants of the people of Trèfles, Stanley, I express my deepest gratitude to our Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the House will know, the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare is mandated to promote gender equality and women empowerment for the design and implementation of appropriate programmes; second, to ensure projection of children for the implementation of policies and programmes geared towards strengthening child protection and development and third to combat gender based violence and promote family welfare through the implementation of projects, programmes and sensitisation campaigns.

In an attempt to promote gender equality, gender responsive budgeting initiatives were introduced in the last Budget through the allocation of a sum of Rs200,000 to five Ministries, namely, the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Ministry of Youth and Sports, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development.

So, this initiative has helped in the elaboration and implementation of some commendable projects aimed at addressing specific gender gaps in their respective sectors. Having regard to the success of this pilot project, my Ministry and myself made a request to the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development and in the Budget 2017-2018, this initiative has now been extended to all Ministries.

You will agree with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that gender equality is not only the concern of the Ministry of Gender, the whole Government is concerned and it is good that we involve all Ministries. I firmly believe that this is yet another stepping stone for all of us to ensure that gender is mainstream at all levels.

Gender is a cross-cutting issue across all Ministries and sectors. It is the concern of each and every one and every Ministry. It is, in fact, a national concern. Therefore, without the collaboration and support of all Ministries, it will be difficult for us to move in the right direction. It is only through our concerted efforts that gender equality will be attained and we will be able to close the gap.

Allow me to turn to children in shelters. Child's protection and development are of prime importance to my Ministry. When I assumed office at the Ministry of Gender Equality, I noted with concern that there is a high number of children in shelters. These children have either been abandoned by their biological parents or they have been subject to neglect or physical and sexual abuse. Therefore, it is important to address this issue and explore the possibility of reintegrating these children to their respective families, to their biological families and, if not possible, placing them in foster families.

The House will agree with me that every child has a right to grow up in a safe, caring and peaceful environment. A home is the ideal place for this. Therefore, since January 2017, I have given instruction to the effect that a dedicated team be entrusted with the responsibility of re-investigating the case of each child currently placed in shelters to assess the possibility

of reintegration. I can tell you that since February 2017, children are gradually being reintegrated in their respective families. At the same time, we are working on the possibilities of placing those, who cannot join their biological parents, to be placed, as I have said, in foster families.

For reintegration to be successful and permanent, it needs to be carried out through a sound process ensuring that the child is ready to be reunited with his family, that the family is prepared to welcome the child and that there is good follow-up support after the reunification process.

Therefore, in view of the challenges and implication of such exercise, my Ministry has set up a technical committee comprising representatives of various Ministries to –

- (i) identify bottlenecks pertaining to the reintegration of those children into their respective families;
- (ii) to come up with an appropriate strategy to overcome the identified hurdles and facilitate the process of reintegration and family rehabilitation as far as possible, and
- (iii) where reintegration cannot be envisaged, to make recommendations to put in place a more efficient mechanism to cater for the overall care and development of children living in shelters.

Another key initiative taken by my Ministry to enhance child protection lies in the upgrading of child daycare centres. When I assumed office, I was informed that many child daycare centres are not compliant with the rule laid down in the institution for the Welfare and Protection of Children, Regulations 2000. This situation could potentially put children at risk and could no longer be allowed to perpetuate.

Therefore, a special team of officers was gathered to carry out a survey islandwise to identify all non-compliant child daycare centres. Moreover, again, a technical committee has been set up here to identify the difficulties faced by these institutions and to make recommendations with a view to assisting them to comply with the law.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2017-2018 has announced the new Children's Bill to give effect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This Bill will be a comprehensive piece of legislation which would provide for the protection of the rights of the child. It will be an umbrella legislation for reference for all the authorities concerned.

Children are considered to be one of the most vulnerable sections of society and we owe them protection, security and education. With a view to fulfilling our duties towards those sensitive elements of our society, we are designing a legal framework whose implementation will provide fruitful solution to existing problems. The House will agree with me that this is not an easy and straightforward legislation. We have to be very careful as children are involved. As such, a systematic approach is necessary, unfortunately, it requires time.

I will fail in my intervention if I don't say a few words about the victims of domestic violence. Combating gender-based violence and promoting family welfare well-being remain one of the most important objectives of my Ministry. Time and again, our Government has reiterated its commitment to combat domestic violence and to strong support victims thereof.

In fact, the hon. Prime Minister has himself, on numerous occasions, drawn our attention to the fact that domestic violence is a social ill that needs to be uprooted and addressed in the right direction, in the right way.

As the Minister responsible for family and child development, I am committed to do my best to improve the situation. Victims of domestic violence, who are most of the time women, often lack family support and due to financial constraint, they find themselves trapped, as they have nowhere to go. This is where we come into play. Our role is to provide such victims with assistance and accommodation to empower them to break the circle of domestic violence.

The part played by NGOs in this situation is crucial, as victims of domestic violence, along with their children, often find refuge in shelters run by NGOs. In an attempt to further encourage NGOs to assist such victims and in order to alleviate their financial burden, my Ministry has pressed for a capitation grant to be paid to NGOs which accommodate victims of domestic violence and their children. Our request has been acceded to. The capitation grant is Rs400 per woman per day and Rs341 per child per day. This amount caters for care, food, cloth and other expenses related to daily living expenses incurred at the shelter.

In addition to the above, my Ministry is in the process of setting up an integrated support service in-line with the recommendation of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Committee. This integrated support service will be a comprehensive integrated system that provides immediate, consistent, coordinated and timely support to victims, and

counselling on a 24-hour basis. Victims will no longer need to knock at countless doors for help and support. The integrated support service will serve as one proper unit.

My Ministry has also organised massive campaigns to sensitise the community against domestic violence. For the first time, a judicial training has been organised with the collaboration of the Australian High Commission to better equip Magistrates to assist victims of domestic violence during Court hearings.

As per the Budget 2017/2018, my Ministry will be blessed with the recruitment of additional Family Welfare and Protection Officers, and additional Enforcement Officers. I have time and again voiced out the need for the Ministry to be equipped with the right officers and with the right mindset to deal with domestic violence cases. The increase in the number of officers will assist in meeting the objectives of our mission to support victims of domestic violence.

Women and children are, unfortunately, viewed as the most vulnerable elements of our society. Hurdles and tough challenges often undermine their strength and confidence, and obstruct their path to progress. However, I wish to reassure the House that my Ministry is providing and will continue to provide its unflagging support to those in need. The budget allocation for financial year 2017/2018 will certainly provide my Ministry with the necessary financial means to embark on new and innovative projects geared towards enhancing the welfare of women, children and families at large.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we won the elections in December 2014, we pledged to work in the pursuit of the well-being of our citizens. We vowed to bring new measures, new projects and new ideas to mould the economy and to spur economic development to the shore of sustainable growth. The budgetary provisions have been designed in accordance with Governments, budgetary programme, paving the way to long-term economic development. Today, we are aiming for a rise in the growth rate to 4.1%. We have, indeed, cultivated high ambitions with far-reaching benefits for our country. Holding the reins of governance, our Prime Minister has worked relentlessly to devise the most appropriate measures to grapple with the challenges of the economy.

Through this present Budget, the Government has set out its plan and priorities to work for and with the people of Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House,

we are determined to bring Mauritius forward, and there is no doubt we will succeed because we are positive, we know where we are heading.

Let me end by saying that, here, on this side of the House, we have a strong Leader, full of positivity and optimism. He is well surrounded by people of knowledge, and he knows how to make our country a haven of peace, prosperity and happiness. Allow me to, once again, congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, for not only having given us the opportunity to serve our country, but also for having at heart those who are in need and bring in this Budget 2017/2018 good measures to support and accompany those who need help. This, indeed, calls for a deep appreciation of the endeavour and vision of the Government. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Osman Mahomed!

(4.55 p.m.)

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have had the chance to follow the intervention of several Members, including that of the hon. Minister Mentor, who, in his speech, said that this Government, that means his Government, has been in office for only 2 years, so far. Though I have to say, it seems much longer since they made all those promises, and so long since many of the former Government and their supporters were arrested, locked up and now many of these cases dropped for lack of a shred of any evidence against them. And so long have we been waiting for so many of the election promises of this Government to be fulfilled. That this Budget seems another anti-climax from a Government that has got true more Ministers of Finance than the present half-timer has had to endure Court appearances over the MedPoint case. It has really seemed so long that this unravelling alliance has just about survived, despite its continual haemorrhaging of adherents, that I suppose the hon. Minister Mentor was claiming, it was still too early to expect results from this Government. That is, if any of us any longer expects it to deliver on any of its promises. May I also remind the hon. Minister Mentor that we are in the 31st month of this Government in power? And, by now, this Government has less time left in office than the time it has spent in office.

What is more worrisome, however, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the trend is exactly the reverse of what was promised. Fulfilment of its promises seems to re-sit faster

than time progresses with this Government. And it is a real concern for those with any sense of justice and fair play, on what was clearly a false prospectus that duped the electorate. This half-baked budget is just another helping of more promises no one in their right mind can trust. For trust is the very substance in short supply with this regime.

As a matter of fact, there has been a net deterioration of the economic situation since this Government has taken office. Even after all the following presentations -

- (i) Achieving meaningful change;
- (ii) Mauritius at the crossroad;
- (iii) On achieving the second economic miracle and Vision 2030;
- (iv) A new era of development, and
- (v) This present Budget “Rising to the challenge of our ambitions”.

I must say that the hon. Minister of Finance has been consistent in his last two Budget presentations. Insofar as a radical change in transforming the budget exercise, in which one would traditionally expect the elaboration of major economic orientations and, God knows, we need them but, instead, we are being taken by his speech through an unrelated series of items, like a schoolboy’s wish list for his birthday, that, at times, we were under the impression that the Minister had lost his way in a maze of his own making.

In this Budget, there is nothing much on policy nor on economic strategy to reassure the population that we have even started on the meaningful change heralded in 2015, or have begun to cross those crossroads or have begun to see the second economic miracle unfolding, or have even opened the door of that new era of development or begun to rise from our knees to the new challenge of this Government’s ambition.

Indeed, we only find that these long 31 months this Government’s ambition is mounting on the miseries of credulities of the electorates they are bamboozled to vote for them. Where is that feel good factor? Where is the exit from the middle-income trap? Where are all the promises they made before and after they were elected? This Budget is nothing but an air pipe, lacking in substance, we have the right to expect from the ambitious promises of the manifesto and on every Budget the present regime has had the gold to offer.

I was reading the *micro-trottoir*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, conducted by one of the weekly newspapers during the weekend. Almost all of the people who were interviewed had negative sentiments contrary to more balanced feedback in the past. Some people have even

expressed doubts about the *bien fondé* of these projects and they were questioning whether they are realisable or not. Another question being asked is: what impact will this Budget have on the daily life of the Mauritian families already suffering from the high costs of living? If this Government needs an *aveu d'échec* this is one!

Before I move on this Budget, I would like to touch on the issue of poverty which the hon. Minister Mentor said did not happen with this Government. Now, whilst the poor may be with us always under this Government, the number of poor people has increased and is continuing to increase while Ministers and MPs are going around telling them that this is not the case. I take my own Constituency. How many people have lost their jobs under this Government - I mean Government jobs – be it at the Municipal Council, Road Development Authority and other Departments and thus depriving them of their livelihood today? How many people, who were employed by the BAI Group, are now jobless? How many Super Cash Back Gold victims, in my own Constituency, are still waiting for their sweat money? Mr Salim Mutty said it four days ago, and I quote from him –

“Pravind Jugnauth inn couillone dimounn. Li malhonnète.”

In referring to the undertaking he had with them before leaving India. How many *marchands ambulants* of Port Louis are now having such a hard time to survive? I do not say that there was no need to *mett l'ordre*. There was one as the Government calls it. But what is the plan B for them? Like the one, the Labour Party Government had for the *marchands ambulants* before the general elections.

Furthermore, there is a *sentiment de deux poids deux mesures* when *marchands ambulants* in the Constituency of the Minister of Local Government, hon. Jhugroo, were able to continue selling, the more so after the hon. Minister had intervened at the level of the Police who wanted to prevent the *marchands* from operating. Yet, the Police are supposed to be independent. Pull the other leg! Talking about the Minister of Local Government, hon. Jhugroo, I have listened to him yesterday and before as well. He is one of the most vociferous critics of the Labour Party in this House, even from his very own maiden speech in Parliament. If you would allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will quote what he said on 26 February 2015 –

“Madam Speaker, I wish to mention today that, during the last electoral campaign, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam had got the guts to treat *l'Alliance*

Lepep as ‘*camion saleté*’! Let me remind him that this ‘*camion saleté*’, with our driver, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, has been able to elect 51 MPs, (...).”

That was in 2015.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I challenge the Alliance sitting across there to go and ask the people out there what they think of this Government. If they really believe in real democracy, don’t do that with an opinion poll per say. Go to the country and see what votes you get in the election boxes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Gayan, yesterday said if you cannot take the heat, then you cannot stay in the kitchen. *La cuisine*! Now, it seems that *la cuisine* is very important for this Government. But *combien ‘la cuisine malheureux finn arêtt rouler avek sa gouvernement-la’* ? This is a question that comes to the lips...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Not able to count!

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members!

Mr Osman Mahomed: Hon. Gayan, I invite you...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, allow the hon. Member to make his speech!

Mr Osman Mahomed: This is a question that comes to the lips of many people since the last general elections.

I think this Government will go down history lane as ‘*gouvernman la cuisine*’, simply because that very ‘*cuisine*’ or rather those who are in it are responsible for our country’s downfall. Who has not heard the famous recording of the conversation between Mr Sattar

Hajee Abdoula and Mr Dawood Rawat in the wake of the collapse of the BAI group? The same deceased company that is suing the Government of Mauritius for USD 1 billion - Rs37 billion!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year's Budget also presented some serious issues in so far as long-term and medium planning is concerned. Planning is still being done in a fragmented and dispersed manner. This results in lack of proper coordination, inadequate policy and project analysis, and coherence in the elaboration of an overall macroeconomic development framework. This leads to a slowdown in the implementation and execution as evidenced by the percentage of capital spending yearly even for this year itself on account of the absence of an efficient and effective monitoring system.

I had listened to the hon. Leader of the Opposition just after the Budget exercise and he said that, last year, three-quarter of the measures were not implemented and that it is going to be the same this year. More broken promises! How long before the whole country will cry enough is enough?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some time ago, the World Bank expressed concerns on the absence of planning in our budgetary framework. This is still evident. I said it before and I am saying it again today. There is now a Strategic Policy and Planning Department at the Prime Minister's Office with a view to charting out a well-defined direction and vision. Last month, in this very House, we voted additional funds for this Department. I had even questioned the hon. Prime Minister on that broad item.

I hope that this office together with the proposed Economic Development Board and the National Economic and Social Council will fill the much needed evident void made by the abandonment of the programme-based budgeting system by this Government in its first year in office.

I believe the scrapping of the PBB was yet again in the spirit of '*nettoyer*' the mandate that this Government claims it was given by the people of Mauritius. '*Nettoyer*', that's what was on everybody's list, but, by the way, the word '*nettoyer*' is very seldom used these days by Members on the other side of the House. The last person I heard using this word was from my constituency MP, hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus who had said, in an interview last month, on inside news, that "*kuma ou koner, le gouvernement finn gagn le mandat pou nettoyer.*"

Where has all this so-called '*nettoyer*' lead us today? Talking about '*nettoyer*', I could not possibly refrain from thinking on how long a list of scandals we have before us today. I think hon. Armanee had reminded us yesterday, he had dealt on an exercise in one minute, but time lapsed and he could not finish the list. '*Nettoyer, version lepep*' had led us to Rs5 billions of damages now payable by the STC to Betamax and there is more to come, payable to the STC.

Now, what could we have done with Rs5 billions? This is half the price of the SSR International Airport. Now, yesterday hon. Jhugroo was talking about cracks in the building of the Flacq Fire Station. I am sure that now that he has become Minister, he must be knowing that engineers are responsible for supervision and not Ministers. Now, regarding that airport, I can refer the House to PQ No. B/583 of 2015 of hon. Mahen Jhugroo on the airport. And one of the supplementary questions therein is –

“Being given that we have heard from the Acting Prime Minister that the repair works at the airport would be done without any extra cost, can we know whether the materials used are worth the price we paid for?”

That was a question from the hon. Jhugroo. Here, we are in 2015, Members of this Government were asking questions on petty repair works at no cost to the Government on this flagship structure of Mauritius when we are now being required to pay damages to the tune of half the price of that same airport. Which is which? Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I have chosen the word 'flagship' because the SSR International Airport has recently figured on Travel and Life Style Sight Twinkle Magazine, as one of the most beautiful airports in this world.

What we need now is a Government able to attract new investors through its doors. What we do not need is more trips by the hon. Prime Minister flying off from this beautiful airport and coming back with more debt weighing us down. For, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, it is the debt level that is on everybody's mind in this country today. 188,000 in December 2,000 was the debt per head per capita of population and, today, if I quote from the figures of the hon. Leader of the Opposition - I am sure he knows what he is talking about, he has been Minister of Finance in the recent past years - it is 233,000 per capita. Now, based on these figures of the Leader of the Opposition and without counting the Line of Credit from India, our national debt has risen by 24% in 2½ years. 24% increase in debt level in 2½ years, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir! Now, in his book, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, the Rise and Fall of Nations,

author Ruchir Sharma, one of Bloomberg's 50 most influential people of 2015 and foreign policy top global thinker of 2012 reminded us, how the clearest signal of coming of financial trouble comes from the pace of increase of debts.

Size matters, but pace matters more and he substantiated further by giving the example of Thailand in the late 1990s. Thailand, the debt level there was increasing significantly faster than the economy for a sustained period of time and we all know what happened to Thailand during that time. So, I summon the people on the other side of the House to read this because we are playing with the future of our country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who was not shocked to hear what the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said in his Press conference on his return from India, three weeks ago.

He said he had found a unique way in borrowing money from India through a special purpose vehicle at the State Bank of Mauritius, without this amount being counted as public debts and that this warrants that this Government, his Government be issued a copyright status on this. Here we are, this Government is trying to outsmart IMF loans and yet boasting about it. And with a four-year grace period, he will just pass on that debt to the next Government and not to be taken on his own shoulders at all.

But the chickens will come to the roost; the electorate has a longer memory than he thinks. As regards that SPV, what lessons are we imparting to the public service and the private sector already themselves so heavily indebted. Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 24% increase in debt level in 2½ years what did we get in return? Did we get an airport like the one the Labour Party has left as landmark of its legacy? No, instead we have a dead and buried Heritage City. Did we have a first-class public hospital like the Dr. Jeetoo hospital in my Constituency at the cost of Rs2.3 billion half the Betamax damages?

No, this Government has paid Rs144 m. for the MedPoint Clinic and yet has to make use of it. Did we get a mighty Dam like the Bagatelle Dam or did the Government rehabilitate any water treatment plants? No, we are still awaiting better supply of water in many parts of the island, including my own constituency notwithstanding heavy investment made at the Pailles Treatment Plant by the Labour Party which was commissioned in 2015 under this regime.

We are still waiting that enhanced water supply there. Did we have useful highways and bypasses like the one built by the Labour Party led Government? No, this investment is

investing Rs600 m. on a highway that passes nearby the airport, near the airport Smart City Project which appears to be in trouble. Ever since *la guerre intestine* has begun - I had a chance to ask question on this in Parliament - between the Architect and the Promoter. The Architect is accusing the Promoter of not paying him and the Promoter is accusing the Architect for having barred in his own country to practise as Architect.

Now, let me come a little bit about social housing because it was debated this morning with the PNQ. Well, I had the chance to discuss with the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands for the squatters of Tranquebar who have now been relocated to Pointe aux Sables and I must thank him for that as he did the needful almost immediately. But having said that, where are all the promises made by this Government? What is a fact and it is undeniable today that all those housing units that have so far been delivered by this Government have actually been initiated by the Labour Party led Government. I am, here, talking about a thousand housing units, the construction of which started in 2014 and were scheduled to be handed over in 2015. New housing units of two rooms plus kitchen plus bathroom plus WC designed for extension and which can also accommodate an additional floor on nine sites, namely Camp Ithier, Quatre Cocos, Camp de Masque, Chebel, Beau Bois, Pointe-aux-Sables, Sebastopol, Mare d'Albert and Mon Gout. Now, for the sake of decency one must recognise, and not criticising during inauguration ceremonies, the former regime because your cupboard is empty and it is bare and you have to rely on your neighbours, don't criticise them.

One note on the environment and sustainable development, the problem there is notwithstanding the few measures contained in this budget exercise, there remains the fact that this Ministry is perceived as being '*enn ministère bouche trou*' of this Government. The Ministry has had three Ministers since the last General Elections of 2014: hon. Dayal, hon. Wong Yen Cheong, and now hon. Sinatambou. Three Ministers in two years for the Ministry of Environment! That makes a Minister in every 8 months or so approximately! The current one also holds the portfolio of the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity; one of the three biggest Ministries in this country. The other two being the Ministry of Education and Human Resources and Ministry of Health and Quality Life simply because their client base is very large. It is a very Ministry. I have worked at that Ministry before.

Well, so far, I have seen that hon. Sinatambou has recently launched the environmental foundation of Her Highness Princess Camilla de Bourbon who is here to do some business as

well. I am quoting from her own statement. Now, is this environment foundation going to solve our environmental problems?

Hon. Henry talked about COP23 in Bonn later this year. Can I ask the hon. Minister, even symbolically, what action has he taken as regards the US decision to pull out of the US, of the COP21 Paris Agreement on climate change?

(Interruptions)

At least, we could have written a letter of protest because we are one of the...

(Interruptions)

Have you?

The Deputy Speaker: Please, address yourself to the Chair!

Mr Osman-Mahomed: We could have done that because we are one of the 195 signatories.

(Interruptions)

Mauritius emits only 0.01% of global CO₂ emission and the US is responsible for about 24%, whereas we don't pollute, we are the receiving end insofar as damages are concerned. Now, what have become of the funds that were committed by the US for adaptation purposes for country like us? I don't see anything in the budget. Will the environmental foundation of Her Highness give us money for that? There are some serious concerns there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We need to make our voices heard more and more.

I would like to touch on a few issues that concern my constituency: Constituency No. 2. I note that the Government has made provision for wastewater management at several locations, but I have not seen Ward 4. There, there are a lot of problems because the old system gets clogged and it really causes hardship to people. I had asked a question in Parliament yesterday and I am still waiting for a written answer.

Secondly, I hope the provision of Rs500 m. to Local Authorities for energy efficient led street lighting will also entail repairing the existing network at many locations. Port Louis is very dark by night. And Port Louis get lighted up as it should only on "*Porlwi by Light*" nights once a year!

I see provision has been made for the continuation of the compost bins which was initiated under *Maurice Ile Durable*. This is good. But what the people in my constituency are asking for, are the *poubelles*, the bins because those that were given to them many, many years ago, have worn out or have been damaged.

Smart Complexes: I have a PQ on next Tuesday. Furthermore, I see that this budget exercise makes provision for the funds for the purchase of 20 fire and rescue vehicles. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, like everybody else, I have watched how the blaze sadly ripped off the 24-storey Grenfell Tower in Latimer Road in London yesterday, taking many lives of people who were trapped inside and injuring so many people. At its peak and for several hours, it took 200 fire-fighters and hours and hours to fight that blaze. Now, 24-floors is not very tall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is just like our Bank of Mauritius, Mauritius Telecom, MCB, SBM, Air Mauritius type buildings. God forbid and I do not wish any country to have this kind of trouble, I would advise the hon. Minister to look beyond the cracks of the Flacq Fire Station and to ensure with his officers that the equipment that is being purchased under this budget meets the requirements of our new skylines, be it in terms of equipment or be it in terms of training that we are imparting for our fire-fighters because, I say it again, God forbid, the last thing we would wish, is for our country to be in a similar situation and we are not able to fight that fire.

On an ending note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we need is not a half-baked budget from a part-time Minister of Finance and Economic Development, but a robust effort that will put this country back on a path for sustainable development without hand-outs from our friends from India who have grave problem of their own. What we need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is: firstly, a budget based on balanced fiscal policy and not one we are clearly living beyond our means. Secondly, a budget that is based on real transparency about our growing debt and not one faking the figures by removing chunks of our foreign debts off their books. Indeed, the Financial Secretary, that other mentor has surprised many for allowing such dodgy devices and he is now perpetrating the *subterfuges noirs*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Osman-Mahomed: This used to be called creative accounting. Now, it is a little more than fiscal fraud. Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need a budget which

incorporates Strategic Economic Planning leading us to 2030 and beyond. This should embrace a proper valuation of our environmental assets which are in danger, are being frittered away as this Government seems intent on spreading infrastructure in concrete from shore to shore even on the fragile ecosystem of Agalega.

Above all, we need a budget that seriously captures our responsibilities under the Paris Accord, the 2005 UN SIDS Mauritius Strategy and our commitment from Samoa, UN SIDS Conference of 2014. For this, we need a fully costed long-term programme, and not the mismatch we are being offered here. We urgently need a new approach to financial management and planning, not just for now, for the brief further life-time of this Government so exhausted of vision, but for the future for his children, for our children and for generations to come.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if that package is too much to ask from this part-time Minister of Finance, even the help of all his team, I call on him to move over, to dissolve this Assembly and to allow a more skilled and experienced Government to move in with a full-time Minister of Finance who is up to the job without asking for time-off to do his homework and then coming back with this package.

I thank you for your attention.

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

At 5.30 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.08 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Roopun!

The Minister of Arts and Culture (Mr P. Roopun): Madam Speaker, let me first and foremost congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of this Budget. This Budget is forward looking where nobody has been left behind.

Before, I proceed, Madam Speaker, it's good that we acknowledge far too often the presence of the official Opposition of this House. I mean, I want to be sarcastic. I take it that the Leader of the Opposition is taken up, but to see all the seats of the official Opposition, more often than not, empty. Because, Madam Speaker, the Budget exercise is the most important business of this House over the year. We can close Parliament like it was done in

the past, but invariably for Government to function, at least once, we should come here to vote the Budget of this country, and we are paid for that. And we hear so much about a new style of governance, youth should be interested in politics, but you should have stamina, Madam. It is easier said than done. If we want to have a definition of demagogy, you have it here. Do you know why? So many Members, now in the official Opposition, were with us a few months back. Just compare how many times they stood up, intervened, came with suggestions or even criticisms, we never heard them! Now, the Opposition is making as if they are the centre of the world coming with all sorts of comments, rhetoric and mere criticisms after criticisms. This is why I want to deplore this state of affairs.

En passant, Madam Speaker, let me also comment very briefly, I must say, on the hon. Member, who just spoke, before we break. I will just take two events which, of course, are quite topical among Members of the Opposition. It is the Betamax affair and also the BAI saga, which I believe, all Members in the Opposition must have commented upon and I am sure they will also continue commenting.

The Betamax affair, we have all been criticising it as from day one, including the MMM. We have been very critical of the way everything has been done. There has been opacity, complicity at the highest level. We know now how everything was wrapped up in less than 24 hours, how legislation was being - I must say not amended - manipulated and we have the obligation, moral, legal, political to question whatever we find fishy.

(Interruptions)

It is not a question of just finding something, condoning and just remain like this because we have independent report stating that those clauses - and now I am telling the expert report - were so unusual, they were unheard of and they appeared to be exorbitant in the field of activities over which they were dealing. As a responsible Government, what should we do? Just brush aside? We are fully aware that this Betamax contract is a contract *en béton*, but even then it is our duty. We cannot just like this lightly accept everything because it is not just a question of one contract. It is a matter that we have to send the proper signal. No more any Betamax!

(Interruptions)

There should be no impunity.

(Interruptions)

Of course! This is daylight robbery. You are a lawyer. We know...

(Interruptions)

...we know quite well, Madam, one of the basic principles of criminal law is that it is better to let 99 criminals outside than to convict one innocent. This is the basic principle. There should be proof beyond reasonable doubt and this also we are contesting. There are cases before the Supreme Court where we are contesting. I don't want to indulge into that, but I must say loud and clear that we were duty-bound to take whatever measures we took and we are duty-bound to do whatever we can do so that all the culprits do not benefit ill-gotten gains and this is what this Government is going to do. I won't indulge into other issues, but I wish to put it loud and clear that what was the motivation of this Government.

Now, we come to the BAI saga. Fortunately for us, fortunately, for this Government the worst is behind us. We have been able to tackle this issue because it was an issue which had lots of social, economic, legal and other implications. But, one thing is absolutely clear and we have the NTan Report that Rs17 billion, I mean. rupees of Mauritians, old, young, small savers, big enterprises, have been siphoned out of Mauritius and they are untraceable. We have the NTan Report which clearly shows that, whether it is a Ponzi scheme or Ponzi-like scheme, but the truth remains that Rs17 billion has been siphoned away.

Unfortunately, I could not have the support of my friend, hon. Rutnah. I was trying to do a small exercise, but a very short calculation...

(Interruptions)

... and I don't want to take the risk of saying so, precisely that...

(Interruptions)

I have done a small calculation here. It would seem that Rs17 billion is more than the Budget of 12 Ministries taken together! More than 12 Ministries, which means that there are Ministers here and if you take half of them, you won't reach the figure of Rs17 billion, the Budget of a whole year! Just to give you an example, the Budget of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research is Rs16.6 billion for the whole year. The Budget of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is Rs11.6 billion. Let us take another example. The Ministry of Youth and Sports is given a Budget of Rs732 m. each year. Now, just imagine in terms of comparison what does Rs17 billion represent! Do you

think that all those who are here or outside will forget all those who are behind this BAI saga? We stated so, on many occasions that everything was a cook up scheme with complicity at the highest level, and we maintain that! This is what I wanted to say regarding these issues.

I wanted to deal with some comments made by hon. Henry. Hopefully, later on, if he joins me, I will take the opportunity to answer to him or otherwise, *in abstencia*, I will make some certain remarks.

Madam Speaker, last year, we had a Budget which was designed to usher 'A New Era of Development'. Today, we may safely say that this era of sustained development is now on the horizon. We have now tangible results which we can show to the population. I will just give a few examples. The Metro Express, about which we have been talking for the last 25 or more years, is going to be a reality. In this September, we are going to launch the Metro Express. We are going to have a bridge, if I may say, a Dream Bridge, the real Dream Bridge. We had a Dream Bridge which I believe hon. Gayan mentioned yesterday. This was a virtual bridge. We are going to have a run drainage system joining M1 to Coromandel at Montée S. Works are going to start in October. We all know, coming from the South or from Upper Plaines Wilhems, the ordeal we have to face at the junction of Phoenix roundabout; how much we lose in terms of time, money, productivity lost, fuel. This also is going to take shape as from this October.

We are going to have also a road linking La Vigie to La Brasserie, subsequently to Beaux Songes, but at least this segment is going to start. We are going to have a state-of-the-art complex at Côte d'Or. These are not *effets d'annonce*, Madam Speaker. These are concrete works that will start shortly. Regarding these projects, we are not talking of millions, we are talking of billions. Just imagine what multiplier effect it is going to have on the economy! It is true, and I confirm what Sir Anerood Jugnauth stated. You cannot expect that overnight you are going to find results. With the legacy of the *Parti Travailliste-PMSP*, who would have assumed that when we took power, the following day we are going to find results! How do you call it? *L'écurie d'Augias*? It was worse than that. We started to put order and I must say that, there also, results are coming. We know what is the situation actually in Air Mauritius, in MBC. NDU was on the verge of insolvency, of *faillite* with 1.2 billion outstanding bills. And you expect that we are going to go to those contractors and tell them that: "Okay, come with other works!" This should be paid first, then we are going to

work. They were contractors who were on the verge of insolvency. They were not being paid. Mind you, there were works carried out, without any record of the quality of the work, of the amount of the contract, no certification! We had to put order in all these. Very often, we had to dispense with various checks and balances. If I am not mistaken, if my memory serves me right, we even had to go to Cabinet at some point in time. Then, we could start, in fact, to do the works.

But I must say, Madam, that we are now confident, that the scene has been set for Mauritius to rise to the challenge of our ambitions, that of becoming a high-income economy. I have no doubt, that if we go on this trend, the GDP Capita will reach what is being forecasted in 2023, that is, over 13,600 USD. We are heading towards a more vibrant economy, with modern infrastructure. We are going to become technologically advanced, while being an environmentally sustainable country and socially inclusive.

I should also lay emphasis on a few basic institutions that have been created. Before coming to that, I should heartily thank the hon. Prime Minister, not only for the various measures in the field of art and culture, but also this very symbolical and laudable initiative of inviting artists for the very first time for the pre-budget consultation. Let me, on behalf of the whole creative industry; thank the Prime Minister for that initiative. I am particularly glad that we are coming with an Economic Development Board. I must say that I have been personally proponent for having a proper structure for long-term planning and development, because I consider that planning and development are vital, so that we can be more effective in this very competitive world. We cannot just react, we should be proactive.

Do not think about today, think for the next 25 years. This is my humble view, that if today we have been able to have economic development, this was because we have been having a regular planning and development exercise by the very existence of a Ministry of Economic Planning and Development. We are going to have one directorate which is going to focus on national and sectorial development planning. I wish well to that institution and I am sure that it is going to be of great help for our future long-term planning. I also take good note of the setting up of a National Economic and Social Council. This Council is going to be chaired by none other than the Prime Minister himself. This also sends the appropriate signal.

As we know, this Council is going to be a think tank. It is going to be an advisory body in terms of policy so that we can discuss key socio-economic issues and, most importantly, strengthen dialogue among different partners. It is good that we have a look at

all our challenges in a very systematic and regular interval. We do have pre-budgetary consultations but what I have noticed personally is that most stakeholders have a tendency to come with their shopping list, with requests rather than to come with strategies how we should move forward together. I trust that this new platform which encourage profound reflection and crosscutting debates having in mind our long-term consideration and strategies. In the same vein, we should also applaud the setting up of a three-year strategic plan with this Budget. We are going to have various strategic plans, starting from this one, which will enable us to measure our performance, evaluate our progress, and also take whatever corrective measures, if needed, whenever they are needed.

Madam Speaker, before moving to my Ministry or to some other business, let me make some comments on a very important and sensitive issue. Much has been said about the support we have received from India, but I must tell you that I am deeply saddened with remarks which unfortunately remind us of those dark days of our pre-independence era. We should all remember that we share a unique relationship with India. Our diplomatic relation dates back - guess since when - since 1948 just after India, itself, got independence. We are going shortly to celebrate 70 years of diplomatic relationship with India. I do not know if anyone among us here was born at that time. I know Sir Anerood Jugnauth was born. I don't want to ask the age of my friend, Ivan! Perhaps hon. Minister Koonjoo! But most of us were not even born.

In 2015, we all recall that Prime Minister Modi, one of the first countries he visited when he became Prime Minister was Mauritius. It is just to tell you the strong ties that bind our two countries. Last Thursday, Madam Speaker, we had here in this House the distinguished Speaker from the Lok Sabha with a delegation. A few weeks back, we had the visit of hon. Kalraj Mishra, if I am not mistaken, who is the Minister of Micro and Medium Enterprise. In early July, there is yet going to be another Ministerial delegation coming from Bihar. This morning, I had news that the Minister of Culture, Dr. Sharma, is also envisaging to come and visit us.

When we view our relationship with India, it is not just a question of money; it is much wider than that. We have got cultural exchanges. A few weeks back, my Ministry sent a group of *Sega tipik*, the '*Zouer Nu La Misik*' Group. They went to perform in India. It's a group of *Sega tipik*, but I do not know the name. They went to perform in India. How many amongst us here have got relatives who for decades have been pursuing further studies in

India? I know myself of many cases; students from all communities having had their tertiary education there. I am sure that, amongst us here, there should be. If I'm not mistaken hon. Joe Lesjongard had studied in India. Just to tell you that we should not give this relationship just a question of money and view it just in isolation. But, of course, India is not our only partner.

We have got also friendly relationships with other countries. Just to give an example, within my Ministry itself, just like we sent a troop of *Sega tipik* in India, there was one which we sent in South Africa on 25 May for the Africa day. I, myself, visited South Africa. We have a tenure agreement between Le Morne Heritage and Robben Island. Shortly from Australia, in the context of our next celebration of Independence Day, a group of aborigines from Australia is going to come here.

Our relationship with China, I must tell you that since I am Minister of Arts and Culture, there should have been, at least, eight delegations of different levels, be it painters, be it cooks, be it persons in the field of museum and dance, who have been visiting us. But all this, Madam Speaker, is something of which we are very proud. I humbly ask all hon. Members to give due regard to whatever we say, what insinuation we make and, at times, this may cause us much more harm than we perhaps imagine. Of course, this solemn request is not only towards Members of this House, but also outside of the House in different quarters. I just hope that this will be heard.

Madam Speaker, coming back to the Budget, I heard the Leader of the Opposition in his speech stating that –

“... never in my 30-year career in politics, have I seen a Budget presented to the nation in such turmoil, turbulence, protest, allegations and accusations.”

Just imagine he was here, on this side of the House, what would have been his comments. Just to remind you what he stated last year –

“I would like to congratulate my colleague and friend for a very beautiful Budget.”

This Budget will go a long way to make of Mauritius a better, more prosperous country and a fairer society. It has been well drafted, the speech was well delivered, it is coherent, it is innovative. The Budget has had the rare privilege of being complemented by all sides of the House and today, suddenly, nothing seems good.

According to him, the Budget presented is '*menti menti*'.

(*Interruptions*)

Madame la présidente, le PMSD d'aujourd'hui, le PMSD post-Sir Gaëtan Duval est un parti sans âme, sans vision. Je dois dire que c'est un drôle d'espèce, le peu que je peux dire. Un mélange extraordinaire de caméléon qui adopte toutes sortes de camouflage pour se fondre dans la nature et tantôt rouge, tantôt orange, orphelin on devient bleu. Quelquefois, et trop souvent même, on prend la forme d'un parasite, on s'accroche. Et les parasites, Madame la présidente, vous avez de très beaux, très jeunes, attirants, mais ce sont des parasites. Et quelquefois les parasites se transforment en rats, et là qu'est-ce qui se passe? '*Souffler et manger*'!

Mr A. Duval: Madam Speaker, the hon. Minister is treating the PMSD Members, Members of this Assembly of parasites, of rats? Madam Speaker, you have been keen to stop me yesterday, I will expect the same on this side.

Madam Speaker: What I will say is that the hon. Minister is just replying. He has not mentioned names and yesterday only somebody from this side of the House said that when it is addressed in general, it is acceptable, but when it is addressed to a particular Member, it is not acceptable.

Mr Roopun: Madam Speaker, there is a saying '*ceux qui s'excusent, s'accusent*'. Just to say that when a party is transformed, then we come to the period of '*souffler manger*'. This is what in a nutshell summarises everything. I won't dwell with someone who has been like *Judas, le baisemain* and then *la trahison* as we have in the Bible of Jesus.

I will not also dwell on another Member of the Opposition, who before Budget has already commented on it. I leave it for some other quarters. Madam Speaker, I avoid the temptation of talking too lengthily on the sterile criticisms of the Opposition. I do not think that they can teach us a lesson nor do I want to teach them any lesson. They should better mediate on themselves. Their leadership, where they are and where they want to be.

I start by making a few comments and responds to remarks made by hon. Thierry Henry, who, unfortunately he is not here. I must say I expected him to be present. I did tell him that I am going to respond to what he stated, but, unfortunately, he is not here. He mentioned that there are various parastatal bodies without chairman. Let me tell him that, in

all those parastatals, they are functioning. We have got acting chairperson and all the activities are being carried out as they should.

He also stated that there are *artistes* who are *déçus*; they are a few, I know. Hon. Lesjongard mentioned it yesterday, but, please, *de grâce*, do not try to generalise. I have myself, since I am Minister of Arts and Culture, met a lot of artists. There was a supposedly boycott and we know what happened. But I must say that I am compassionate with the pledge of artists. Any suggestion from whoever is most welcome. We will do our best to try to see the best way where we can move the agenda of artists of our creators and help them to the best of our abilities.

There were a few issues which were raised. One relates to the royalties and I have just referred the hon. Member to one page of the Budget as an annex. I just asked him to refer to page 17 regarding royalties and he will find the answer. He also mentioned the status of artists and I must say that it is not true that we are delaying the introduction of the Bill. We are working on it, the name of an expert was finalised only in July 2016 and the first visit was in February this year. The expert will be coming back again in September and we are pursuing seriously the drafting of the legislation and I must say that it is something quite complicated.

The expert during her first visit had a working session with a series of Ministries and we want to see how we can integrate the role and status of artists insofar as Social Security and Labour legislation are concerned, but we are moving further on this. I won't ask my hon. predecessor what he has done on it, we leave it for the time being, but I must just report what we did since I am in office. So far as the Copyright Bill is concerned, the hon. Member stated that everything is ready and just how to go to Parliament, to come to this House.

It is far from being the truth. I must say that I, personally, had various meetings during the month of February. On 15 February, I had a meeting with a representative of various Ministries. I met the High-Powered Committee on 17 February. I went to Cabinet; the Draft Bill has been placed on the website of the Ministry, we invited views and comments, we had certain suggestions, certain comments. I, myself had meetings with the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation at the beginning of April to seek the views of the IBA. And we have now come with certain changes in the original draft and this has been sent to the SLO for redrafting. I must say that all those views will now be discussed at the level of the High-Powered Committee. A meeting has been fixed for next Thursday on 22

June and we are going to do our best so that the Bill comes before this House in the earliest possible time.

Madam Speaker, I won't dwell on a few of the issues that were raised by hon. friends, but just to tell that when I assumed office as Minister of Arts and Culture, I must say that the transition was a bit laborious. A few days thereafter, I had to deal with a series of events. We had the Spring Festival. Within a week, we had to organise the 01 February's event, Commemoration of Slavery. This was followed by various other activities like Cavadee, Maha Shivratri, Independence Day, Ugaadi, Gudi Padwa, Varusha Pirappu and the Boat Festival. Now, in line we have the Music Day on 21 June. Just to tell you, these are major events. This made me realise one thing. First of all, how complex and fertile arts and culture is in Mauritius and how we should now try to develop a new strategy which goes beyond religion. There should be a paradigm shift in arts and culture. We need to develop proper management of our cultural diversity and heritage and focus more on matters other than mere events management. We should endeavour together to analyse what is the role of culture in nation building; how we should use it as a vector for peace and sustainable development, and, most importantly, how we should mainstream cultural development and enhance benefit derived from creative industries.. We should, of course, take stock of our achievements, but also acknowledge that there is also erosion of our cultural values and reflect on what are the challenges we now have to face in the wake of the development of information technology.

But what is most important, Madam Speaker, we should realise that we have a lot to share with the world. Our interculturality! This is, in fact, our greatest wealth. One may say that Mauritius is famous because of our economic development. Economic development is relative, but the wealth of our culture this is priceless. Perhaps we don't realise because we are just inside the whole system and it is for others to make it realise what we have as wealth. And you know the good thing about culture, unlike what is material; when you have too many, you have to divide. When you are practising a culture, you are developing a culture, it multiplies. And, above all, we should endeavour to develop our Mauritian culture. There is a difference between just following our ancestral cultures. But through this, there is a new blend of Mauritian culture over which we have to work out. So that our culture - just to take the word of hon. Benydin, I remember well what he stated this morning – “our culture should not be like walls which is going to divide us”; we should build bridges so that our different cultures unite us and this intercultural culture is only something which we should share with

the world; intercultural action which is going to be peace, combat extremism in all its forms and also be our contribution for a better world for our future generation.

There is another thing which is good that we reflect upon. What is art? What is culture? I asked the question when I joined the Ministry and I must confess that I did not have a clear answer. And I am sure that many of us here we can't just embrace all that culture and taste. Our own culture, the culture of all of us here, starts at the very moment of our conception; what should be done; what tradition we have; how the mother should behave; what the mother should eat; what she must do; what she must not to. We have our own culture upon how we are going to celebrate the birth of a child. All our life, we have a lot to share. Even after death; how we treat our ancestors. We have lots of things that we do, even well after our loved ones have left the world. We have prayers. We have to go to pay them tribute at some specific time. All these are within culture. It is not just a question of religion. What we eat; what we can't eat! How we eat! Fingers! We eat with our fingers. Others eat with a fork! Others with the *baguette*! What we wear! What spices we use! Our music! And my humble view is that it is this definition of arts and culture that we should have and this is where we should endeavour to move.

Dance is also part of the culture. This is another way of looking at things, but it is movement. In fact, Madam Speaker, after three decades, we have had a Ministry of Arts and Culture. I believe that there is a lot of thinking that has to be done, and I must say that I have enlisted the support of a technical expert from UNESCO for a complete re-engineering and restructuring of the Ministry. We are going to see how we can take international best practices and try to give our Ministry of Arts and Culture another dimension. We should not forget that we have also the creative industry; we have a lot of potential.

In addition to a rethinking, there is also a lot of works that we are trying to do in terms of the various institutions which fall under my Ministry. There is a merging of the National Museum Council with the National Art Gallery which is ongoing.

(Interruptions)

I can't see.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, when I am on my feet, time seems to run faster than when I am seated. But, I pray for some indulgence. I want to elaborate on a few measures taken within this Budget and I will try to be as short as possible.

Just to give a few insight about my vision as the Head of the Ministry of Arts and Culture, I must say that under my Ministry, we have got various Cultural Trusts and also Speaking Unions and which I support to the best of our abilities. One thing I have noticed is that all those Trusts and Speaking Unions are working to enhance and promote their different customs and traditions.

What I have also been able to promote is that we should not just concentrate on cult. I just give you a few examples. We have the Telugu Associations - my friend was with us - which is not concentrating just on religious activities. We had a Miss Telugu where young ladies had to wear different traditional sarees, did some rangolis. They had to show their culinary skills, they were chanting Ram Bhajan.

The Tamil Speaking Union organised literary workshops, together with Malaysian writers. We have lots of examples where we are trying to give art and culture a new dimension.

I am very pleased that we are going to launch a National Award to give recognition to our artists, to honour our artists, our creators, our performers for their performance in the different disciplines of art and also we are trying to see how we can develop together with all the media, including MBC, a common *Disque de l'année*, so that there is only one winner. We will try to see how we can develop this.

Another issue over which I wish to highlight is that there have been requests from artists about venues for them to be able to perform. I am pleased to announce that we are embarking in the construction of a multipurpose complex at Côte d'Or, as you are aware, in the context of the *Jeux des îles*. This complex, which is going to be a major infrastructural work, is going to start shortly.

In addition to having a football stadium, an aquatic centre and a multipurpose stadium will also have facilities for high level musical concerts. This gymnasium cum facility hall will be able to accommodate between 2,000 to 5,000 persons. I am sure that the community of artists will appreciate that we are coming with a few amenities for them. I had meetings with the local authorities to see how we can use our existing facilities.

We remember those days when we had in our town halls, exposition of painters, *vernissage* and so on. But, unfortunately, we don't find such things any more. We will try to

encourage such activities. I have the support of all Mayors and District Councillors in that score and I hope we can bring this collaboration further.

Another issue, perhaps which is good that I mention it here, is that even on beaches we want to develop some *espace artistique*. We all know that when we travel, we find a lot of painters doing live paintings, portraits and so on. Unfortunately, we don't find it in Mauritius. We want to develop all those activities. Perhaps, we are going to limit it only during weekdays so that the public beaches can be used by all our Mauritians during weekends.

There is also La Citadelle, where a sum of Rs3 m. was earmarked under my Ministry. I know that there are rehabilitation works which are ongoing at the level of the Ministry of Tourism. There is also an art zone which we will try to develop at granary. Here, we are going to have the support of the private sector.

To check

One important measure is a media-tech. The purpose of a media-tech is to have a collection of our heritage. If we take, for example, '*Ti Frère*', he has been one of our pioneers in terms of Sega. I don't know if we still have cassettes, videos of '*Ti Frère*'. The same where we can think of other artists, like if we take - I don't know if he is here - Sona Noyan, a famous Bhojpuri singer. We have *Qawwalis*. We will try to see how we can develop all these.

Here, when we are talking about media-tech. For example, hon. Toussaint, in his young age, used to be an artist, playing in dramas. We have also our friend, Reza Cassam Uteem, former President, who was also very active in dramas. Our actual Vice-President, his Excellency Vyapoory was also a performer.

(Interruptions)

I am told now that hon. Rutnah also. But, fortunately, for hon. Rutnah we have the opportunity of seeing him every day.

(Interruptions)

We find it live and direct. But for others, it is good that we have the possibility of keeping our cultural heritage for posterity.

My friend, hon. Oree, is a very good Ramayan singer. Champion, mind you! He has been representing us in India. Perhaps, some other days, we are going to have the opportunity to listen to him in this very House. These are going to be the purpose of a media-tech.

There was an issue about artists. I remember hon. Henry mentioned about artists performing at the MBC. We are working on a mechanism where they will be given more opportunities.

In terms of heritage, Madam Speaker, all of us, I am sure, we are delighted that the Plaza Theatre will be operational quite soon.

I can't give any time frame, but we know that works have started. One phase of the work has been completed and the *Salle des fêtes* is now operational. But we should be reminded that the *Salle des fêtes* of Le Plaza have been closed since 2004.

It is same for the Port Louis Theatre which has been closed since 2008. There also, we are trying to have preliminary works so that we can know the amount of work that has to be done. We are also, through funds, provided under the Lotto Fund, trying to see how we can develop also other historical sites. And, I must say here that *la Batterie de l'Harmonie* is also another very important issue where we are trying to see how together with artists we can develop it.

The hon. Member just arrived in time for him to know that the issue about the access has been cleared. I know that a substantial amount is being invested together with the support of Government so that we can develop the whole network of roads where we are going to have not only *la Batterie de l'Harmonie*, but various other activities, hotels which are going to be built there.

Another issue over which I will have to dwell is the development of the cultural tourism, Madam. This is also a cluster over which we wish to develop. We know tourists come here not for our sun, sea and sand only, but also for our culture. For Maha Shivaratri, for Cavadee we have lots of tourists coming, but there are also lots of other events where they can participate, where we wish them to share with us, like Diwali and these different activities are potentials where we can attract even more tourists. I must say that during a study carried out by the International Trade Centre and within our National Exports Strategy, cultural tourism has a very important role and, of course, we wish to develop these cultural

sites together with the private sector. I mentioned about the *Village des artistes* unfortunately, I am just going to rush.

May I also, Madam Speaker, just as a conclusion inform the House that we went further with the inscription of *Sega tambour* as...

(Interruptions)

Not Sinatambou, its *Sega tambour* as part of our world heritage and this week itself, we have some very good news and, hopefully, we are going to pursue this inscription in November this year in South Korea.

I wish also to inform that we are most grateful that our young artist Jane Constance is now Ambassador for Peace at the level of UNESCO. We are also organising together with UNESCO a series of Conferences in Mauritius, one on the Slave Route, one on the Indentured Labour Route. Next month, we are going to have a Conference among Ministers from East Africa to deal with heritage and their importance, in a nutshell just to give you the various activities that we are organising within our Ministry.

I will end almost now, Madam Speaker, by reminding everyone of us that we are celebrating, of course, our 50th anniversary of independence next year and we have already a list of activities which we are organising. I will once again make an appeal to each and every one so that we can together make this an eventful one and we also wish to have the support of the private sector in this endeavour.

M. la présidente, pour terminer, l'art et la culture sont deux éléments qui doivent être vus au-delà de la religion car c'est un bien que nous avons tous hérité de nos ancêtres. C'est un bien qu'on a en commun. C'est un bien qui nous lie, peu importe notre appartenance ethnique ou même politique. C'est ce mélange de cultures qui a aujourd'hui amené à la création de la culture mauricienne pour reprendre encore une fois les mots de l'honorable Toolsyraj Benydin –

«Nos différentes cultures ne doivent pas être des murs qui nous séparent mais des ponts pour nous unir ».

Chaque pays croit en sa culture et veut tout mettre en œuvre pour la préserver, la valoriser et la transmettre à la génération future. Ce soir, je lancerai un appel solennel aux membres de cette auguste Assemblée, aux membres de la presse, aux artistes ainsi qu'à toute

la population générale à joindre nos forces, la main dans la main, pour préserver et promouvoir la culture mauricienne et faciliter l'accès à cet élément unificateur au centre même du processus de renforcement de l'identité mauricienne.

Je terminerai, Madame la présidente, en citant Nana Awere Damoah, un auteur Ghanéen, et là, je dois remercier un officier de mon ministère qui m'a quand même mis sur cette piste, *I wish to quote* –

“We love to quote the saying: Rome was not built in a day, but we fail to remember that Rome...

(Interruptions)

Not *Gro Mario*, Rome.

(Interruptions)

“Rome was eventually built and it must have been magnificent and that is why people admired it. They were told that it did not happen in a day. The question then is how was it built? The answer is it was built every day.”

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank all hon. Members for their attention. Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus!

(7.18 p.m.)

Mrs R. Jadoo-Jaunbocus (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to my feet, but I shudder to speak and why do I shudder is because when my children watch the House of the Parliament on television on Live Parliament, oh my God! When family is here, this Parliament, oh my God! Why I say that is because there has been talk of culture, there has been talk of elevation and yet when families talk outside, earlier on hon. Shakeel Mohamed was saying if we were to ask people how this country is faring, and I say the same thing, if we were to ask people how this House is behaving or rather not behaving, ask people outside. We have Parliament TV and what is happening is that, instead of having an elevated level of debate, instead of talking about what this Budget is about, instead of talking about proposals, instead of talking about things which are positive and constructive, what is being done here? Insults are being flung from the other

side. We are being told about a litany of what has been done in the ages of the Macarena time and the *Cotomili* time. Yet, not a word on what has been provided for and written for in this Budget. This is why, Madam Speaker, I say I shudder when I stand up to speak.

Let us turn to this Budget ‘Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions’. Indeed, a lot has been said good, very good, not so good, but when I read the plethora of reviews, what really comes to mind is what the MCCI has said –

« C’est un budget très fort. Il se base sur le passé mais regarde vers l’avenir. Donc, c’est un budget d’ouverture. »

And yet, we go even further, it is said –

‘L’investissement public, cela sert à la relance économique.’

It seems that whoever speaks, depending as, I believe, it is hon. Roopun had said -

“When you sit there, it is one side of the mirror, one side of the coin and when you sit on this side of the House, the coin has flipped and you cannot see the other side.”

The hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance started this Budget in order to shape our destiny for our country, and for our population. This is how he opens the Budget Speech in his Second Reading. And, in fact, what he says at paragraph 5 is that –

“The thrust of last year’s Budget has allowed us to build a strong framework for economic revival. It has propelled our economy to a higher growth rate of 3.9 per cent in 2016/17, compared to 3.2 per cent in the previous year.”

And it talks about the estimated growth rate and also talks, at paragraph 7, about the unemployment rate which has fallen to 7.3 per cent in 2016, and the inflation rate was 1 per cent in that same year. Why do I say that is because we must not forget the reality, we must not forget that the context in this Budget rises and comes out. It is in a context where, at the outset, and it is of paramount importance to remind people of this House, and those who hear us outside, that this Budget has been considered and written in an era of ongoing turbulences on the global, political and economic stage, including Brexit in Europe, including America First in the United States, what is happening in North Korea, the difficult climate change discussions and other attacks on corporations worldwide. We have the elections which have just gone through in England and France. And it is in Mauritius before we set out our

economic plan, it is very much, our economy is based on what is happening outside. And before these countries have actually established their economic policy, what we have is, our hon. Minister of Finance has come with a Budget with such positive reviews and such positive remarks.

I have heard many who said : « *Le budget ne répond pas à l'attente de la population, le budget n'a pas fait des provisions pour la Betamax.* »

I asked myself this question. I am not an economist, I am not an accountant, I am a simple lawyer, and a simple MP in this Parliament, Member of this House. But what I do know, Madam Speaker, is that you cannot provide for something which is not actually a debt on the State. And I am talking about the famous Betamax saga, everybody is saying nothing has been provided for, the Minister has no vision. But should the Minister act, think. When we said *oiseau de malheur pour l'Opposition*, I thought that this was mere expression when we talk on what the Opposition says. But I think as a reality, what I say is that they cannot wait for the country to falter, not the Government, because when we talk about Betamax, yes the Government but also the people out there, the Mauritians who will suffer out there and I will say how they will suffer. Everybody is so happy rubbing their hands: *Oui, Pravind Jugnauth pas inn fer provision, li pou bizin payer là! Bé kisanla ki pou paye ça?* I am sorry, Madam Speaker, we are not in Creole yet. Who is going to pay for that? Why is the Opposition so happy that our people, the Mauritians, have to pay such a huge debt? I qualify what I say. If ever they have to pay, because, let us look what is about Betamax, what of Betamax? Betamax is a 15-year contract for a minimum of USD290 million. Madam Speaker, I do not know how many zeros that makes in rupees. Too many, I need a calculator for that one. I dare not venture, but what I am saying is, forget about hon. Rutnah, focus on USD 290 million! Again, what the people, the nation has to pay is not a joke. One may make an error in calculating in the heat of the moment, but that does not mean one is not a good lawyer, or one cannot count, and we must not forget we will have had to spend USD290 million. This country! Who cares? Do they care? They are worse than Shylock in the Merchant of Venice. At least, Portia said: “You cannot take the pound of flesh without extracting the blood”. But they want it all, they want the flesh, they want the blood and everything of this nation, not this Government, this nation. Because it is about what this nation has to pay, Madam Speaker.

And I have not finished with Betamax yet. Betamax, how was the contract awarded? It was awarded without expression of interest. It was awarded in breach of all procurement procedures.

(Interruptions)

It was awarded. Do not shout and say who did it or who did not do it! It is who has to pay, and we are talking about their financial implications; who has to pay; to whose benefit it was made when the contract was drafted. The company, I had - I was quite surprised, I heard hon. Ashit Gungah, Minister of Commerce, stated that the day the company was formed, it was the same day that the contract was awarded. The little that I read about procurement, is, at least, the company must have had some years of experience. For little drains in our constituency, for which we are being very much criticised, for small drains, we need experts with experience, now for a contract of USD290 million, spanning over 15 years, with the 5 yearly incremental going up to 1.5 and then 2%. We have escalating increment. This is called fleecing *le people*, Madam Speaker. And who is going to pay? Nobody cares; we are all making politics on this. But what I have to say is no provision is being made because all this is going to Appeal, there will be a Court, and we have a justice system. Let's have some faith in our system, and let us pray, and let us put our heads together and see how, when the former Government had, in fact, allocated such a contract, we can save the country. Because this was not terminated just because we wanted to give the contract to someone *qui sont nos petits copains, ou notre beau-frere, ou nos parents. Non, non, non!* This was made to save the country's money as hon. Gungah has spoken. And let us not forget, we had a litany of what supposedly *PTR* legacy was, I recall *PTR* legacy means hedging at the STC, I recall *PTR* legacy is 1.2 *milliard* of debt at the NDU which we are still servicing. We are behind with our projects because we are still servicing, hedging at the Air Mauritius as well. So, all these companies would have gone bankrupt had we not come and saved these companies from complete bankruptcy.

And let us also remind people something, Madam Speaker, our reputation in the world, the Mauritius reputation in the world of business has not been made in 1 or 2 days, it has taken years and years to build that reputation. It has taken a lot of years and what we do is we are casting doubts on everything and everybody. We cast doubts on potential investors, all investors *sont nos petits amis et notre petite amie !* This is not possible, Madam Speaker. What we are doing is that we are ensuring that no one comes and invests in Mauritius the way

we are treating all the potential investors because everybody would be saying: “you come to Mauritius, you will be blacklisted, you will be accused of this and that and that!” And then, what are they going to do? Again, Mr Shylock comes into play; they will rub their hands together and say no FDI, no economic development in this country. That is why I say we are getting from bad to worse.

About the BAI, Madam Speaker, I won’t say much about it. Suffice to say, the hon. Prime Minister has met with the BAI, and has met with them not further than today, and has made proposals to them. He is someone of heart, and he is someone *à l’écoute*, and he is compassionate. He is doing all that he can do to save these people. At the end of the day, we have heard about the BAI saga and we are very compassionate with those victims.

Actually, before I talk about our Budget, let us just have a look on what has been so much said about the *rezilta lor rezilta* party. I have here: ‘Building a Better Mauritius’, ‘Creating a New Wave of Prosperity’ in 2013 and that has dragged the country down a lot. What we had is a repeal of defeat, a repeal of *mal fait*, a repeal of non-implementation. What we have here and what was said in 2013, I quote –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, my third Budget builds on our past achievements and sticks to our vision of the future - that of becoming a high income nation, without absolute poverty, of *Maurice Ile Durable* and of a democratised economy.”

At that time, in 2013, what we had in those days, unemployment rate was 8.3% as compared to now unemployment rate has come down to 7.3%. And yet, they stand, on the other side of the House, all of them screaming, we are giving rise to unemployment rate. When you look at the figures for vacancies which have been filled and posts which have been created, what would you have is last year when you look at the Disciplined Forces Services Commission, when you look at PSC, when you look at the Judicial Legal Services Commission, no less than 3,300 people were recruited, showing clearly that people have been recruited and put into post leading to the drop in unemployment rate. I will say no more because I know the hon. Minister of Labour is here. So, he will be able to address the House on this issue further.

Turning to, again, building our Mauritius to a new wave of prosperity, a lot has been said about a *budget menti menti*. Let us see who is *menti menti* and who is *menteur menteur*.

(Interruptions)

No, no, I will go to the highlight in a minute.

(Interruptions)

I am not aware.

We talked at paragraph 92 of creating the new wave of prosperity, Madam Speaker, of a great separated junction over Phoenix/Jumbo roundabouts. Is it there? Hon. Benydin, has it been built yet? Who is going to build it? This Government!

Secondly, the construction of a bridge over Grand Rivière North West to link Coromandel to Sorèze on the M1. Is it there? Hon. Mrs Monty, your Constituency ...

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus! I am sorry, you cannot ask questions to other hon. Members whilst you are intervening!

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: I apologise, Madam Speaker. In fact, it was a rhetoric question, but I will refrain from doing that.

Now, we have the tunnel of Signal Mountain and Champs de Mars. Has this been built yet, Madam Speaker? Not yet! Yet, what was happening is, according to these interventions, we are literally redrawing the map of Mauritius. Unfortunately, the map has stayed where it is and has gone a bit backwards, has shrunk a little bit, when you look at these projects.

Now, when you turn further in this Budget, it talks about - I quote -

“(...) the *MID* Fund to encourage and give incentives to small planters to grow plants that will be efficient sources of biomass energy.”

You talked about so many things that the *Maurice Ile Durable (MID)* is supposed to do. I quote –

“This Budget provides a total of Rs6 billion for implementing a broad spectrum of *MID*-related projects for greater use of renewable energy, protection of lagoons and aquifers, sustainable food production and the rehabilitation of nature reserves and parks, among others.”

What do you have on the *MID* and the *MID* Fund, Madam Speaker? That has to be heard. Those are not my words, Madam Speaker. I quote the question of hon. Bérenger in this very House to the then Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, on 03 December 2010. His question was –

“ (...) hon. Prime Minister will allow me to say that the Professor de Rosnay *qui a été très critique* about what has taken place over the last two years. If I can just quote a few words of his -

“Le MID est trop timide. Des choses ne vont pas aussi vite que je l’aurais espéré, c’est vrai. Quelque part on ne se donne pas les moyens de nos ambitions. Le vrai problème, c’est l’absence d’un plan d’action.”

And, I could go on.

I do not say that. It is hon. Bérenger who said that.

“Des choses se font mais il manque une vision d’ensemble et des projets mobilisateurs. Nous avons commis des erreurs comme le fait de débloquer beaucoup d’argent sans avoir de ligne directrice.”

Those were the words of Professor de Rosnay.

(Interruptions)

I will come to that. Then, the then Prime Minister said –

“We have put the foundation in place.”

This is what Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam replied at that time, then Prime Minister - I quote -

“I know there have been some people who have been saying - and I am not talking about the Opposition, people in general (...).”

Le monde dont on parle dehors là. People in general and experts! The one that was supposed to advise the Prime Minister’s Office! I quote –

“(...) that there is not enough coordination. That is why I have put these two committees.”

According to hon. Berenger –

“That is, he has recommended that the *MID* Fund be transferred from the Ministry for Energy to the Ministry of Environment (...).”

This is what we are talking about. Building the Mauritius! Again, when we go back to the party who says: *résultat sur résultat*, let us look at another thing that they say -

“Hon. Pravind Jugnauth hasn’t had any vision in creation of employment, has not provided for enough post, etc.”

When we look only at the section Recruitment of other Specialists and Doctors, how many were provided in 2013? We have -

- 33 specialists
- 36 doctors;
- 300 student nurses, and
- 400 attendants.

De quoi l’honorable Thierry Henry was talking about? Les queues dans l’hôpital Jeetoo, the long queues waiting at Jeetoo Hospital. If you are going to recruit only 33 or 36 doctors, then ...

(Interruptions)

I am sorry! Okay! Wrong person! From the *rezilta* party!

Madam Speaker, this Government has recruited 160 plus 8, that is, 168 last year and, in all, almost 490 doctors over the last two years. We still say that this Government has no vision and is not anything for the country.

Now, let us turn to another section, Community-based Projects. Again, we are in 2013. We were dreaming. We were reshaping the map of Mauritius then. We are going to have Rs2 m. for a new traffic centre at Rivière du Rempart. Hon. Rutnah, have you seen the new traffic centre?

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus! I am drawing your attention once more to the fact that you do not address another colleague of this House.

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: It is just a slip of the tongue, Madam Speaker, I take that back.

- Rs7 m. for the upgrading of the Youth Training Centres at Anse La Raie and Bel Ombre;
- Rs87 m. for the construction of a new market fair at Goodlands, and
- Rs150 m. for a market fair at Quatre Bornes.

I went there last week and I see that it is this Government and this Council which are actually doing this construction work at Quatre Bornes and that in the hon. Minister’s and hon. Leader

of the Opposition's own Constituency. This is what we call one Budget with vision and this one without a vision and implementation. I could go on.

When we look at the flooding and this is a serious matter because we have had several flash floods. In 2013, the flash floods! It is said earlier this year: 'have raised the need to improve control and responsibility for our land drainage system. We, therefore, provide for the setting up of the Land Drainage Agency'. *Action! Zéro!* It is this Government which has come with the Land Drainage Act and is actually implementing the recommendation of GIBBs in the early 2000 report.

We have in the Budget - indeed I need to stop for breath because there are so many unimplemented projects - at paragraph 450 - Rs200 m. awarded for the Multi Sport Complex at Triolet and La Source. We have not seen *la pose de la première pierre* yet, we have not seen any of that yet.

And from such non-implementation, what do we have on the other side? We have those, on the other side, coming to teach Government a lesson and saying that we have a part-time Minister of Finance, Madam Speaker. A part-time Minister of Finance when they had a part-time Prime Minister! Where was he most of the time? I hear that he was sometimes in London, sometimes in Albion, sometimes in Roche Noire, anywhere, but where he should be certainly, not in board rooms. I do not know which other rooms, but certainly not in board rooms.

And we dare talk about a part-time Minister of Finance, they dare say that the person has not even looked, without a vision of this Budget, there are so many measures which have to be highlighted, Madam Speaker. I can see that time management has started to apply, so I would go a bit faster. Building Innovative Mauritius at paragraph 32 of the Budget, we are talking about the research development, research and development being the bedrock of innovation and that our plan is to put an unprecedented focus on encouraging research and, in fact, we have the setting up of the Mauritius Research Council to transform it into the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council. Why this is being done is because of this kind of investment, of commitment! In parallel what you have is accelerated capital allowance of 50% in respect of capital expenditure on research and innovation, research and development. So, in one sense, the Minister of Finance is saying that he is going to invest into research and innovation, but is putting words into action. He is actually giving incentives, further he is

giving a double deduction for five years up to income year 2022 on qualifying research and development expenditure directly related to the entities trade and incurred in Mauritius.

And such qualifying expenditure would be staff cost, consumable items, e-computer software, would be subcontracted research and development items. So, in other words, what the Minister has done is, in so doing, he is not only saying that he wants this field of research to increase, because when we recall the recent visit to China, when different departments, different parts of Government were visiting the Research Centre, one of the things that was highlighted, further to questions that we had put, is how has China reached such a stage of development. One answer was that the country has invested in research. Be it at private level, be it at public level, at any level, research is the key word and that is how we are going to innovate, how we are going to keep up a pace with this fast moving world.

Now, if I may turn to another sector of this year's Budget, it talks about recruitment, about Law and Order. It talks about the recruitment of, at least, 583 additional Police Constables. It talks about the recruitment of light armoured personnel, SMF officers, SSU officers, ADSU officers. I want also to come to the implementing of the Police Training Academy at Côte d'Or City.

When we have the Leader of the Opposition talking and that is a very serious matter, tracking law and order and dealing with drug proliferation in this country. What he had to say also was that this Government has failed in this area in the sense that we should invest in our people and not in our equipment, but it is there, setting about the academy, more recruitment. In fact it is one of the things that we had heard again from *le peuple* out there before the election and they dare say that we have not respected our electoral promise.

When you were out there in 2014, families of doctors, parents of doctors, parents would come and say: my child has qualified as a doctor, but he is working as a labourer because he has to earn, there is no shame in working, but he wants to go and practise what he has learnt too, that is, medicine. We have a shortage of Police Officers. As a lawyer, you go at every Police station and what you hear is: we are short of Police Officers!

And we are being told that we have wasted public money in investing in equipment purchase, in staffing, increasing of level of staffing and setting up of Training Academy. This is a vision and the vision of this Government is to move forward and bring the country on path with the other developed countries. More about job creation: we have the creation of

Family Welfare Protection Officers because this Government means business when it talks about protecting the vulnerable.

We have the recruitment of Enforcement Officers at the level of the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. What we have is a provision for the Children's Bill to give effect to the Convention of the Rights of the Child and that will provide a better framework for the care and protection of the child. This Convention has been for years and they are talking, on the other side of the House, of protecting the vulnerable! Protecting the vulnerable does not just call for asking a question on certain issues and saying we have not done it or we have done it. Protecting the vulnerable means a commitment to basic and high needs and if you cannot protect the child and the woman of your society, any society will have failed if you cannot do that and this so-called, by the other side, being a part-time Minister of Finance has had the time to look into this and provide for such implementation. I know that my time will be running out soon, so I will not go too much over, but what I will talk about is, as everybody else has talked about the projects, we all know how and in what condition in 2014 we received a legacy and we claimed to the legacy of this Government.

What have been left were debts. I have talked about the various debts and when you think about it, what can any Government do when it has inherited so many debts? Not do anything *pour la relance du pays*! Inheriting a country with just debts! What the Government has done and, in fact, many critics and am just looking for analysis and critics, what they have said is that to come out of this, what the country has to do is to look at foreign investors and look at export and I am sure one can see the number of measures. I will not go into it now because I know time is short, but a number of measures that have been done in order to *accueillir les investisseurs de l'extérieur à Maurice, par exemple*, tax incentives given for pharmaceutical companies, business facilitation, permits being given, occupational permits and trading permits for foreigners, all this because what is being looked at, it being looked at it holistically. This is what has been done by the hon. Minister of Finance and we are talking about the backdrop of this country having its debt and not having been able to do anything for the country. Do we sit back and let it crumble as the Opposition would want it to do? No! What this Government has done and what the hon. Minister has rightly done, this has been applauded by a lot of - be it KPMG and other commentators on economics, on Finance. They have said the best way *pour la relance* is when you have projects going on, all these infrastructural projects across the country are going to reboost the economy, give a jerk to it

so that we can achieve the target to reduce poverty, to increase employment and economic betterment for the country and that is why we have a list of projects. I will not go into all the details of all the projects mentioned to highlight a couple which are found in the Constituencies of Port Louis, being MP of the Constituency in Port Louis. At Plaine Verte, we have a multi-purpose complex and this is in line with business facilitation that the Government had in mind. The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development had in mind, and has made provisions for reduction in - how do we call it, Ministry hopping, from one Ministry to another, bringing all under one roof - I can see hon. Ameer Meea is listening very attentively - and that, Madam Speaker, is going, as we say, *Insha Allah*, going to be implemented in Plaine Verte.

Now, we turn to Constituency No. 2, a Multi-Sports Complex at Port Louis. Hon. Osman-Mahomed needs not await his questions for whenever he has put it to, as he has said earlier on. Visits have been made for that and provisions have been made for that. In fact, we have started working on the project since last year with the then Minister of Youth & Sports and it has carried on with the present Minister of Youth & Sports and we now find measures made, provided for in the Budget at Appendix III. And what I can say, again, for Plaine Verte is that we have provisions for Port Louis for the construction of a Community Health Centre. I am just about to end, hon. Deputy Chief Whip.

(Interruptions)

A number of provisions have been made and what is happening is that this Government is...

(Interruptions)

The Government means business. How does the Government means business? It has ensured that the funds - and let us just say one word about the funds. When formally we were going to have assistance from Dubai, from the Emirates, from Arab people, what did we hear? *Pé vann moris avek Arab!* Now, what do we hear? *Pé vann Agalega avek l'Inde!* Are we just into the selling business. We don't sell *cotomili* and we don't parcel out land like *cotomili* and we don't sell land! We develop our assets, not just by planting *cotomili*. This is quite a lucrative business. But we develop our assets and these are not just mere words. I say stop bashing on India. Stop saying things when someone has lent out a hand to help this country. We had nothing! What do you suggest we do? Sell *cotomili*! No! The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has gone and negotiated and has come with

something for the country, for the advancement of the country. We have a number of projects and this Government - and I am going to end on that - means business.

This Government has already started to set up committees to monitor each and every one. Let us not forget what the Budget says because people think we are blinkered vision. Earlier on we heard, for instance, in the Constituency of hon. Toussaint and hon. Mrs Malini Sewocksingh about the swimming pool that there is no provision in it. What of it? The money is there to be spent and the project is there and the money will be allocated because we have faith in our hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development. Once the work and the design will be completed, then the money, I am sure, will be allocated. And this Budget, Madam Speaker, as rightly said by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development : “I am therefore introducing a 3-year rolling plan to support our medium and long-term objectives.” So, this Budget is not tunnel vision like the Ring Road...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can I have some order, please?

Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus: This Budget is not tunnel vision like the Ring Road which ends with the mountain in Pailles. This Budget is not like the Terre Rouge/Verdun Road which cracks at the very drive of the very first car. This Budget is not like the Ring Road which cracked at Pailles. And the former Leader of the Opposition even went to visit that road. This Budget is not like the leaking bagatelle Dam. This Budget is not like the airport, ‘Nandini Mahal’, I think, it was called with the then Prime Minister going to check the very thickness of the carpet in the lounge and what colour it was! This is not the kind of budget. And what kind of airport do we have? So nicely designed that it also started leaking. Last time, I went to drop someone, it was leaking. A leaking piece of art as we have it!

(Interruptions)

And what is sad about that airport; we are talking about our economy; we are talking about culture, of tourism and exposing them to other projects. We have a VIP lounge which is found right at the end. And why is it found right at the end? So that all people will travel through all the duty-free shops of we know who was being protected at that time. This is not the budget of someone who spends his time out there ‘macarenaing’ and I don’t know what else he does.

This is the Budget of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who has a vision for his country and he wants his people to be better off, be it economically, be it socially. You step out from your house in the morning, everything is done so that your everyday comfort is there, provided for from going from home to the school, travelling to the school, to the hospital, community centres, sport centres; everything is being catered for.

Last but not least, everybody has talked about what they have done in their constituencies. You can't deny that! I have to say a couple of words of what has been implemented in my constituency because I am sure hon. Shakeel Mohamed will be very keen to know what we have done and how much we have spent...

(Interruptions)

The message can be passed on. We have, Madam Speaker, asphalted Rue Alma, Rue Feillafe, Rue Inkerman, Rue Langlois, Rue Poivre, Impasse Tulsidas, Rue Edward. *Fait! Ce sont les asphaltages qui ont été faits.* La Rue Cook, whenever - before I was there as a PPS - a bus will turn from the hospital going to my Constituency being Tranquebar or Vallée Pitot, anybody would have a dislocated back because the road is in such poor condition that we had come and made Impasse Cook a priority to asphalt it.

We are now in the process of going to Sauzier, Blocks 9 and 10 network. We are now in Impasse Kennedy. We are about to move into Impasse Kennedy to make it into a network with the retaining wall. In fact, what is happening in our Constituency No. 2, is that the whole of what we call - the word 'cité' was heard earlier on, the words 'crown land' was heard earlier on. It will no longer be known as what people qualify in an abject manner as *cité* and crown land. We are changing the configuration so that everywhere you have...

(Interruptions)

We are not a Government as - what did they say? *Cozé disik, disik!* We are not *cozé disik, disik*, we are action *béton* and *coaltar*! We are a Government in mortar and we are going to do it. This is the beginning and more is to come under the leadership of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know I have oversaid!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh!

(7.57 p.m.)

Ms M. Sewocksingh (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Thank you, Madam Speaker. On the very outset, allow me to say that it is a real challenge to understand the very purpose of this Budget. But before getting into my Budget Speech, Madam Speaker, allow me to quickly reply to some hon. Members who intervened before me.

Hon. Roopun spoke lengthily to criticise the Opposition. Unfortunately, we didn't hear a single word about hon. Roopun saying on his previous Ministry, that is, the Ministry of Social Integration. *Quel est son bilan?*

For once, Madam Speaker, I thought that I would agree with hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus in the beginning when she said that she is not going to be stooped, to go low, to go down like other hon. Members of the House have been, instead they would talk about their Ministries, about their Constituencies; they would bring political and hilarious discussions here. It was for a few minutes and I really appreciated when she said that. But, in the course of her speech, unfortunately, *elle a dérapé*. And you could hear *cotomili!* Lounge! Roches Noires! Anyway ! *Je ne vais pas dérapier, Madame la présidente, parce qu'on est là pour quelque chose de très sérieux*. People out there are looking for *résultat* lor *résultat*. This is what people are looking for. People are fed up with *scandale* and *scandale*. People don't want to hear about these things.

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member doesn't have to shout that much!

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, I am talking on the same tone as my...

(Interruptions)

Okay, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Ms Sewocksingh: Madam Speaker, in the morning, we heard hon...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Ms Sewocksingh: In the morning, we heard hon. Dr. Sorefan trying to criticise the PMSD, but he forgot that his former leader said sometime back: *‘li trop bête pu réponn li ou li tro bête pu reprend li.’* And he was right, and I would also add, Madam Speaker, not only to *reprend* but to *réponn* to all these. And this applies to other Members on the other side of the House too and who are useless to reply.

Madam Speaker, now I will come back to my mood. There are a few Members, one or two, I should mention here, that made very good speeches, as per my opinion, and spoke about their respective Ministries. As I could recall, hon. Bholah and hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo in the morning.

(Interruptions)

Yes, when something is good, we have to say it, Madam Speaker, but, at the end of day, this Budget is a non-event Budget, without any vision to take our country to the next level of development and economic growth. Most of the big projects which would obviously never happen come from different loans. Thus, this Government has burdened the future generation and, this, I would like just to mention because hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus said it, who is going to pay? And yes, Madam Speaker, she said it in her tone, let me tell you -

“Madame la présidente, nous avons hypothéqué l’avenir de nos enfants en leur faisant porter sur leurs épaules un fardeau si lourd, alors que ceux qui ont créé ce fardeau aujourd’hui ne seront sans doute pas là demain pour voir les conséquences ou pour assumer les conséquences. »

Madam Speaker, a national budget is an essential economic process. It is not a process which lays down the expenditure and income of the Government, but provides a platform for a medium and long-term vision for our country. Political credibility and confidence for the future!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Ms Sewocksingh: There are elements in this Budget that can be measured quantitatively. Some are important but not all and not everything. Issues such as vision, leadership, good governance, genuine democracy and the quality of life of people on a sustained basis are equally important, Madam Speaker.

Most of the projects in this Budget are non-urgent projects. We just heard hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus talking about tarring *l'impasse*.

Madam Speaker, let's be fair to the people out there as she just mentioned earlier. The people there, they want to see more. There is no roadmap, no strategy, no benchmarking and no business model. It is just a model *menti menti* with a lot of *effets d'annonce*. And, Madam Speaker, you could see and feel in this Budget that it has not been prepared by someone who delivers *résultat lor résultat*.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, we should agree that instead of the very long list...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

Ms Sewocksingh: ...of announced projects for which, in my opinion, no proper studies have been conducted there could have been better forthcoming proposals.

In fact, if the budget deficit seems to have been kept within more or less the same level as the previous year, that is, 3.2% in 2017/18 versus 3.5% in 2016-17, thus giving an impression of the economy, especially the management of the budget finances are gradually and slowly improving. I wish to underline, here, Madam Speaker, that the truth is that the budget deficit has been artificially controlled. It is so simple to understand.

In reality, the expenses have been below the announced figures due to the fact that many announced projects have not yet been put into practice, thus allowing the Government to save hundreds of millions of rupees. Automatically the budget deficit has not increased due to the non-spending. It is simple Mathematics. I am sure my friend will understand.

In fact, the truth is that lots of those project funds have not been utilised at all, Madam Speaker. They are making savings at the detriment of the development of the country whereby briefly I would like to mention a few, among others, non-distribution of tablets to children of Grades I and II, as promised.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ms Sewocksingh, please sit down! Allow me to restore the seriousness of the debates in this House. We are discussing the Budget and it is a very serious

issue. I have the impression that lots of people in this House are having a nice time. So, let me ask hon. Members to restore the seriousness of the debates.

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will just to take again the previous sentence. In fact, the truth is that lots of project funds have not been utilised at all, thus, making savings at the detriment of the development of the country. This is how we note, non-distribution of tablets of children of Grades I and II, as promised; installation of the gold refinery, creation of technopoles with 3-D printers at Rivière du Rempart, creation of a pharmaceutical village at Rose Belle, so on and so forth. Creative accounting has thus been used to present a budget deficit of 3.5% for 2016-17, which in reality is much higher than that. Is this a way to manage funds emanating from Mauritius taxpayers, Madam Speaker? I really wonder.

Madam Speaker, there are a few sectors that I would like to elaborate on today. I would like to elaborate on the Agro-Industry sector. Unfortunately, I did not hear a single measure brought forward to ensure food security. In a world of uncertainties and in the wake of major global conflicts, ensuring food security is of paramount importance, Madam Speaker. Nothing concrete about our farmers and breeders have been said! And I can recall that hon. Bhagwan, hon. Mrs Selvon, and hon. Ramful too, mentioned some of the points in their respective speeches.

Madam Speaker, every one of us cannot be a farmer or breeder. There are people there doing the work. We delegate the responsibility of feeding our families to a relatively small percentage of people of this country. We do not realise that when there are floods and droughts these people may lose everything that they have been cultivating for months, for years, Madam Speaker. This is the tragedy of these people. We do not realise to what extent these people have invested in their way to become planters, farmers, breeders and that overnight everything is gone.

Madam Speaker, just a few weeks back, the onion cultivators at Belle Mare have lost all their crops in a matter of days. I hope that the hon. Minister is aware of it. What are the measures brought forward to assist and help these planters? I hope that the hon. Minister was not in Agalega at that time. Having said that, Madam Speaker, this reminds me...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, you seem to ignore what I am saying!

(Interruptions)

I just said that we have to restore the seriousness of the debate. So, please, adhere to what I have said.

(Interruptions)

Ms Sewocksingh: Thank you, Madam. Having said that, this reminds me of the way the Foot and Mouth Disease was mishandled. Here, I remember the two PNQs that the former Leader of the Opposition, hon. Bérenger, brought in the House after which a Fact-Finding Committee on the outbreak of the disease was set up, and this report said everything.

(Interruptions)

Nu pas ti ministre lerla ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, to make my point clear, there is nothing personal with the Minister or the Ministry, but I would like to say that there have been some measures that have been mentioned in the Budget 2016-2017 which have been repeated in the Budget Speech 2017-2018. Many measures that have been forecasted would not be implemented, Madam. I can recall the ex-Dubreuil Tea Factory; it was there in the Budget last year. We can see it in this Budget again.

Anyway, my views pertaining to this Budget, Madam, are more of realistic approach without technical words or numbers. At some point of history we had some 35,000 planters and now we are left with less than 14,000 and some 20,000 acres abandoned land which gives an indication of the situation of the field.

Small planters seem to be always the last ones on the priority list, Madam. Unfortunately, no upgrading of reservoirs or dams have been undertaken for them. The last

one which was built was in 1994, if I may say so, was the Midlands Dam. Most of the irrigation infrastructure often lay idle because of expensive spare parts.

Coming to a measure in this Budget where it is said that VAT refund for replacement of old lorries will be done, Madam, I suggest that tractors too can be exempted as it is more dynamic and efficient in terms of usage. It has greater towing power on difficult terrains which make it ideal to access remote areas of sugarcane field or any other cultivation.

(Interruptions)

Another very important aspect which I would like to highlight in the agriculture sector is the amount of debts that the planters and the breeders face. For various reasons, Madam, they have taken a loan with some banks and have a lot of difficulties to repay them back. Any facility provided to them would enable them to modernise their equipment and invest in diversifying their crops and thus been fruitful for the whole country.

Before ending on the agro sector, Madam, I am very glad to hear that at last MSAW will no longer kill dogs. The stray dogs will be in shelters, which is a very good measure, Madam. The hon. Minister knows how much I have at heart animals as last year or last two years we were together to attend a case at a secondary school where there was a stray dog and the hon. Minister acted promptly. I said it, we have to give the devil its due.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, before ending on this topic and as we are talking about stray dogs, I would like to briefly comment on a measure that yesterday hon. Gayan mentioned about the Tourism Authority which would support MSAW in terms of manpower for catching stray dogs and that there would be a payment by MSAW of Rs25 per dog collected.

Madam Speaker, I just had a click in the mind when I heard hon. Gayan saying that, because when hon. Xavier-Luc Duval was Minister of Finance, he came with a scheme where a sum of Rs300 would be given to those who would bring stray dogs to the MSPCA. Madam Speaker, at that time, if I am not mistaken, it was in 2012, he was giving a sum of Rs300 and today just Rs25! Madam, that is why I am saying that this Budget has not been prepared by a person of vision.

Coming to the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, I listened to the hon. Minister carefully this morning, and I say it again, the hon. Minister

mentioned about her Ministry. She came with the proposals of her Ministry. She told what the Ministry has done and all that and it was very interesting. She has the willpower, Madam. Yes, listening to her indeed she has the willpower, but I cannot feel the same for Government because if you look at the Budget Speech, only one page is dedicated to Gender Equality. If I am not mistaken, four paragraphs! You may correct me, if I am wrong. Madam, I hope that domestic violence is one of the major priorities. I heard the Minister talking and I was quite relieved because domestic violence is a big issue in our country. We cannot leave any stone unturned because this can happen to anybody, Madam, anywhere and we do not want to see anybody suffering from domestic violence.

Having said that, I would fail in my duty if I do not mention the work that hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud did when she was Minister of Gender Equality and we should say hats off to her. She had done a very good job when she was Minister and that is why we see only four paragraphs in the Budget! Let us take it positively.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, hon. Mrs Perraud brought the amendments to the Domestic Violence Act last year where many sensitive and courageous amendments were made. Madam, we must cross the barriers of gender inequality as the situation of women is at risk of deterioration. According to a recent publication of a press article dated 24 May 2017, it clearly and sadly says that there is an increase in domestic violence cases. In comparison to July 2015 to June 2016, there were 1,771 new cases for females and 225 new cases for male victims of domestic violence. I am sure the actual hon. Minister has taken note of it.

Madam Speaker, there was a Child Protection and Care Bill which was about to be brought to this House at some point in time. But, unfortunately, we left the Government; it was the time when hon. Mrs Perraud was there. Unfortunately, it never came, both for the country, even for the women, unfortunately for the children. I say it again, unfortunately, we left the Government and it went into the drawers.

Now, we are quite surprised to see that mention is being made about the Children's Bill in the Budget. Like my good friend told me it is just du *réchauffé*, Madam Speaker. It is nothing new that the Government is bringing to the Children's Bill here. The Children's Bill has been fully viewed into a Child Protection and Care Bill. We thought that we would see

that Child Protection and Care Bill soon, which is very comprehensive and well defined, but it does not seem to be the priority of this Government.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take a few minutes of the House to talk about my Constituency. Of course, this is the time for us to say a little bit of our *bilan*.

(Interruptions)

Our Constituency!

Before starting talking about our Constituency, Madam Speaker, we all know that hon. Toussaint, hon. Duval, all those who have been with me during the campaign 2014 when we were in alliance with MSM Party, all those who know me when I was Councillor at the Municipality of Curepipe, all the good friends sitting on the other side of the House, because I saw their reaction last time - hon. Sawmynaden, unfortunately hon. Bodha is not here because he also is a Minister of good faith - they know, Madam Speaker, that I have a dream for Curepipe. Everybody knows it! On 05 November 2014, when we were campaigning together with hon. Toussaint, he knows very well, hon. Duval knows it too, I said it somewhere at the town hall; I have a dream for my Constituency, I have a dream for my town, it is a swimming pool, Madam Speaker. This dream, Madam Speaker, is not a dream that I had last night. This dream is a dream of my Constituency.

Madam Speaker, I am not only a Member of the National Assembly representing Constituency Curepipe/Midlands, I am also *une Curepipienne*. I am born and brought up in Curepipe. I know *les attentes de ces gens-là*. Many of these people cannot go to a private swimming pool. They cannot afford to go in another place because of lack of time. So, they have been asking for that. Madam Speaker, I have this project very much at heart. When I am talking about it, I become very emotional because when you do politics, Madam Speaker, you also voice out for others, you say what others want to know. That is why I am here, Madam Speaker. You do it with a lot of passion.

Madam Speaker, when I heard the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development mentioning about this project in his Budget Speech, anybody here in this House, here or outside, who knows me, who have been with me, hon. Toussaint knows very well my reaction - it was prompt, spontaneous at heart. I was so happy that even if I am not in the Government, there was a project that was being brought when I was campaigning in 2014, when I was Councillor. At that time, when I was Councillor, we were in alliance

with the Labour Party in 2012. So, nothing politics, Madam Speaker! But, Madam Speaker, I was shattered after that. For a second, I said: ‘Yes, at least, at last!’ because last year, we did not hear anything from the Budget. You can go and see in the Hansard. I mentioned it during my last speech on the Budget, Madam Speaker. I was sitting on the other side of the House, not like I am here today. Nicely and politely, I said it: “Nothing much was given to Curepipe.” But when I heard it, I was happy just for a second, then the Leader of the Opposition just turned and looked at us and said: “This will never happen!”

This will never happen, Madam Speaker! My dreams were shattered, indeed. My dreams were shattered because the truth is the truth! This swimming pool has become a swimming ‘fool’! Hon. Dr. Sorefan, in the morning said ...

(Interruptions)

Even hon. Aliphon! Madam Speaker, I am sure people out there must be listening and I am sure that there is one person in particular, who is *Sanspudeur* or *Sanspeur*, hiding behind a screen saying that the hon. Leader of the Opposition scolded her, told her off; they are making fun out of this, Madam Speaker. Understand that this will not happen. The hon. Leader of the Opposition said it clearly during his Budget Speech and in very simple mathematics. The project value is Rs75 m., only Re1 m. has been earmarked.

Madam, I just said in my speech, we are indebted. There are many projects which we mentioned on this side of the House, and which have not been materialised; a market fair in Curepipe, still again another dream. And now we are talking about the swimming pool?

Hon. Dr. Sorefan in the morning said: “Oh, she was being scolded by her Leader. She was being told off.” Madam Speaker, let me tell you, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is one of the finest gentlemen that we have.

(Interruptions)

He is very cultured, polite and is of a good faith! *La personnalité le plus populaire !* Who, Madam Speaker? Statistics does not lie. As per statistics, not Malini Sewocksingh who is telling that! Not only here, even outside, our Leader of the Opposition has decency, is polite with everybody; we all know about it. Everybody knows about it. Even if hon. Dr. Sorefan will ask for an appointment with the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he will get it. Anybody!

Madam Speaker, we, the PMSD is not the school where there is vulgarity, where people use vulgar words. I have never heard my Leader saying: 'I am going to urinate on someone.' Never! I have been in this Party for so many years - I am very proud to be there and very proud to have such a leader - and I have never heard such words.

Madam Speaker, before I end up on this swimming pool, these people who were making fun out of it are the last ones to give us lessons because we all know - I have been *témoin*, even the Press people know - who is the Party which puts a lot of pressure on Members of the National Assembly *et qui réprimande leurs députés, et qui des fois, force les députés à enlever des questions*. We all know.

(Interruptions)

I am not going to make a big scene of it. We all know. It has been on the news as we all know. There are some who are smiling in front of me. So, Madam Speaker, they are not going to teach us, the PMSD, a lesson. Anyway! Having said that, it is the same thing for the Town Hall, Madam Speaker. The same thing! We see the forecasts and it is very confusing. During Committee of Supply, I am going to get clarifications. Again, the Town Hall of Curepipe, is not a project of yesterday. When I was Councillor, and I was there, hon. Toussaint - hon. Bodha, every time accompanying us, the former Minister of Local Government knows how much we have been working. I say 'we' because at that time, there was the former Mayor, Nathalie Gopee, who was at the Municipality of Curepipe. We all know that this is not a project that is going to be announced now. This project is long overdue. Yesterday, hon. Adrien Duval mentioned it, this also – fool! Bamboozling, as the hon. Member said.

Madam Speaker, I believe that in the Constituency we have more priorities now. We have other things, like I have just mentioned, the market fair and pavements. Hon. Mrs Jadoo-Jaunbocus is talking about *l'impasse*, but I know when hon. Toussaint was PPS of the Constituency, he did it. But we still have to improve our drains.

(Interruptions)

Thank you!

We have to improve our roads and pavements. We have so many things to do. Madam Speaker, we are in the 21st century, Constituency No.17 is in the centre of the country and we

are among the biggest democracy in the world. If you see a children's playground in my Constituency, Madam Speaker, you will be shocked. Even hon. Henry just asked me: 'What is this, Malini, just see!

(Interruptions)

It is in Midlands!

(Interruptions)

Unfortunately, the actual hon. Minister of Local Government is not here. Is this the swimming pool? Look at this! This is the state of a children's playground in Constituency No. 17, Curepipe/Midlands. Madam Speaker, unfortunately, nothing has been done for the Constituency. Only des *effets d'annonce*! We are not going to say anything. It will never come and I am sure about it. But having worked with hon. Toussaint, I hope that, now, being the Minister of Youth and Sports, few measures will come along and our synthetic track in the Constituency will come soon, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I will say just a few words. I note with deep concern that there are some hon. Members of this Government who are embarking in a mission to light up the communal flame and invoke the devil that racial hatred is all about. The acts and doings are clear indications that this budget has not been well received out there, so by hook or by crook, if I may say so, Madam Speaker, this Government has already submerged in a tsunami of unpopularity, rejected to say the least by the masses, which is meddling its way in reviving and bringing on communal sentiments.

We, on this side of this House, Madam Speaker, and the population at large shall not fall prey to this communal agenda of this already discredited Government which shall go down in history as being the worst, most incompetent and inefficient Government. Madam Speaker, the writings are on the walls. In the morning, hon. Henry mentioned it. If the Government has some feeling for the people out there, if they have listened to the voice of the people, then, Madam Speaker, let us go for an election.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 8.38 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.42 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Boygah!

Mrs D. Boygah (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port & Rose Belle): M. le président, merci de me donner la parole. Pour commencer, je vois de l'autre côté, il n'y a aucun membre du PMSD, quelques membres du MMM qui sont présents - merci d'être là - mais ce n'est pas joli à voir! Nous sommes là, ne vous en faites pas, mais pour vous dire très franchement, après avoir écouté les paroles de l'honorable Ms Sewocksingh, je suis vraiment atterrée. Atterrée de voir ce que devient cette Assemblée! Je n'arrive pas à croire les propos mal intentionnés ou malicieux de l'honorable Ms Sewocksingh, ce n'était qu'un show. We can do the show, but leave it during election time. I am an expert, as well, doing all these shows, dramas, *mais on le fait 'lor camion savon'*. We cannot do it in the National Assembly because this is a serious matter. The business here is very serious because we are being observed, we are being examined, we are being assessed by the population, what we are doing, what is our body language, what is our behaviour in this National Assembly. A humble request to all Members of this Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that our behaviour should be up to the mark because, at the end of the day, we will have to reply when we go back to our constituency and people say '*hey, ti p laguere dan parlement labas ki p arriver dan parlement labas*'.

As you know, nowadays, the live broadcasting of the National Assembly has become more famous than the football. Everybody knows about it and it is very sad to note that hon. Ms Sewocksingh who has nourished her political career on the generosity of the *L'Alliance Lepep* and of our Prime Minister is today making allegations and trying to paint a very negative and tainted picture of this Government. Only one year back when she formed part of Government, she was using flowery language nicely and politely with charms and everything. And today the same Government is the worst government, what she just said.

Today, *c'est un gouvernement incompetent* and you know she was patting on our back, on our shoulders saying that Government is doing very good and today she is just using languages that do not make honour to this National Assembly. And today what we can see, the Opposition seems to be running a race of – can I say of 'mediocracy', and the trend nowadays is different, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Before the election and during the election campaign, it was on off, on off. Nowadays, it is just walk in walkout, walk in walkout.

That is the trend of the National Assembly and the Members have to be responsible for that and they have to reply to their constituents, what they are doing because they are being paid. This is public fund, they are being paid to sit in the debate, they are being paid to hear the debate, they are being paid to answer, to give *réplique* to the debate, but what we can see today, we do not have anybody on the other side, this is no good. We can do the same thing, but we are not going to stoop so down. We are not going to do that.

And to start, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, le budget concocté et présenté par l'honorable Pravin Kumar Jugnauth, Premier ministre et ministre des Finances et de Développement économique et de la *NDU* était très attendu. De par les réactions suscitées, on peut dire que le budget a été bien accueilli dans différents secteurs, les *stakeholders* et la population, dans son ensemble, exception faite de certains qui disent toujours '*narien pas bon, narien pas pou bon-là*'. J'ai pris le soin de bien décortiquer le budget, M. le président, je peux dire haut et fort que ce budget contient des mesures qui nous propulsent davantage vers notre vision, la vision du gouvernement *l'Alliance Lepep*, vers la vision 2030, et plus particulièrement de notre ministre Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Par contre, je suis déçue mais pas surprise par la prise de position des membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, d'ouvrir une parenthèse pour souhaiter bonne chance et bon courage à Sir Anerood Jugnauth qui, en ce moment, mène une croisade contre deux super puissants pour recouvrir notre souveraineté sur les Chagos. Une pensée spéciale aux Chagossiens, prions pour qu'ils puissent retrouver leur patrie très bientôt.

M. le président, j'ai la conviction que l'Opposition comprend mal leur rôle. En effet, elle oublie qu'ils sont au même titre que nous, des élus qui ont la mission de travailler dans l'intérêt de la population pour faire avancer le pays. L'intérêt national doit primer sur les considérations partisans mais malheureusement tel n'est pas le cas. Que voyons-nous? Une Opposition qui ne veut que la perte du gouvernement, démocratiquement élu pour une période de cinq ans. Quel est leur seul souci? A quand les élections générales? Quel *winning formula* pour mettre le grappin sur le pouvoir et faire l'alliance avec le diable rouge s'il le faut?

Et comme on voit toujours, on a, ici, à l'Assemblée un *part-time* leader de l'opposition, qui n'est pas présent maintenant. Mr Deputy Speaker, il n'y a qu'à voir l'ambiance malsaine lors du *Question Time*. Ceux-ci font tout pour *disrupt* les travaux du Parlement et ce qu'ils veulent c'est le pouvoir, le pouvoir, et le pouvoir. On a ri un bon coup,

M. le président quand le leader de l'opposition - je m'asseyais là et je le regardais bien, le visage et tout - a repris un article de la presse indienne pour venir prétendre que Shri Modi Ji a conseillé à notre Premier ministre de dissoudre le Parlement, alors que selon ce journaliste, le MSM n'obtiendra que quatre sièges. Le leader de l'opposition est venu porter cette grosse bêtise avec tout le sérieux du monde. Incroyable! Moi, j'ai bien ri. J'ai bien ri en regardant son visage et, comme on dit, son *body language* était tellement sérieux, c'était comme si les élections générales étaient juste après le budget. Ceci étant, nous constatons que notre Opposition est composée de plusieurs parties avec chacun à la tête un leader qui veut monter 'kadadak' des autres pour être Premier ministre. Quand un qualifie le budget de globalement décevant, l'autre réplique dans les minutes qui suivent pour clamer que le budget est décevant.

M. le président, nous parcourons, depuis l'installation du gouvernement 'Lepep', un chemin parsemé d'embûches, parfois par une institution qui est primordialement rouge mais plus souvent par ceux qui ont déserté. Parmi eux, certains qui ont trouvé le poêlon trop chaud et d'autres qui ont cru que l'herbe était plus verte de l'autre côté.

M. le président, j'ai écouté avec un sentiment de dégoût les reproches faits par ceux qui, hier, étaient encore du même banc que nous. Leurs départs ont inévitablement grippé la machinerie gouvernementale mais pendant un court laps de temps, empêchant la réalisation de certains projets tombant sous leur responsabilité. Aussi à peine dehors, ils ont mené et mènent toujours une campagne agressive contre le gouvernement dont ils ont fait partie. Ils croient marquer des points pour assurer leur survie politique mais, en effet, ils sont en train de scorer leurs *own goals*, M. le président. La population n'est pas dupe.

On imagine mal l'honorable Roshi Bhadain ou l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval se dissocier si grossièrement de Betamax et de la BAI. M. le président, il existe un virus bien plus dangereux que le H1N1 qui a envahi les membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre. Et ce virus est sauvagement répandu parmi la population par un secteur de la presse parlée et écrite. Je ne dis pas tout. Un secteur de la presse parlée et écrite! Ce virus à têtes multiples. On empoisonne les cerveaux, créant un sentiment de découragement que tout ce que fait ce gouvernement n'est pas bon. Tout est pourri ! Et que nous sommes arrivés à un point de non-retour. Pour preuve, chaque incident mineur impliquant un proche d'un membre du gouvernement est exagéré, hors proportion et devient un scandale national, une excuse de plus pour réclamer les élections générales. Mais, M. le président, notre présente équipe

demeure très soudée autour de notre Premier ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. Nous sommes déterminés à compléter notre présent mandat et un mandat à venir, et aussi à tenir toutes nos promesses électorales. Par exemple, la transmission en direct des travaux parlementaires est une promesse tenue, tout comme le *9-year schooling* du ministre de l'Éducation, entre autres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our country stands at a crossroad. The easier way was to trend an easy path, the beaten track and to make it business as usual. This has been ongoing for the past decade or so. This, unfortunately, leads to high unemployment, low growth, morose economy, high debt, less reserves in foreign currency as witnessed prior to December 2014. But this Government has chosen the difficult one because it is imperative to rise in the right direction to confront the challenges that lay ahead to meet our ambitions. The path chosen by this Government is indeed difficult, but the end result is bound to compensate the difficulties met.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a globally and nationally challenging context, the Budget 2017-2018 determines a vivid role and establishes itself as a stepping stone for us to live up to the challenges, ambitions and legitimate aspirations. I have lent a concerned ear to the reaction of the stakeholders in different fields and I feel satisfied that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has come up with a budget that addresses societal loopholes and propels our economy in a new era of growth. The process of re-engineering our economy is on and this is not a *budget menti menti* or a *budget médiocre*, as stated by hon. Adrien Duval yesterday and by hon. Thierry Henry this morning.

This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has sufficiently taken every sector of the economy as well as every individual concerned. Infrastructural development has given significant attention. The idea to change the landscape of our island with the five main objectives has been taken into consideration. Numerous hurdles lay ahead of our financial services, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, namely from the OECD and the EU. Measures are being introduced to consolidate this vital pillar of the economy along with the existing fiscal advantages so as Mauritius be no longer tagged as a tax haven.

We are witnessing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a revival of the tea industry, the livestock sector and the emergence of the Blue economy. The Metro Express, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a concrete example of an ambitious endeavour which will enhance our lifestyle, create jobs

and poles of economic development and commercial activities. The Metro Express will create a new environment and a buzz around the nine identified stations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to share with the House, a plea of one of my mandates living at New Grove. This gentleman works at Port Louis. If he succeeds in leaving his house at 6.45 a.m., he reaches his office in Port Louis at 8 a.m. that means 45 minutes before time. But if he happens to step in the bus after 7 a.m., he reaches at 9:25 a. m., that is, two and a half hours for a journey of 45 to 50 minutes. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just imagine in normal circumstances, he could have left at 8 a.m. and reaches at 8:45 a.m. So much time lost and energy spent. But with the advent of the Metro Express, he would have a stressless, safe and pleasant journey and if by bus or without traffic or by Metro, life of such people will be much better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to convey on behalf of the common people of Mauritius, my heartfelt thanks to Shri Narendra Modi Ji and to the Government of India for their appreciated help addressed to our Government. Thank you, Ji!

One of my appreciations of this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the attention given to social development. Measures like the negative taxation will have an impact on families. The 150,000 low-income earners, women and children will directly benefit from the revolution and never-heard of measure. We are well aware that women are among the majority of the employees drawing less than Rs10,000 monthly. This measure thrills me more because I believe that women are the pillar of the family and any additional revenue will favour a happy family life.

Womenfolk have very well appreciated that sanitary pads will henceforth cost a lot cheaper. The decrease of 18% on flour, which means bread, will have an impact on the family budget. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the important tax decrease on exportation of SMEs from 15% to 3%, will pave the way for more local investments leading to more creation of jobs. Additional momentum is given to the tourist industry with the introduction of flights from traditional partners and new tax measures for the pivotal strength of this Budget. The introduction of the solidarity levy of 5% for those drawing very high-income of Rs3.5 m. is most welcome. A colossal sum of Rs6.8 billion has been earmarked for the housing construction and other infrastructural development. This will lead to job creations and a sensitive decrease in the rate of unemployment.

Regarding Local Authorities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we, as PPSs, have a role to oversee all the infrastructural works and development in our own constituency where we are elected and we oversee one more constituency. The Local Authorities are very important for us because we work *en étroite collaboration avec les collectivités locales*, may it be the District Council or the Municipal Council.

Now, in this Budget, our Prime Minister has seen it deemed that we should increase over and above their Capital Budget, give a sum of Rs400 m. for projects at regional and door level over and above the normal Budget.

Government is committed to bring development in every nook and corner of this island. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to extend my appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his historical Budget. Well done, hon. leader!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as a PPS, I will fail if I do not mention about the projects in my Constituency. But one thing is clear, myself, being first time elected, a woman elected in Constituency No. 11, Rose Belle and Vieux Grand Port, the first time being a PPS. But, I am not the only woman in this Government who has been assigned the job of PPS. This is the first Government with three ladies PPSs ever in history and the three of us are working very hard and the results, as you can see, with a list of projects already being implemented.

Now, allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to embark all of you on a trip in my Constituency No. 11. We are all aware that our country was ruled over by different self-proclaimed kings before 2014. Like in a jungle, every territory had a king of its own whose name was associated with the cordial points: *'sa pou mwa sa, sa pou li sa*. We had our *roi de l'est, roi du nord, roi lion* and No. 11 had a *roi du sud*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, laissez-moi vous dire que la circonscription No. 11 a été délaissée complètement et que celui qui s'est déclaré roi du sud n'a laissé aucun héritage dont les habitants peuvent être fiers, sauf une marge de marché de Rose Belle. J'avais oublié quelque chose, la construction d'un hôpital pour les animaux à Rose Belle, portant le nom de Sir Satcam Boolell. Aussi, peut-être, quelques couches de bitume sur quelques kilomètres de route, mais en 27 ans de présence continue, c'est très, très peu. Mais en deux ans, comme *PPS*, avec la collaboration de mes deux collègues, l'honorable Seeruttun et l'honorable Premdut Koonjoo et la bénédiction du Leader du MSM, j'ai initié un chapelet de projets.

You will not imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the poor state in which Constituency No. 11 was two years back and the change brought in since and, in such a short lapse of time is, indeed, a great achievement. I would like to mention a few, one among the very long list. But, before I mention the list of projects implemented in Constituency No. 11, which I consider as a great achievement and which is considered by my constituents, as a great achievement of the Government *Lepep. Lepep, non!* Now, it is only MSM and ML.

Something that clicks my mind is, last year, when I was giving my Budget Speech, the next day after, one newspaper printed a long article on what I said. It was not written by any Editor. It was written by one feminist association, who dared write and write, she said this and that and tagged myself as a flower pot. A nice flower pot was designed and I was given the name of a flower plot. That flower pot has a *bilan*. That flower pot, she works very hard. *Zoli fam rest zoli fam!* But we do not come and sit here. We can be PPSs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but there is a drawback, we are bound not to ask any question. Unfortunately, as a PPS, many of our constituents do not know that as a Private Parliamentary Secretary, we cannot ask questions in the National Assembly. We can participate only in debates. When we sit nicely and politely well dressed, it does not mean that we are flower pots. This flower pot works very hard. As regards the *bilan*, if need be, I will table it. The *bilan* is a *bilan of timidounes*. It is a *bilan* for poor people in Constituency No. 11 and Constituency No. 13, who have been suffering for years, for decades, for more than 27 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Starting with my achievements of 2016-2017, I would like to mention to the House that we work under the National Development Unit. We are completing by the end of this month - I have the details, but I don't want to mention them - the number of drain projects being implemented in Constituency No. 11 is 54.

If we go on, regarding new roads by the end of this financial year, June 2017, 32 roads will be completed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I go on more, as regards resurfacing work, 31 roads, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If I go on more, the number of amenities is around 4.

In one financial year, 2016-2017 we have a *bilan*. The *bilan* is not only roads, drains, and resurfacing, but also amenities like Janazah platforms. I have a *bilan* of three Janazah platforms being completed by end of June. Six lighting of football grounds - never heard in Constituency No. 11 - will be completed by end of this year; not this financial year, but this

year. There are also the lighting of football grounds at Cluny, La Rosa, New Grove, Old Grand Port, Quatre Soeurs and St Hubert.

This is not all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! The drain project, in collaboration with the UNDP, the NDU and the District Council also, and everybody claims that nothing is being done in Constituency No. 11. Constituency No. 11 has inherited 200 parking at the Nehru Hospital. If you go around the island, on the flat surface, you won't encounter about 200 parking. This is the biggest parking in our hospitals.

The construction of an incinerator project which was frozen and forgotten, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is now operational. Delocalising of inhabitants of landslide at Quatre Soeurs where the Cabinet has already taken a decision and these people will be delocalised.

Construction of a Tsunami Centre by the Ministry of Environment is on an ongoing stage. More to come is about RDA. Concerning RDA, we have completed around 25 projects in Constituency No. 11. With these 25 projects, we have for the CWA, where now I have to thank the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, for giving a very special effort to the south east region.

Regarding the coastal region in our Constituency No. 11, these people if I relate the story, it will be too long. But one thing I can tell you is when I was just elected, two o'clock in the morning my phone buzzed. At that time, you are just shocked; maybe you are hearing a very bad news and what is happening. At two o'clock in the morning, I just dared take my phone and reply: "*Oui, qui c'est?*" That person asked me: "*Madame Boygah, kott ou été là ? « Kott mo pou été deux heures di matin papa !*" This was the answer I could give. But, at that particular time, just imagine, people living on the coastal area, where they have to go to work at three or four o'clock in the morning, they don't have water. They don't have water, because those CWA pipes which date for years and years back, 50 years back, have a *perdition* of more than 75% of the water.

These same people today at Marie Jeanne, Quatre Soeurs, have inherited from the hon. Deputy Prime Minister and the CWA about 1.2 km of new piping. I cannot say 24/7, but pressure of water that can satisfy the inhabitants of Quatre Soeurs. The water piping works have been replaced, Phase I about 3 km from Rivière des Créoles roundabout to Ferney, Cité Longtill, Petit Camp and Camp Carol are already done. Major CWA works and full width tarring has been completed at Saint Hubert and the upcoming projects.

Everybody cries in the population stating that this Government is just fooling us, telling us that we will get water 24/7, but I can reassure them by taking the example of my constituency. In my constituency there are around six projects in the current Budget where water supply will ease the life of the inhabitants of No. 11. For example, piping from Riche en Eau to Grand Bel Air and Ville Noire around 12 kms, renewal of pipes in Plaine Magnien in Constituency No. 12. We have renewal of service main from Rose Belle to Mont Fertile with 7.2 kms. Construction of service reservoir with a storage of 2,000 *millimètres cubes* at Balisson, upgrading of Rivière du Poste water treatment plant that will increase the water treatment capacity from 15,000 to 25,000, improvement of water supply in the regions of Quatre Soeurs, Grande Rivière Sud Est, Grand Sable, Petit Sable, about 13 kms. All these come under the Ministry of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo.

I have to thank the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo, for the fixing and realignment of new CEB poles at the NHDC of Nouvelle France. There are around 71 new poles and today the people of NHDC at Nouvelle France are very much grateful to the hon. Member of this National Assembly. If I go on like this, it will be a never ending list because it is so long and so fruitful.

Concerning the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, about six projects are already implemented in the constituency. Now, I will come to a very important part which is the RDA. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the RDA has a predominant role in Constituency No. 11 and it is doing a very good work, *par exemple* the formalities for a culvert at Anse Jonchée and reprofiling of the road have already been started and land acquisition is being done. At Bambous Virieux, where often it is overflowed during heavy rain now a reconstruction of culvert of high volume capacity is starting. Footpath and drain project along Savanne Road near Aubeeluck restaurant is starting in January 2018. Two main roundabouts as we say, Southern East Highway, for these two roundabouts like Nouvelle France and Ferney, the drainage system is being upgraded.

If I go on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it will be very long, but one thing I have to mention is that the inhabitants of Constituency No. 11 are very happy because after years and years they are seeing new improvement and things happening in the constituency; retaining walls being built to rehabilitate the area from Riche en Eau to Deux Bras is already going on.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the pleasure to announce that part of the sum of Rs3.3 billion from the Indian funding will be used to finance an ambitious mega project of

Deux Frères Waterfront. This is a dream come true. This is the baby of the Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth. When hon. Pravind Jugnauth was *un député de la circonscription* it was his project, his vision, to have a waterfront at Deux Frères and the inhabitants, as you know very well, of Deux Frères are the forgotten children of the Republic. It is as if they do not exist on the geographical map of Mauritius. But the whole of the south east coast will burst with these commercial activities.

The waterfront will include a wharf for jetties, shops for tourists, *des tables d'hôtes* and restaurants, amongst others. Even now, during normal season around 1,200 à 1,500 tourists make the trip from GRSE to Cascade daily. This is for normal season and during peak season, it is around 2,000 tourists. This is big because I had a chat with the different authorities like the Beach Authority and the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development. This beach is very well *fréquentée*. Just imagine with the advent of the waterfront, these tourists will have another pole of attraction.

The people of this region will have lots of opportunities in different fields which will uplift their standard of living. Economic activities will be given a major boost. These regions will no longer be tagged as the forgotten area of the south east and an area with lot of poverty. Jobs will abound for these village people.

Last, but not the least, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritius Ports Authority has finalised a Master Plan whereby provision for a quay for leisure craft and fishing boats at Vieux Grand Port has been included.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank profoundly the inhabitants of Constituency No. 11 who always believe in the MSM led Government. Again, my thoughts and thanks go to the hon. Prime Minister who has a soft corner for Constituency No. 11. This region with the setting up of this major project will bring a new life and will witness a horde of economic activities bounding tourism.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I wish to say that Mauritius has, as an overwhelming majority, confidently confided its confidence in this Government. We won't fail them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but to those who dream daily of eminent *élections générales*, I have these words: '*Arête rêver mam!*'

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Koonjoo!

(10.18 p.m.)

The Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping (Mr P. Koonjoo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Naturally, I will start by congratulating the hon. Prime Minister for the Budget he has presented. It is his third Budget in the Parliament, we all know, and it is a matter of pride to see that when he was the Minister of Finance, the last Budget presented in this House was really a landmark in the economic history of Mauritius.

This Budget in the context of the international climate concerning the economic, social and also political image, we know that the whole world is going through difficult times, be it small or developed countries. What is happening all over the world today? It is sad to say, but it is a fact that in any part of the world imbalances, crimes, bomb blasts and also floods, cyclones, apart from other things which are killing people. I must congratulate the hon. Prime Minister that he has fought a long way the problems about cancer patients in Mauritius. I remember in 2011, I went to see the ex-Prime Minister before leaving as *Ambassadeur* ...

(Interruptions)

I was appointed Ambassador in Malaysia and I remembered having met the Prime Minister. The shocking thing is that I know Dr. Arvind Boolell since a long time. I went to see him and get his blessing before going because he was the Minister of Foreign affairs. At the same time, I went to see the Prime Minister before I left because I want to have, not his blessing, but at least his views about the programme as a new Ambassador in Malaysia. To my surprise, the Minister, the Permanent Secretary, the top officials, all of them refused to have a word, to phone the Prime Minister, to talk to him and fix an appointment for me. I was just surprised.

Ultimately, one of the officers told me: “You are a political appointee, so you take appointment with the Prime Minister”. I phoned the secretary and he gave me an appointment. I went there, I thought that it would take me 5 minutes, at least 10 minutes, the most. But he sat down with his cigar and started talking to me. He talked to me for more than 30 minutes, *palabres*, nothing serious about the work, nothing serious about the Embassy or the policy that we have to follow there. I just asked myself, how come that a Minister, a

Permanent Secretary, advisers of the Prime Minister, nobody wants to talk to him or to have a phone call. They are all afraid because they will have *zot makachia*. I am sure that if my good friends from that side do not know, maybe they will know or they can ask their Leader - they have all been in this House - what kind of a polite man he is.

In this very House, my friend is sitting there. He was the Prime Minister and he was sitting there or here. He was the Prime Minister and he has no respect for the MLAs, Ministers but for the ladies; everybody knows now the behaviour of the ex-Prime Minister. What kind of man he is. The ex-Prime Minister! It is sad to say it, but it is the truth. When we speak the truth, we should not be afraid of anything, anybody. I believe in that. What I want to say is that our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, has got the guts to present a Budget in very dreadful circumstances in the whole world.

We know what has happened a couple of days back in UK, some weeks back again in the same country, what is happening in Syria and in so many other countries, bloodshed, killing, bomb blast. It is incredible! In what kind of a world are we living? It is difficult to assess. But I will assess the Prime Minister. As I said, I am happy that he has taken measures concerning people who are suffering from cancer. Never seen! When he presented the first Budget, I went to congratulate him before leaving and I told him: "Now, you are a grown and matured man, you can put your feet in the shoes of your father." This is what I told him. That is his right to become a Prime Minister. I never knew that he will become Prime Minister so soon. But the Budget he presented, the way he showed his ability, what he has got in his mind, especially when he said it openly: "I want to eradicate extreme poverty in this country." This was a huge step.

We all know that all around the world, everywhere, in all countries, we have poor people. They are there and it is difficult to eradicate extreme poverty. But he took measures and he meant it. I was happy that he was determined to eradicate extreme poverty, because in Mauritius there are many places where people are living in very, very bad conditions. I know because I come from a poor family. It is not a sin, I do not choose my family, but I know and I have lived it.

It was a very bold step that our Prime Minister has taken to eradicate poverty. We know that in one year – they are official figures - about 8,000 people have been registered as extreme cases. But we know also the mentality of the people in Mauritius. Unfortunately, everybody wants to have everything free - this is a very bad mentality, free education, free

health care, free housing. We heard about our friend talking about how he wants to protect the people at the lower rung of the ladder, he wants to give a house to everybody. But it is difficult, you cannot please everybody. And the problem is that, in Mauritius, it is an abuse of democracy. Everybody wants to have everything free. What is happening in education? Education is free, now people want to have certificate also free. Give them everything free! It is a bad policy because if we give somebody something free, he does not know how he has been able to get that thing. He has not shed any sweat, he has not worked for it; but he is getting it free and he will not know the value of the good.

That is why when we give about Rs9,000 to people who are extremely poor, we wanted at the same time that they, at least, make an effort and add some more money with that Rs9,000. If you put Rs2,000 or Rs3,000, you work and then, from Rs9,000 you can have Rs13,000 or Rs15,000. That will make you feel comfortable economically. This is a point that is very, very good and I am sure that in the coming years, we have not abandoned the idea of eradicating completely extreme poverty. At the end of the day, the population realises that they have to contribute and they have to work. I think we are forgetting this work culture day by day. We have to inculcate in our children, in our youths that they have to work because there is no other prayer better than working. In all religions, if somebody wants to have a dignity, he has to earn his living. When you earn your living, you get it after shedding your sweat, and then you will know the value of that thing. I am sure that in the coming years - we have another two budgets to come - we will have to give results concerning the people living in extreme poverty. In this budget, I want to say that I was talking about the ex-Prime Minister.

Do you know what exactly? He was talking about his cousin's brother. He was talking about somebody who has come from UK – I know him – and he was asking news about my family. He was complaining that his cousin's brother had lost a child because he was suffering from cancer. I told him that even I have suffered. I have got two sisters and even two sister-in-laws - four of them - and coincidentally, all four women passed away with cancer in the past. I told him: 'Please, do something for the people who are suffering from cancer.' Those who suffer from cancer - my good friend over there is a doctor, he knows - it is very, very painful, believe me, especially when you are at the last stage. It is terrible! In was in 2011. Today, we are in 2017. Nothing was done.

Our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, knew the pain of the poor people and, now, he has shown that he has got so much sympathy for the people who are suffering from cancer. I must thank him at the bottom of my heart that - so many people in Mauritius are suffering from this disease and this disease is very bad and very painful - he has made provisions in the budget for two linear machines for taking care of cancer patients. *Bravo*, Prime Minister! We are all with you.

Apart from this, I also want to talk about another bold step taken by the Prime Minister in the Budget - he said it with pride and conviction – which is about the fight against drugs. I remember in the past when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was Prime Minister - I was together with him - he had the determination to go on war with the drug dealers. It is a curse to Mauritius. Today, the drug dealers have multiplied. You can't imagine. Now, we come to know how many kilos, if not, tonnes of drugs are circulated in Mauritius, how many people have suffered from drugs. That was a time when Sir Anerood Jugnauth was the Prime Minister and I remember very well, one day, I said: 'Big brother, let me have a touch at your bullet proof jacket that you are wearing.' It was all metal and heavy. I wonder how he was carrying it when he was going out. Difficult! But he was a man of determination.

(Interruptions)

I do not know how many kilos, but it was quite heavy. I could feel it with my hands.

He was a man who was determined to go and fight against the drug dealers. Unfortunately, when he left, the ex-Prime Minister took over, the country went to darkness. He had the guts to say that every time the MSM is in power, the drugs come out. They forget that it was Sir Anerood Jugnauth who put his life in danger to fight against drug dealers.

(Interruptions)

Yes!

Today, our Prime Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, has decided to fight against those drug dealers. I wish him all the best. Let me tell him that the whole Mauritian people, especially the mothers who lost their sons and daughters - even daughters were victims of drugs. You can't imagine, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, sometimes back in colleges and in primary schools, children were falling prey to the drugs. How do we call it?

(Interruptions)

Synthetic drugs! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know it because when I was working as a teacher in Curepipe, I had a student in Form VI who was a good footballer. One morning, I learned that he has passed away because he has fallen into drug use. Six months were too much for him; he passed away. I went to the funeral and met his father who was in tears. I don't know about other communities, but I know about Hindu community; when a son is born in your house, the father has a pride because he knew that he has got somebody who will take him to the cemetery or to the cremation ground. It is very difficult for an old father to carry the dead body of his son on his shoulder. It is very, very painful.

(Interruptions)

It is a shame that my friends on the other side - I don't know what they are talking.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I will come to the Budget. Don't worry! I am just talking about your ex-Prime Minister. You have fallen in love with him! Your leader also has fallen in love with him!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Koonjoo: I am talking about drugs. It is in the budget.

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Koonjoo: I am talking about the fight that the hon. Prime Minister is raising against the dealers. I don't know if you have got friends or somebody very near to you among the drug dealers. I don't know! It is painful for you.

(Interruptions)

I know it is painful. I am just sorry for these people. Others have left. I don't know. It is a pity. It is more than 40 years that I am in politics. More than 40 Years! I have not seen such people sitting as hon. Members in this Assembly. I can't believe it. I just pity them. There is one guy, young lawyer - he is a lawyer - the way he is behaving in front of his friends, ladies, you can't imagine. There is no respect and they are hon. Members. I am just sorry to say it, but it is a fact.

(Interruptions)

I know his father's father. I know Sir Gaëtan Duval in 1976, 1982. We won elections, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and Paul Berenger together. I was a Minister and I got a phone call from Sir Gaëtan Duval. I had never talked to him in politics or never met him. He phoned me. But he spoke well!

(Interruptions)

I don't know *coco*!

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

Mr Koonjoo: He was a cultured man. He might have other defects, but his son, his grandson; it is a pity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

It is important. I have seen the first time in Mauritius, there is a big hue and cry, how we have a helping hand, financial help from India. Nobody expected that Mr Modi will become the Prime Minister. There was a big hue and cry in India, that somebody whose father is “*chaay wala*”, selling tea could not become a Prime Minister.

Today, he has proved the world what Mr Narendra Modi is - hats off - and the result he is giving in this country is exemplary. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today we have an arrangement. We have a line of credit with India. Our Prime Minister said it so many times, in so many ways, that other preceding Government in Mauritius never took care to enjoy some loan from that Line of Credit.

Luckily, our Prime Minister - it is something to be proud of when you see Pravind Jugnauth, as a young brother, shaking hand with Mr Modi as a big brother, elder brother. Among brothers, there is no problem. We have a longstanding relationship with India. When I was small in school before we got Independence in Mauritius - I do not know if you know or not - we were celebrating the Independence Day of India in Mauritius in the countryside and we were singing the *Jana Gana Mana*, the National Anthem.

(Interruptions)

Yes, luckily you know.

In those days, I was a child. In the countryside, we were celebrating, we were feeling proud. Later on, in 1967-1968 was the election and for the first time I voted - we were celebrating and it was difficult. It is good that people know it. I was in Plaine des Papayes, we had to come by lorry to Champ de Mars when the flag was being hosted for the first time in Mauritius. It was a matter of pride and we know what happened in Mauritius. Before that, what the hell we had in Mauritius; I think that my friends, on the other side, will know - if they don't know, they asked their parents what really happened in Mauritius before Independence. How there was a campaign against Hindu community in Mauritius: *"Enveloper nou pas ouler!"*

(Interruptions)

"Langouti nou pas ouler!" Same people were writing in those days, the Press people. Today, they are doing the same dirty job. Same dirty job! The Press thinks that they are the fourth power, they can do anything, but we cannot do everything. When I read some papers, the way the people write, youngsters, young boys, young girls, I just ask myself: how have these people been trained?

If you want to meet real people, newspaper people, Press people, you go to UK, you go to India. There you will learn what means a Pressman. They can do anything to find the truth. Here, it is a pity how the Press has gone down in Mauritius! It is a pity! So, the surprise for me is: how come they look down upon India! That means India bashing Mauritius for the last, as if we have done a crime. It is normal if we get some help from Arabian countries, if we get help from the French. No problem! Any country we will have, we cannot stand alone. We have to develop our country, we can take loan. This is not a sin.

Since 1968, when Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam was Prime Minister, and we all know that today, our Mentor is in US fighting for the complete Independence of Mauritius because there have been *'tricmardye'*. The MMM people know about it, how the first Prime Minister of Mauritius made the deal with the English people to get Independence. Today, our Mentor, ex-Prime Minister is fighting alone. We wish him all the best. I want to tell him that all Mauritians are with him there in New York.

(Interruptions)

Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, as a Mauritian, as I said, as a Hindu also, and when I say Hindu, I am not fanatic. I know I can speak Urdu more than anybody in this room here. I

understand Urdu, I love the Urdu poetry, it is a beautiful language. I know my Hindi, I know my Bhojpuri, I know English and French, I know some Tamil also.

(Interruptions)

We are a multi-religious country. When you are outside Mauritius then you know the value of Mauritius. You want to come back again to Mauritius quickly because there is no other place better than Mauritius. So many tourists come; so many foreigners come from other countries. It is a pride for us to be a Mauritian citizen. Foreigners are just surprised, how come that with so many different religions, different cultures, you live in a peaceful way, there is no problem of security. There is a first-class harmony, be it among the people. I do not know whether you remember, there was a time when taxi drivers were taking tourists to their home, giving them *farata*; a sort of friendship developed between the tourists and the taxi drivers. This is Mauritius and if we put hatred in the mind of our young children, our youngsters, we are putting poison in their mind. Always speak the truth, put good things in their ears. Tell them that they are going to love - my name also is Prem, love. If you put hatred in the ears of youngsters, children, students, they will grow up with hatred.

Can you imagine a girl of 16 years old enveloping herself with lots of explosives - it is not dynamites, it is more dangerous than that - and blowing herself out! What did she get? As a young girl how much hatred she must have had in her heart that she blew herself with dynamite and killed herself! We do not want to live in a country like this. We do not want to live in a world like where there is hatred. Today, the same thing happens. So many years have gone, brothers are fighting with brothers. It is difficult. We want to make Mauritius a real paradise. When we are gone they can live in peace. They can sleep in peace in their home. This is the kind of country we want to bring! You can't build a nation if you are putting hatred in their ears.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my friends are impatient to know about my Ministry. Well, here you are! I will go straight, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about the Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. I want to start with the projects which were mentioned in the last Budget. I want to lay stress that, in spite of all adverse extreme external headwinds, our economy has shown resilience in 2016. And 2017 is expected to keep the trend in 2017 and 2018 by maintaining an increasing growth rate of 3.9%, as rightly mentioned by the hon. Prime Minister and all my colleagues here. 3.9% growth rate in 2016

and 2017, and 4.1% in 2017 and 2018. This turnaround has definitely put the unemployment rate in Mauritius on a downward path reaching 7.3%. These figures which I am giving, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are all figures drawn from the Statistical Office of Mauritius. This encouraging performance is explained mainly by the measures taken by this Government since it took office in December 2014 to improve productivity and private investment trend. The real growth rate of private investment which was negative since 2012 has grown up with the positive growth of 5.7% in 2016.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the population at large has accepted wholeheartedly the Budget of our Prime Minister. In view of worsening conditions in our main markets, the export-oriented enterprise will benefit from lowering of corporate tax. This is one measure taken in the Budget and it is good to note that this will encourage people.

Turning to my Ministry, I will just highlight some of the measures which were in the Budget the last financial year and how many of them we have already accomplished.

The first is regarding the aquaculture. Out of 20 sites earmarked, 18 have been allocated to private promoters for development and we have signed the first deed of concession for farming at sea. We all know that *la Ferme Marine de Mahebourg*, a Mauritian enterprise has, after so many years, been negotiating with the ex-Prime Minister. When Sir Anerood Jugnauth took up the reign after 2014 elections, a couple of years were enough for this Mauritian company to obtain that concession. It was the first time in Mauritius that any promoter gets a concession in the sea. Today, the *Ferme Marine de Mahebourg* is working. It is important to note that they are giving results. We believe that in the coming years more of such firms will come and invest, create employment and also bring foreign exchange to Mauritius.

The second point is about the floating cages. This also was in the Budget last year. 10 floating cages earmarked in the last Budget have already been set up and allocated to fishermen cooperative societies, with the permission of my friend, my colleague. Two at each of the sites –

- Grand Gaube: 2;
- Poudre d'Or: 2;
- Grand Rivière Sud Est: 2, and
- 4 in the Bambous Virieux region.

This is allowing fishermen to embark in aquaculture and improve their living standards. Each floating cage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is expected to produce around 8 to 10 *tonnes* of fish each year.

(Interruptions)

Menti, menti! Those who speak false every time in their life, they always believe that everybody is speaking false!

Thirdly, with regard to the allocation of grant of 50% up to a cap of Rs4 m. to cooperative societies – again, my good friend knows it – and for which a sum of Rs12 m. was budgeted; three fishermen cooperatives have already been selected for the acquisition of semi-industrial fishing vessels. 50% is given to them as a grant, as a gift. They will take the remaining 50% from the bank concerned. I must tell you that the procedures for the disbursement are currently under way at the MauBank and this measure will enable fishermen to venture on fishing banks.

About the fishing banks, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just want to remind the House that our fishing banks are full of fish. The capacity of the banks is about 5,000 tonnes per year. Unfortunately, for the last years, less than 2,000 tonnes fishermen have been fishing in the fishing banks. So, this is a very important measure that the hon. Prime Minister has put forward where fishermen will have the opportunity to buy a fishing vessel at about Rs8 m. and go on fishing in the banks where there is plenty of fish. But, I will just appeal to the fishermen that, if you are getting a grant of Rs4 m. as a gift, the other Rs4 m. you are taking as a loan. Please, see to it that you work well. You have to reimburse the loan and also make ahead because lots of fishes are there in the fishing banks. I am not talking about the Exclusive Economic Zone. I am talking about the fishing banks; I remind others where there is plenty of fish. We can't let our fish become old, we have to fish.

Regarding the *canot*, it is a boat, a scheme from the European Union and they have given a grant to Mauritius. From this grant - we call it Canot Scheme - 18 fishermen from different regions of the island have already benefited from this scheme. 11 applications are already being recommended to MauBank for funding.

A Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Mauritius and the European Union were successfully concluded in April 2017, for a period of four years. Besides providing financial contributions to fishing access rights, Fisheries Support

Programme, the Fisheries Partnership Agreement for the first time includes additional financial support for the development of the Ocean Economy. I wish to highlight that the total financial package that will be disbursed by the European Union will be higher than those paid under previous protocol. It is a matter of pride. I must also add that, together with us, the private sector also is benefiting from our negotiation.

A Reciprocal Fishing Agreement between the Republic of Mauritius and the Republic of Seychelles has been signed last February for fishing opportunities in our respective EEZ, Seychelles EEZ and Mauritian EEZ.

With a view to develop a national fleet - we don't have a national fishing fleet. It is a pity that 50 years after the Independence of Mauritius, we have not been able to secure a fishing vessel for fishing purposes. I have in mind to find out means to have a fishing fleet of Mauritius. I am happy to inform the House that there is a company from South Africa called Afritex which has incorporated a company in Mauritius and they are benefiting from the AGOA Agreement that we have got in Mauritius, they are putting Mauritian flag, they are fishing in our water and they are exporting chilled fish to the American market. This company, which has already five vessels in Mauritius, intends to increase the fleet to 14 vessels by the end of this year. This is an unprecedented development because we are going to fish tuna fishing, long line fishing in Mauritius. I must also point out that this company has been incorporated in Mauritius and the company has in the pipeline to train around 400 Mauritian fishermen in long line fish over a period of five years.

As you may recall, in the last Budget, we pledged to train 1,200 persons at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy and I am pleased to announce that more than 1,300 candidates have already been trained by the Mauritian Maritime Academy during the last financial year. We are aiming to increase this number out of training up to 2,000 per year. There is demand on the cruise ships. I think we can provide these youngsters and, among the youngsters, there are also young girls who are interested and they are sailing on the cruise ship. You have good salaries there, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Moreover, Mauritius Maritime Training Academy (MMTA) has already introduced three new courses at the academy –

- (i) Pre-sea training - before you embarked on sea, some training should be done by the guys who are coasting the ships/vessels. You have pre-sea training for

general purpose ratings. It is a course that you have to do before going on board for fishing vessels;

- (ii) Fishing vessels general purpose rating fishing course is another training;
- (iii) Training of skippers' boats of less of 24 meters.

At the same time, apart from cruise sector, my Ministry, with the help of Human Resource Development Council, together with other important - MITD, for example, have got about 500. There was a road show; there was an open door at Ebene some months back. There were 6,000 youngsters attending the training and out of them, there is a vacancy for 400 youngsters to join the cruise. They are being trained to join the cruise very soon.

A Memorandum of Understanding with the National Institute of Oceanography of Goa for Oceanography Research has been signed during the visit of the hon. Prime Minister in India. This will assist and enhance the Research Capacity in the field of Oceanography. I must tell the House - I am sure that you know it - that the day we presented the Budget in the Parliament, with the help of the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, the inauguration of the Mauritius Oceanography Institute (MOI) took place in the morning. It is a beautiful place. Unfortunately, the country has had to wait for years and years and luckily we joined to take the Government and in two years' time, we opened the Oceanography Institute at Albion. This is very important for the development of fishing sector, aquaculture, research and development.

I must not forget the last, it is the closure of the octopus fishing season for two months from 15 August 2016 to 15 October 2016, for the first time in Mauritius. I am sure that we are proud to say that the people from Rodrigues are ahead of us. They have started these things years back. We just started last year and the result is outstanding. The closure has yielded conclusive results in terms of quality and quantity of octopus. I must say that...

(Interruptions)

I will finish very quickly.

Yes, the harvest for the octopus was about 2 *tonnes* in 14 days and the biggest octopus weighing about 9 kg. More important, it was observed that before the closure of octopus fishing season, it was an average of half kilo, that is, one pound. After the closure, their weight almost trebled to reach 1.5 kg for one octopus. This is what happens if you make some sacrifice in life. For two months, there was no catch of octopus and we got incredible result. It was a first one and it won't be the last one.

It is good for the House to learn that even the international TV channel, like the National Geography had broadcasted this initiative undertaken by my Ministry all over the world.

(Interruptions)

It is a matter of pride!

(Interruptions)

There is another measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I will mention it because it is important. The marine ranching is ongoing in order to restock our lagoon. We should accept that our lagoon is being depleted year by year of fish. What we are doing at the Albion Fisheries Centre is that we are rearing the fingerlings, small fish, in the lagoon and putting them in the lagoon and at the same time we are also furnishing those people who have cage cultures for them to nourish and make those fingerlings bigger. We have Cordonniers, Gueules Pavé which are being reared at the Albion Fisheries Centre. Unfortunately, recently on the day we were inaugurating the Mauritius Institute of Oceanography (MOI) in Albion, at another place people have gone to steal at night, they have plundered the fingerlings in Albion Fisheries Centre. There is an enquiry going on and we believe that we will have good results in the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will, with the permission of the Deputy Chief Whip, turn to some measures that were taken in this Budget. I can't forget to do that.

(Interruptions)

It is mentioned that we are going to upgrade the *Maison des Pêcheurs* at Cap Malheureux, Tamarin and Mahebourg. This is in the Budget and we must be grateful to the Prime Minister. There is a grant for acquisition of refrigeration vehicles, vehicles which are air conditioned and fishermen can carry their catch to different places. These vehicles are being given to us as a grant, a gift. Facility is being extended to fishermen who have contracted start-up loans under certain schemes in Mauritius. Concerning the VAT refund, if someone buys anything, VAT is refunded to the fisherman on an additional list of equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to mention that children of fishermen are getting special grant from the Fishermen Welfare Fund. Sometime back children who passed the CPE, SC or the HSC were getting scholarship by the Fishermen Welfare Fund. We have

extended these scholarships to people who are graduates and also postgraduates. I am happy to tell you that there is one gentleman who, with the help of the grant from the Fishermen Welfare Fund, has joined my Ministry as a Senior Officer. On top of that, each year five students benefit from this scheme. Three students in Mauritius and two in Rodrigues; we have not forgotten Rodrigues.

(Interruptions)

To end, I think I have to mention the most important achievement in the fisheries sector. In 2016, the local production of fish has increased by double digit, that is, 20%. For example, in 2015, local production of fish was around 12,000 tonnes in Mauritius, while in 2016 after one year, it went up to around 15,000 tonnes. There is an increase and we have to pursue that. Moreover, the total exports of fish and fish products have increased from around 134,000 tonnes in 2015 to more than 137,000 tonnes in 2016. It is worth mentioning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that total turnover for the fisheries in 2016 was around Rs27 billion. Rs27 billion!

I wish to highlight that Mauritius ranks third of the total fish export to European Union market. It is worth noting that exports of fish and fish products have shown a growth of around 6% in 2016 and as such fish exports for Mauritius represents around 20% of our grand total exports. It is a matter of pride that among the exporting sectors, in only fisheries sector we have been able to make some progress of about 9% increase compared to others where we have plunged down, unfortunately.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have to abide by the Chief Whip. We have got some more important issues, but I will leave it for next time.

(Interruptions)

Again, I must thank the hon. Prime Minister for the help he has given to this sector. It is a new sector and we all know that it has got lots of perspectives. Recently, the day we inaugurated the MOI at Albion was the Ocean Day and the theme of that day was 'Our Ocean our Future'. I believe strongly that the future, not of Mauritius alone, but the whole world, pertains to the Ocean Economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ocean is our wealth and I will say that we will take all our means to explore the ocean, but without destroying the ecosystem. We have to do it in a

very sustainable way. Since the beginning, two years back I have been telling and I will see to it that there is no hanky-panky with the ocean. It is our future. What we have to give to our future generations is an ocean plenty of health, wealth and good for the whole country. I am very proud that this sector will be the *lumière de demain pour nos enfants et petits-enfants*.

I thank you for your attention, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

(11.19 p.m.)

Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Any Budget exercise is a clear indication of how the Government in place intends to enhance its economic growth and social development. Its preparation needs a zero understanding of aspiration of the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for his vision as embodied in the Budget 2017-2018 and for the innovation he brought along. For example, the consultations for the first time with all the PPS and Government MPs and also the introduction of a negative income tax system, amongst others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Citizen Support Unit, which is a new tool for public/Government interaction, has already seen 1,600 complaints within one month. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am grateful to the hon. Prime Minister for giving substantial consideration to my constituency in the Budget. In last year's Budget, some Rs75 m. were earmarked for the construction of a swimming pool. We are still at the design stage, never mind! But last year's Budget 2016/2017, with the support of the PPS, hon. Mrs Boygah, 41 drains and 13 new roads were constructed, 20 roads were resurfaced; which means we are doing our job properly.

This year's Budget includes the construction of an electric incinerator in Souillac, widening of some roads, namely, in Bois Chéri and La Flora, construction of drains where required, and the upgrading of Rivière du Poste bridge. Moreover, a road linking Rivière du Poste and Grand Bois is underway, thus avoiding the public from Rivière du Poste, Souillac and down the road to go through La Flora to reach Grand Bois. Of course, we should not forget the Rivière des Anguilles Dam which is also budgeted in this year's Budget. Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir, as in all budgets, there is room for improvement, and in this context, I would like to make a few suggestions.

The Government machinery cannot run efficiently if vacancies still exist in executive positions in several key institutions. Yesterday, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Air Mauritius and still we do not have a CEO there, neither in the FSC nor in the ESD. In order for these institutions to be productive, they need strong leadership at the top, and these posts to be filled urgently.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, education is a driving force for economic growth, and there is a lot of emphasis in the Budget 2017/2018 for training and higher education. This is a very praiseworthy consideration from our Prime Minister, but there is still an acute shortage of qualified manpower on the market to meet the labour requirement of different sectors. Hopefully, the new technical Universities will bridge the gap. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I had the opportunity last month to interview six fresh graduates from the University of Mauritius, and I can tell you it was appalling. Neither of them could read an elliptical drawing nor has a notion about the practical side of engineering. So what are we producing? Are we meeting the requirement of the industry? This is not so. An architectural drawing could not be read properly. These fresh graduates are employed under the YEP programme and they are paid Rs6,000, for example, from YEP and Rs6,000 from the employer. Right now, there are only 2 big M & E contractor in Mauritius who employ them, and employ them as technician, not even as trainee engineers because their level is too low. This is the situation that we have to face, and it has to be changed.

In one of my PQs this year, I asked the hon. Minister of Education about the link between universities and industries, but I did not get the expected reply. I was talking about the signing of MOUs with industrial engineering conglomerate, like Siemens, ABB, General Electric, who has their own Universities. And then, you will have an exchange of students from the University of Mauritius with these Universities to get better quality engineers from our institutions. But right now, this is not the case. We are just sending them for 3 months training in Rey & Lenferna, Manser Saxon or whatever. They are not to the level of international or multi-national companies ABBGE, where there will be a technological transfer.

Another issue I would like to tackle is the problem in CIDB. Unfortunately, the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport is not here. CIDB right now, recognises

only electrical and mechanical engineers. What the University of Mauritius is producing, they are producing mechatronics engineers and building service engineers. Right now, they are not allowed to sign any tender. But these people spend a lot of money to study and they are engineers, whether they are graduated locally or abroad. They spend their time and personal sacrifice, and yet when they come here, they cannot sign a tender, they are not allowed by CIDB. This aberration has to be corrected urgently because they are engineers after all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned earlier, I will take up the subject of Rivière des Anguilles swimming pool again. The delay actually, we say it is at design stage. It was earmarked last year; several capital projects were budgeted, but only a few saw the light at the end of the tunnel last year. Why? The main reason is CPB where the processing of any tender is a minimum of 3 months. This cannot be so! We have so many capital projects to implement within the next two and a half years. So, it is important now that we reduce this processing time to one month by increasing the man-power at CPB. This is the only chance we have, to see that these projects come out of the ground during our mandate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would kindly request the hon. Prime Minister to see to it that the bid processing period be reduced drastically. But CPB is not always the reason for a delay. If we take the case concerning the road decongestion programme at Phoenix, namely the A1-M1 Bridge project, pre-qualification exercise has been done and approved since two months. The file is still at RDA and did not go back to CPB. Why? Do they want to make some changes in the approved list? We need to know. Certainly, we will not have a snap-election, but it seems that we will have a snap-tender for this project.

In the same line of thinking, most of the capital projects tendered call for domestic sub-contractor. Now, this is a very important point. A big civil contractor is awarded a project, then the main contractor chooses the sub-contractors for the services like electrical installation, plumbing, fire alarm or whatever. It is the main cutter; we call it a domestic sub-contractor. Now, this is not fair at all. Why? Because we want to encourage the SMEs and develop the SMEs! The main contractor always chooses 3 or 4 sub-contractors. He does not open up for other contractors to walk in the tender. This has to be corrected, because it is our Government which is giving the contract. The solution for this is that we should have what we call a nominated sub-contract. This means the client; suppose the Ministry of Health or any Ministry is the customer, they will tender a separate bid for the services. In this way, we will open up, give the chance for all the small contractors to participate and bring a

competitive bid. But right now, all these projects that we have, are tendered on a domestic contract basis. This is not fair and this has to be corrected. It is the same in the private sector; the Government gives the permit to the private sector for construction of a hotel, construction of IRS Scheme or whatever. But, you never see more than two MNA contractors which are being called by these in this tender. Why? It is reserved, as we call '*poche gauche poche droite*.' This means the same conglomerate will tender for their own people. One of them will own either Robert Le Maire or Rey Lenferna. We have only two. We have to be frank. These are the only two existing right now. The two big ones! When we give a permit we have to ask the owner of the project to open up the bid for others to have a chance to bid.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Government strongly supports the Paris Agreement on climatic change. We are moving towards renewable energy to reduce our carbon footprint, but one of our main energy consumption sectors is the transportation. But, in the Budget, there is little incentive for the transition from conventional cars to electric cars. India, for example, in collaboration with TATA Group, has targeted year 2030 to replace its actual carpool by electric cars reducing the carbon emission by 30%. Therefore, I beg the hon. Prime Minister to consider some more incentive to encourage the usage of electric cars, that is, to build recharge point along shopping centres, etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the water sector, much is being done to replace the obsolete trunk pipes. 150 kms of pipelines have already been tendered out. Bagatelle Dam will soon be operative through its new filter. More boreholes will be drilled. Fair enough! But, what about the Rivière des Anguilles Dam? It has been budgeted for 2016-2017, but still no consultancy firm has been selected. I am afraid that for this project, there will be retender because of misuse of procedure from the officers of water resources. They asked queries directly to the bidders without going through the Central Tender Board. This is not allowed. What about the chlorination depot that was supposed to be built by CWA? The chlorination depot is for storage of chloride gas cylinders. It was tendered two years ago. The CPB has already selected the contractor. It was supposed to be awarded two years ago, but nothing has been done so far.

In a way, it is good to implement all these projects, new and extension of existing dams, new pipelines. But what is a nice body without a smart brain? What we are doing now, we are spending billions of rupees, but we are not considering the SCADA system which has been tendered two times by CWA but, so far, nothing has been done to the SCADA system.

The CWA does not process any SCADA system. What is a SCADA system? It means System Control And Data Acquisition. CEB already has one. This kind of system allows to control the valve, any pump around the island while sitting at the control room. The CEB already has one and it is working perfectly. In CWA this has been tendered twice, but then it was cancelled. We have spent billions of rupees in new pipelines and still we do not have the brain to control these pipelines. We will end up with the same situation 10 years ahead and we will not know where the leakage comes from. So, it is important that we consider the SCADA system.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will kindly request the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development to consider dissolving the SMF.

(Interruptions)

Yes!

What does the SMF contribute to the society? Just to cut trees and to clean the roads during cyclone. We have a budget of Rs8 billion in the Police Force, where there is a part which is dedicated to the SMF, but it should be used for the following –

- building a stronger Police Force in terms of equipment and manpower, and
- introducing compulsory boot camp training, that was known previously as compulsory military service, which is still known in Europe.

When you look at Scandinavian countries, there is no army there. Who is the army? It is you and me. It is the people who have done the military service. They are called on time to time, every six months, to check in a particular point where they go for one day meeting. So, why do we need this compulsory boot camp training for school leavers for six months' duration? It is to build the character of our young people. At schools or at home there is no such thing as character building and development of a personality. It is there that they will build a strong physique. Physically they will be strong and mentally also. This is where you have team building, trust, development of the character and the good traits of personality will be developed when you have this boot camp training.

Now, my last point probably. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, blackouts, burnouts, that is what we are having in CEB nowadays. CEB is de-energised. Burnouts, why? We still have homes in certain areas in Mauritius where you see the light dimming. This is called burnout.

(Interruptions)

Exactly, because you have fluctuation in voltage! It is a poor network. Blackout that is what happened. We suffered half hour blackout due to a fault in the South. The whole country was blackout during 30 minutes. That is not acceptable! Burnouts, this year, three persons died: one in Belle Vue Harel, a member of the CEB staff, one in Curepipe, a child, his body touched with a transmission tower and another one we saw a boy trying to help his mother. She was having a bath and was electrocuted. We are living in the new era of technology. How can this happen? If we have a reliable network, this should not have happened. We have been talking since year 2015 for a smart grid. What happened to the smart grid? Let me define what a smart grid is so that all hon. Members understand what is a smart grid. It is an electrical network which uses information and communication technology together to improve electricity to travel from the power station to the consumer in a bidirectional way. For example, if my good friend, hon. Rutnah, is having his swimming pool on for 24 hours, CEB will see that there is wastage and will switch off his swimming pool while he is not using it. This is the smart grid. It can interact with the consumers' goods.

(Interruptions)

It saves energy. Why should we have a smart grid? Because it saves energy, prevent blackout and adapt easily to peak loads.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the core activity of CEB is to provide clean, safe and reliable electricity, not to sell to, probably, a provider of Internet. This windfall gain that we are having right now due to low old price is only temporary. Make no mistakes with the Qatar crisis; the price will soon go up.

Since 1999, a transmission network was built at the cost of Rs240 m. to upgrade our network from 66 to 132. Still, we are with 66kv. This means that the lifespan for the towers will soon be over 20 years which means there will be no warranty on it. It is warrantied now till 20 years. Soon, it will be over and still not being used for 132 KV. So, why was it installed? But nothing is so glooming! Setting up of a battery storage station that CEB has already tendered is a laudable step to reinforce the network due to new renewable producers exporting their electricity to the grid.

In the budget, it is mentioned that solar pv panel of 1 Kw will be installed on rooftop of another 3,000 NHDC houses. But it doesn't mention - this is very important - if batteries

will be provided free of charge because there is no meaning having a panel on your roof and the battery cost, by the way, is more expensive than the pv panel. So, it has to be clearly defined as to who will bear the costs. Is it the CEB or the NHDC tenants?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like now to quote the famous Chinese philosopher, Confucius -

“It doesn’t matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.”

(Interruptions)

And this is our Government. Some are saying that there is nothing in the Budget; others are saying that it is a joke, but let me say that we should not expect more because in the Budget 2016/2017 the foundation for our second economic boom was already laid. The economy is set to role. This budget has a positive impact on SMEs and the manufacturing sector. There will be a new transport mode for better connectivity. Construction boom is now; our ‘new Robin Hood’ is taking from the rich and giving to the poor, reducing the gap between the high class and the low class.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again let me congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for his vision. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn!

(11.43 p.m.)

The Minister of labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training: (Mr S. Callichurn): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the presentation of the national Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance has opened a new chapter in the history of this country. This is a defining moment for the country. The Budget presented by the hon. Prime Minister, the first in his capacity as Prime Minister and the fifth as Minister of Finance has once more been positively acclaimed by stakeholders at large. This in itself is a singular achievement.

This Budget is being presented in a context of unprecedented uncertainties at a global level where conventional economic wisdom has become obsolete, if not irrelevant. The state of the world economy has changed drastically since the financial crisis. We have witnessed in the aftermath of the financial crisis a new configuration of the world economic order and the emergence of new economic powers.

Learned economic and financial experts predict a number of threats, which are likely to impair the economic growth if timely and adequate mitigative measures are not taken. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and the rise of nationalism in some European countries have to be considered with seriousness as they will have a direct impact on our economy. In brief, the context is now fraught with uncertainty.

In the wake of these daunting challenges the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has come up with innovative measures which provide a blue print for the economic development, poverty alleviation, job creation, improving the standard of living and, most importantly, to ensure that the fruits of economic growth are evenly distributed. In brief, this Budget contains all the elements required to take Mauritius to new heights.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, besides the unfavourable international context, I need to recall our toxic legacy in the local context for a better appreciation of this Budget. It is too easy to sit on the fence and make criticisms without making any constructive proposal to make this country prosperous.

We should not forget that this Government inherited a country with a crippling economy, a complete breakdown of law and order, ailing education, health care and transportation systems, just to mention a few. The country was simply in a state of dereliction. The country faced numerous economic, social, environmental and moral challenges.

There was an implosion of trust in the system. Moreover, there was an urgency to bury the ethic of greed and rampant corruption, which had been institutionalised by the previous regime. With such a legacy in the face of paralysing uncertainties, one can imagine how much time and effort will be required to redress the situation. The extent of damages is substantial and it will take time to turn the tide and reverse the deep disillusion of the population. However, we have the determination to succeed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is fully alive of the expectations of the population and has accordingly focussed on tangible changes that are responsive to the challenges we face. The new focus is to reduce inequality and increase resilience as well as to come up with solutions to the various problems facing society.

Rising inequality represents a danger. Unemployment and a squeeze on living standards has, in many parts of the world, seriously damaged the social fabric and imperilled democracy. Everything stems from the fact that workers are consistently getting a smaller share of the national income. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has been elected with a clear mandate to bring meaningful change to the daily life of our people and to lead them towards happiness, prosperity and a better future.

We have, in this regard pledged to transform this country, by improving the quality of life, accelerate social integration, strengthen democracy and ensure the independent functioning of institutions. In short, this Budget demonstrates in unequivocal terms our commitment for the greater good of the people of Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Economic growth does not just depend on lower tax and fewer regulations. It depends, *inter alia*, on sound industrial relations, availability of skilled workers, an effective competition regime and a robust framework to safeguard the rights of workers and sound policy to encourage entrepreneurship and creation of jobs. None of these happens by accident. They happen by design, rigorous planning, hard work, less bureaucracy and red tape. In short, a coalition strategy to boost growth, which the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has done.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, with a view to contributing towards the sustainable development of the economy, we have taken a number of commitments, namely, to amend labour legislations to better protect employees, introduce a minimum wage policy, review of the labour legislation for the recruitment of foreign workers and the creation of a National Employment Agency also is on the agenda. Job creation is also central to the objectives of the Government Programme.

The measures announced in the Government Programme for the Budget 2017/2018 are both focussed towards achieving meaningful change, reducing the gap between the rich and the poor and promote social justice. I must recall that since we assumed office some two years ago we have demonstrated our commitment to create a level playing field with the philosophy of “*Développement à visage humain et chances égales pour tous*”.

Through this Budget, we intend to revolutionise the lives and expectations of our citizens by combining social justice with the prosperity in a way, which is unprecedented in the history of this country. We have a collective responsibility to protect the citizens of this country, on whatever side of the aisle we sit in this august Assembly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has to be congratulated for his sense of humanism and compassion. He has rightly observed that in the race of progress, too many are left behind, uncared for, neglected, suffering from hidden injuries of class and race. He has also rightly concluded that this is not justice or compassion, the twin imperatives of a decent society, a moral world. During the last decade, not much had been done to consolidate social justice, including values, ideals and principles. The focus was then on nepotism and a fake democratisation of the economy. With this Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is proposing a new contract for social justice.

We have to remember that for a number of years this country has been a model in the region in terms of political and economic stability. Through the measures contained in this Budget, the economic decline, which started a decade ago, will be reversed. It will no longer be a country gripped by fear and threats of globalisation, but instead it will be a planned and efficient state caring for its citizens, mainly the most vulnerable ones.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has perfectly understood the situation. He has, in his wisdom, decided to move towards a new type of Welfare State, a new Welfare State, which will encourage work, not dependency. The promise to provide employment to the young people is being steadily realised, coupled with the measures taken for the improvement of the living conditions of those in the poverty trap. Already the tone has been set with the implementation of the Negative Income Tax Scheme, which will definitely bring some relief to our unfortunate compatriots.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for too long workers of this country have been subject to dire working conditions and in many sectors the pay level consistently fail to match the actual input of the workers. For too long, successive Governments have turned a deaf ear and a blind eye to the predicament of our fellow citizens. For too long rhetoric has not been followed by concrete actions. It is now time to act.

Minimum wage is not a political issue. It is a purely humanitarian concern requiring the covenant of human solidarity. The global economy, free trade and technological progress have brought great benefits, but they are not distributed equally or even equitably. This situation has lasted for long. The obscene poverty pay will not be tolerated any more.

The National Wage Consultative Council set up under the aegis of my Ministry will be finalising its report very shortly. The Council is working in close collaboration with trade unions, employers' representatives and the civil society in general, to come up with the proposals which would pave the way for a more equitable society, without jeopardising businesses. In the coming months the indecent pay package in certain sectors will become history.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other pillar on which economic progress depends is industrial relations. Hon. Members will recall that this country has made substantial progress to protect the rights of the workers and maintain sound industrial relations. We have gradually moved from adversarial and conflict based model of industrial relations to one of collaboration and consensus. Sound industrial relations is a *sine qua non* to securing a future where we pay high wages for high value activities.

As the House is aware, we have taken the commitment to review the labour legislations to enhance the protection of the employees. This is a serious commitment, which has as objective the promotion of social cohesion, consolidation of the Welfare State and upholding social justice.

In reply to a Parliamentary Question, I informed the House of the wide consultations undertaken by my Ministry for the introduction of new legislative instruments to replace the Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act respectively. I wish to inform the House that the consultations are over and the next step would be the circulation of a White Paper on the proposed Bills to replace the existing legislations.

A Ministerial Committee chaired by my learned colleague, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, is currently finalising the White Paper, which will be made public soon and eventually the Bills will be introduced in the National Assembly, hopefully by the end of this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, improvement of conditions of employment cannot be dissociated from the role of trade unions. Trade unions have been instrumental in the improvements in working conditions and the protection of workers' rights. Worldwide there is an increasing demand for the improvement in working conditions as well as the right of workers. These demands, besides being legitimate are consonant with the spirit of decent work prescribed by the ILO. This is an on-going debate and the finality is the welfare of the workers and sustainable development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the labour laws were last reviewed a few years ago. However, the dynamics of the economy are such that, new challenges emerge and the legislation has to respond to the needs of the day as well as for the near future.

My Ministry is at the forefront to protect the rights of the workers and to ensure that working conditions are strictly in compliance with the law. However, notwithstanding the dedication of the inspectorate and enforcement staff of my Ministry, breaches of the Employment Relations Act and the Employment Rights Act have increased at an alarming rate over the last few years. In fact, the number of complaints is on the ascending trend.

From the statistics, it is clear that workers are more than ever conscious of their rights and trust the enforcement branch of my Ministry, which will continue to fulfil its mission as guardian of the law.

Enforcement of the law will continue in the most rigorous way and unscrupulous employers are hereby warned that no stone would be left unturned to bring them to justice. This is my solemn undertaking to the workers of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in relation to the rights of the workers, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, to which Mauritius is a party, recognises the right of the workers to join a union and bargain as a human right. The ILO declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work also sets out freedom of association as the first principle and right.

It is most unfortunate that freedom of association is denied to workers in some sectors through covert mechanisms. While I appreciate the fairness and human attitude of the majority of employers in this country, I cannot refrain from expressing my indignation to the conduct of some employers who routinely harass, intimidate and coerce workers who try to exercise their freedom to join a union.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certain employers still dream of a distant past where workers had no right to form part of a union and to be subservient to them in any circumstances. Some of you may, no doubt, recall the philosophy of the Thatcher Government in the UK in the 80s, which advocated that the prime role of unions should be to help improve the performance of the firms, which provided their workers with jobs.

I can assure the House that this Government will not allow history to repeat itself. Albeit that the unions have also been weakened by individualism and political apathy, this Government will make history by reinforcing the role of unions on the labour market. The

new labour legislation will attempt to reinforce the role of trade unions and improve the settlement of industrial disputes.

To the employers who are still nostalgic of the pre-independence era, I am sending a strong warning. Do not invite spectre of conflict. This will be for the good of all.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall now come to the burning issue which has, for decades, poisoned the life of citizens of this country and hampered the actions of successive Governments. The subject is employment creation. Here, I would like to establish the nexus between employability and education.

In the current context and especially in the wake of the unwarranted hysteria on the number of credits required to accede to Lower VI, as rightly advocated by the hon. Minister of Education, the nexus between employability and education finds its relevance.

Government has, through its public schools and other educational and vocational institutions, provided tools to every individual to adapt and innovate in a climate of constant technological change. We are today living in a highly competitive global environment where education and knowledge determine value on the job market.

Job seekers now face tough competition and this places additional pressure on the educational system which has to continue to enhance the skills and knowledge of our children. In this regard, the high rate of dropouts at primary or secondary levels is simply alarming for the future of this country.

Government alone cannot turn around these statistics. Parents have a prime responsibility of instilling in their children an ethic of hard work and educational achievement. Teachers also have a critical role in the education process as it has been for generations.

Reforms and innovation in the education system, as boldly put forward by the Minister of Education, would ultimately enable our kids to compete for higher paid jobs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, throughout history, education has been at the heart of the development of this nation and the passport to a decent job and social mobility. We, therefore, need to emphasise to our children that if you work hard and take responsibility, you will have a chance for a better life.

It is, therefore, clear that for a brighter future and to improve the prospects to get a decent job, a meaningful, performance-based educational system is a *sine qua non*.

If we are serious about making Mauritius more competitive in the regional and global economy, our educational strategies have to be reviewed. The move to make the attainment of five credits at School Certificate level compulsory is, indeed, a step in the right direction. Everyone who has at heart the interest of the youth of this country should support this proposal. Any move to counteract this proposal would be sheer demagoguery and counterproductive and inevitably jeopardise the chances of our youth at finding employment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unemployment, especially youth unemployment, remains a sore point worldwide. The degree of success to combat unemployment varies from one country to another and is dependent on a number of factors which, *inter alia*, includes, but not limited to economic growth, innovation and political stability, just to mention a few of them.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unemployment is not a political issue and we should refrain from giving it such a label. Successive Governments have, I assume, tried to tackle the problem to the best of their ability, but, as I have mentioned, with varying levels of success.

The problem, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, is two-fold, namely the absence of a conducive climate for investment and the absence of an integral approach. We have to reckon that the problem was compounded during the decade of Labour Government which failed to provide a conducive environment for new investments.

Millions were squandered on wasteful schemes which were intended to boost up investment. For many reasons the efforts of the previous Government were to all intents and purposes futile and fruitless, to say the least. This is, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, part of the history and cannot be denied.

We have taken time to consider the demand for jobs from those who are more severely afflicted. We have in this category those who have lost their job for purely economic reasons and our young graduates. This is a recurrent cycle, which we need to focus upon in a sustainable manner.

It is, indeed, dramatic that we have hundreds of young graduates on the market without any opportunity to contribute to the prosperity of this country. Admittedly, we should be bold and honest to recognise that the current tertiary education system has to be

overhauled with a view to enhancing its contribution to the national economy. We can no longer afford to allow our young graduates to become desperate and lose faith in the system.

Our philosophy is to create an environment of trust, hope where nascent ambitions would flourish. Within the scope of this philosophy, we have introduced a scheme to provide training to engineers who have just graduated to enable them to become eligible for registration with the Council of Professional Engineers of Mauritius. It is only after this phase that these young engineers can realistically contemplate to start their career as engineers.

In the last Budget, we pledged to provide 200 graduates in engineering the avenue for a professional career. I am pleased to announce this target has been achieved. Here, I would like to thank the public sector institutions for their close collaboration with my Ministry. I also take the opportunity to make an appeal to the private sector to make additional efforts to provide opportunities for these graduates.

Concurrently, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Youth Employment Programme has been revived. I am aware that the current conditions attached to the enlistment of the services of young graduates are not satisfactory. True it is that the philosophy of the Youth Employment Programme is not conducive towards resolving the unemployment situation in a sustainable manner, but we have to reckon that this approach is the lesser of all the evils.

The intention is to provide, at least, temporary relief to the youth and provide them an opportunity to be better prepared for the labour market. I must underline the fact that many youngsters are unable to make headway on the labour market because they are unaware of the unwritten codes of the professional life.

The Youth Employment Programme has, at least, the merit of providing knowledge of the labour market and better preparing the youth of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am nearly finished. It is also a crude fact that no Government can realistically provide jobs to all graduates, diploma holders and those who have completed secondary/primary education. I am sure that hon. Members, on the other side of the House, will share my views on this matter.

These days, universities are dispensing education to prepare graduates for the 21st Century lives and careers in a complex and unpredictable future.

However, we have to recognise that own skills with an enduring self-life, will uniquely be human skills, namely emergent leadership, entrepreneurship, emotional intelligence, creativity and complex problem.

In our digitally enabled and hyper-connected world, graduates will also need cultural empathy, cross-cultural communications and global contacts. The connection between work and learning will also become closer and work-based learning opportunities will have a critical place in preparing for the jobs and skills for the future. Mauritius will be no exception to this rule.

It is, therefore, inescapable that the career of a lifetime will no longer last for a lifetime and workers will probably need to upskill multiple times throughout their working lives. Even jobs less directly affected by technological change will require different skillsets as the ecosystems in which they operate; they will also be affected by the changes such as more flexible working conditions, teleworking and increased casualisation.

It is, therefore, clear that the problem of youth unemployment and unemployment in general will have to be addressed, bearing in mind the perspectives I have just mentioned. We should face this crude reality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Conscious of the daunting challenges ahead, my Ministry is actively working on the National Employment Strategy to address the problem in a holistic and comprehensive manner. My Ministry will shortly issue a White Paper for public consultation given that unemployment and job creation are issues of public interest, which transcend party politics. Therefore, the Opposition as well as the civil society, trade unions and the public at large will have their say on this important issue. We propose to resolve this matter in the most democratic manner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my address last year, I, *inter alia*, announced the creation of the National Employment Agency to replace the Employment Service which has reached the end of its useful lifespan and is unable to respond to the changing needs of our society. The Bill for the setting up of the Agency is being finalised and will be introduced in the House soon.

The Agency will be a one-stop shop, which will, *inter alia*, provide an innovative and modern research platform to proactively identify job market needs and disseminate reliable market information system to jobseekers and employers.

With the setting up of the Agency, we hope to provide state-of-the-art facilities to the public and other stakeholders for a meaningful and versatile service for the benefit of the employment seekers and workers as well.

The other leg of my intervention is in relation to the recruitment of foreign workers to serve in various sectors of the economy. The House is certainly aware that we face a shortage of skills in many areas and it is inevitable that we have to rely on imported labour. With technological changes, local enterprises continue to encounter serious problems to find suitable candidates locally, for a number of critical functions. The situation is not brighter elsewhere and in the face of increasing competition, employers are compelled to recruit from external sources to consolidate their position on the market. Mauritius is no exception to this rule. As a responsible Government, we have a duty to protect our local enterprises and provide them with the requisite support to overcome the constraints of globalisation and enhance their competitiveness. The shortage of qualified personnel should not hamper development or put at risk our enterprises.

The proposal to extend the validity of the work permits to eight years for other sectors of the economy is fully consonant with our initiatives to increase the resilience of our enterprises through the transfer of knowledge and competencies. I must also hasten to add that the extension of the work permit policy is in no way to the detriment of our fellow citizens. Instead, it is complementary.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget has laid down the groundwork for a fully integrated economy by extending the ladders of opportunity downward to reach more and more people.

It provides the right mix of policies to lead to a dynamic free market, widespread economic security, entrepreneurial innovation and upward mobility of our citizens.

It is through the massive investment in public infrastructure and other schemes paved the way for an explosion of economic activities over the years to come and reinforced the social contract to make Mauritius a better place and promote the kind of society we want.

Last but not least, our history gives us the confidence that by a change in culture coupled with the Government action, a change in values and a change in policies, we can emerge from great economic upheavals stronger, not weaker.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the recipe for success is hard work and not pampering from the State. This Budget is a Blueprint for the years ahead and will be the vector for transformation and increased resilience.

Finally, I wish to place on record my appreciation of the extremely humane approach adopted by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development. He has, through this Budget, demonstrated that he is a competent guardian of the finances of this country. He has understood that by investing in the next generation and equipping and inspiring them with a radically different future, we will ensure that they are not only going to survive, but also thrive in new work order and ultimately ensure the prosperity of this country.

Thank you all for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

Mr Rughoobur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Callichurn 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 Friday 16 June 2017 at 3.00 p.m.

Mr Sinatambou rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(00.16)

FOOT AND MOUTH DISEASE – CATTLE – IMPORTATION

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I raise here a matter but, unfortunately, the Minister concerned is not here, that is, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security.

A few days ago, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a company called Socovia Ltd announced an increase of 5 per cent in the price of beef. There is a concern about the quality of the cattle because they are quarantined in the same park at Socovia. The hon. Members would remember that last year, after the outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease, officials from the Ministry had stated that, for three years, contaminated parks would not be allowed to sell meat. So, I would like to hear from the hon. Minister if the Veterinary Services of his Ministry have carried out the necessary inspection to make sure that whatever new cattle are being imported from South Africa to be sold on the local market are not contaminated.

I will also ask him to make an appeal to his colleague, the hon. Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection, so that the price of beef can be controlled in order that consumers will not be fleeced, because with the coming of Eid there will be a huge demand for meat. If the Ministry can intervene to make sure that consumers are not fleeced by Socovia.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou!

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken note of the hon. Member's request. I will transmit it to my colleague Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

PORT LOUIS MARITIME & PORT LOUIS EAST - METHADONE - DISTRIBUTION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My issue tonight relates to the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life. Unfortunately, he is not here; maybe somebody else could take note of my request.

Mr Deputy Speaker, there is a very serious problem and it concerns the distribution of methadone in my constituency - Constituency No. 3. This is an exceptional case, whereby the

distribution of methadone is being done in front of two colleges, namely the Islamic Cultural College and the Madad-ul-Islam College, and I can tell you that this situation is really unacceptable.

So, my plea to Government is that we have to find another suitable place for the distribution of methadone, because this is causing so much distress, so many problems in this area and, over and above that, it is in a residential area. I must admit at the same time that it is not an easy task to find another alternative but, we cannot go on like this, because, as I said earlier, these two colleges are in front of this distribution centre.

(Interruptions)

It is the Islamic Cultural College and the Madad-ul-Islam College. I would urge the hon. Minister to take this matter seriously and to treat my request urgently. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Boissézon!

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have noted the plea of my colleague of Constituency No. 3 and will transmit it to the Minister of Health.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

PAILLES - DISPENSARY - DOCTORS

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Unfortunately, again, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life is not present. By the way, we always raise issues at Adjournment Time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We hear of colleague Ministers saying that they will pass on the message or that they will look into the matter, but we never receive a reply.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we should look into the matter because we stay till late to do our work. The Ministers just stand up and say: 'Okay, we'll look into it.' In fact, we never get a reply thereafter as to what is happening or whether they are looking for it. I hope, tomorrow, the Minister of Health and Quality of Life will be here and that, at least, we know what he intends to do with regard to my request and that of my hon. friend Ameer Meea. I hope that other Ministers will follow the example and give us a reply, at least, by communication or orally. Hon. Jhugroo sent me a reply by communication. There is only

one Minister who has got a reply, but for the others, all the points that we have raised at Adjournment Time, we do not get any reply.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my question concerns the dispensary at Pailles. There is now a dispensary at Pailles and it is open every day, but there is only one doctor. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, the doctor looks after patients who suffer from high blood pressure and diabetes and, on those days, there are many people who attend. They are from Camp Chapelon, Plaine Lauzun, Bonnefin, Pont St. Louis, Guibies, Morcellement Raffray, Cité Michael Leal, Cité St. Louis, Résidence Mon Plaisir, Montebello and Sorèze.

There is a request that there be at least two doctors at the Pailles dispensary, especially on those two days, *les mercredis et les jeudis* when patients suffering of high blood pressure and diabetes go there.

CAMP CHAPELON – MEDICAL COMMUNITY CENTRE

There is another request from the inhabitants of Camp Chapelon, especially the old people. Those suffering from high blood pressure and diabetes used to collect their medicine at the Medical Community Centre of Camp Chapelon.

Since the opening of a dispensary at Cité Jonction, which is quite far from Camp Chapelon, they have to go there to collect their medicine. However, most of them do not go there, they prefer going to the dispensary of Plaine Lauzun which is nearer. So, there is a request, if we can return to the situation where it was before, especially for the old age persons so that they can collect their medicine at the Community Centre. Apparently, there is a fixed date on which nurses and paramedical officers come and distribute the medicine. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr E. Boissézon): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have noted the request of my colleague from Constituency No. 1 and I will transmit it to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. It is to be noted that, today, I have transmitted the request which the hon. Member made yesterday to the substantive Minister.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier!

RICHELIEU – BRANCH ROAD – RESURFACING & LIGHTING

Mr J. C. Barbier (Fourth Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Today, I will address my request to the hon. Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands. Unfortunately, he is not here.

It concerns the Richelieu Branch Road. It is situated after Camp Benoit, at the curve, when you turn to reach the cemetery. You have a branch road there which ends somewhere in Coromandel at the traffic lights. Being given that we have so much industrial development in this zone these days, there are more people using this branch road. The road is in a very deplorable state and there is no street lighting, so far. People use this road not only for going to this industrial zone, but also for going to Résidence Flamboyant and to the industrial zone of Coromandel also.

I am making an appeal to the hon. Minister so that he takes care of the request so that a proper resurfacing of this road be done and also street lighting be provided for the inhabitants of the region. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister Wong Yen Cheong!

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, it is in the pipeline of works to be carried out; it has been noted and, hopefully, it will come very soon. We have already made that request. Thank you.

At 00.26 a.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 16 June 2017 at 3.00 p.m.