



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 19 JUNE 2017

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 14 of 2017

Sitting of 19 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)

ANNOUNCEMENT

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROCEEDINGS – 04 APRIL 2017 – POINT OF ORDER

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, at the Sitting of Tuesday last, the hon. Second Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East, hon. Ameer Meea, raised a point of order in regard to an alleged case of tampering with the official report of 04 April 2017. A perusal of the extracts tabled, in fact, reveals a discrepancy between the two versions of the same extract of the proceedings of the House, which appear to have been downloaded from the website of the National Assembly on two different dates. Hon. Members, Standing Order 16 provides as follows, I quote –

“An Official Report containing a report which shall be as nearly as possible *verbatim*, of all speeches made at each sitting, shall be prepared under the supervision of the Speaker and published under the Authority of the Assembly.”

As you are aware, the responsibility of preparing the official reports lies on the Hansard Unit. The established workflow process consists of the reporting, various levels of sub-editing and final editing of the proceedings of the House, prior to the finalisation and publication thereof, under the supervision of the Speaker and under the Authority of the Assembly. This is a protracted process.

Formerly, the publication of official reports took years to be finalised and become accessible. It is only since 2009 that the proceedings of the House are uploaded on the website of the National Assembly within 24 hours of a Sitting, with the express mention ‘Unrevised’. That process made it possible for the proceedings of the House to be accessible to one and all within such a short delay.

At that point in time, it was a laudable initiative since it was the only way Parliament could be brought to the people.

However, as you are surely aware, the mention ‘Unrevised’ which accompanies the proceedings, qualifies the said version as being non-authoritative, that is, there is a disclaimer from the National Assembly in case of error or omission. In other words, the responsibility of the National Assembly is engaged only when the Revised version is uploaded, which occurs

after the correctness of the reporting is ascertained. In the case under hand, true it is that the two different versions of the same extract of the proceedings of 04 April 2017 have been uploaded on the website of the National Assembly, but both bear the mention ‘Unrevised’, that is, both are non-authoritative. Therefore, to all intents and purposes, no Contempt of the Assembly can be said to have been established, and I rule accordingly.

However, I must add that I have looked into the matter and it has been ascertained that the discrepancy referred to had altered the substance of the proceedings of that part of the proceedings in question. I can assure the House that the omitted part has now been restored. I thank, however, the hon. Member for having drawn my attention to such a serious matter.

I also wish to reassure the House that an internal enquiry is being carried out to look thereinto. Inasmuch as the general principle regarding the records is that corrections, if any, are confined to clerical mistakes and cannot improve or alter the substance or form of the Reporters’ copy. In the light of the enquiry, if required, the whole reporting and editing of the proceedings of the House will be reviewed to prevent any such recurrence in the future.

I thank you.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

BETAMAX LTD - ARBITRAL AWARD

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Attorney General whether, in regard to the recent arbitral award in favour of Betamax Ltd., he will state –

- (a) the terms of the award, indicating if a claim of some Rs4.5 billion has been received from Betamax Ltd.;
- (b) whether the Solicitor General had approved the procedure adopted for the termination of the contract with Betamax Ltd. in 2015;
- (c) full details of any alleged cost saving made since the termination of the contract with Betamax Ltd., and
- (d) if appeal will now be lodged against the award.

The Attorney General (Mr R. Yerrigadoo): Madam Speaker, the issue of the Contract of Affreightment (COA) regarding the transportation of petroleum products for Mauritius signed between the State Trading Corporation (STC) and Betamax Ltd has been raised and addressed in this House on many occasions. The information I would be providing in this PNQ has been obtained from the hon. Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection under whose portfolio the STC falls.

Let me remind the House of some facts about this contract and in the way in which it was allocated in 2009 when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was a Senior Member of the then Government.

Madam Speaker, the Betamax Contract was awarded by the then Minister of Public Infrastructure, Mr Bachoo, when the Labour-PMSD alliance was in Government. It should be pointed out that the Attorney General's Office, which was consulted, did not give its clearance to the contract as proposed by Mr Bhunjun, one of the proponents of Betamax Ltd. One of the grounds was that the Public Procurement Act had not been followed. Despite that, the issue was pursued by the then Government disregarding the legal advice and it is not a mere coincidence that it was on the very day on which the STC Board was considering the Contract of Affreightment, that Betamax Ltd. was incorporated.

Madam Speaker, the experts consulted by the State Trading Corporation are unanimous in saying that they have never seen such a Contract of Affreightment, the terms of which are not to the benefit of the State Trading Corporation. For instance, the COA is drafted very much in favour of Betamax Ltd and the terms provide for the STC to pay far above the market rate for the services provided and for items which we would not expect the STC to pay according to usual market practice.

Madam Speaker, the central element is that the price structure was changed by Betamax Ltd and approved by the then Government whereby, instead of applying market rates for the freight, for transport, a fixed rate, much higher than the prevailing ones was retained. The Contract of Affreightment also included an escalation clause with an increase every five years.

The House is aware that as soon as this Government came into power in December 2014, an Inter-Ministerial Committee was set up by Cabinet to re-negotiate the COA with Betamax Ltd., namely on the following –

- (i) Demurrage charges because it was unusual in the context of a single vessel full time charter;
- (ii) Freight charges, exorbitant as well as above market rates;
- (iii) Escalation rates for freight and demurrage unheard of in the freight market;
- (iv) Port dues and bunker consumption on STC's account payable over and above freight rates contrary to market practice, and
- (v) Additional cargo; Betamax Ltd had exclusive rights to provide for freight services, beyond the capacity of 64,000 MT of Red Eagle, therefore, the cost of any additional cargo on another vessel would still be paid to Betamax Ltd based on the existing contract rates.

Unfortunately, even though three meetings were held with Betamax Ltd to review the COA, Betamax Ltd did not demonstrate any genuine willingness to renegotiate the COA and did not substantiate any of their averments with documentary evidence. Thus, on 30 January 2015, as a responsible Government, we took a decision in the public interest for the State Trading Corporation to terminate forthwith the Contract of Affreightment with Betamax Ltd in the light of, *inter alia*, the unlawful procedure and processes regarding the allocation of the contract.

Madam Speaker, in regard to part (a) of the question, the terms of the award cannot be disclosed as per Rule 35 of the 2013 Rules of the Singapore International Arbitration Centre which provides that, and I quote from Rule 35.1 –

“The parties and the Tribunal shall at all times treat all matters relating to the proceedings and the award as confidential.”

However, to enlighten the House and from information which is already available in the public domain, I can confirm that the Arbitrator has awarded that STC should pay between Rs4.3 billion to Rs4.5 billion (depending on rate of exchange) to Betamax Ltd.

On 12 June 2017, Betamax Ltd submitted a claim to the STC to that effect. The STC has already replied on 13 June 2017, indicating that the STC will apply to the Supreme Court to set aside the Award.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (b) of the question, the hon. Leader of the Opposition who has been in Cabinet for so many years, should know that advice tendered by Law Officers is privileged and are covered by the Official Secrets Act. Given the privileged nature of the legal advice...

(Interruptions)

I heard the Leader of the Opposition saying that he has any sort of advice. As Attorney General and the power vested upon me by the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius, let me sound a note of caution about the Official Secrets Act.

(Interruptions)

It is my duty. The Leader of the Opposition will take his responsibility under oath he took when he became former Deputy Prime Minister of this Government.

(Interruptions)

It is my duty, Madam Speaker. I will not stay away from my duty. It is my duty under the Constitution of this land.

The Leader of the Opposition and, in particular, section 3(4)(e) and I continue, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please proceed!

Mr Yerrigadoo: Given the privileged nature, I have sounded a caution ...

(Interruptions)

The Leader of the Opposition takes his responsibility because our Courts...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Silence, please!

(Interruptions)

If we lose time, then I will not be able to give additional time even if that is warranted!

Mr Yerrigadoo: Given the privileged nature, I was saying, Madam Speaker, of legal advice and the provisions of the Official Secrets Act, I do not propose to provide any details as to the legal advice tendered by any law officer of the Attorney General's Office.

Madam Speaker, it is important to note that the Attorney General's Office has not been the legal adviser of the State Trading Corporation on this whole termination of contract and arbitration issue. The STC has received independent legal advice both locally and internationally.

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

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (c) of the question, I would like to stress on the fact that the decision to terminate the contract between Betamax Ltd. and STC was taken after an independent study was carried out by Stephenson Harwood, as I said, a firm specialised in this matter.

According to the Stephenson Harwood Report, had the STC gone on the open market for the transportation of petroleum products, the costs would have been for time charter USD 55,765,247 and for a Normal Contract of Affreightment USD 64,462,321. This analysis showed that STC had overpaid an amount in the range of USD 45 m. to USD 53 m., that is, between Rs1.6 billion and Rs1.9 billion, since May 2011.

Madam Speaker, the total amount paid to Betamax Ltd for the period May 2011 to January 2015 was USD 125,244,128 for the importation of 4,046,703 metric tons of petroleum products, that is, an average freight rate of USD 30.79 per metric ton.

After the termination of the contract with Betamax Ltd., the average freight rate paid by STC for the period February 2015 to May 2017 is USD 24.25 per metric ton, that is, a savings of USD 6.54 per metric ton.

Madam Speaker, from February 2015 as at May 2017, the total savings amounted to USD 16,328,099, that is, some Rs580 m. It is estimated to be USD 17,581,599, that is, Rs622 m. by the end of July 2017.

Madam Speaker, with regard to part (d) of the question, I am informed by the hon. Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection that the STC has informed him that the STC intends to apply to the Supreme Court under the International Arbitration Act to set aside the said arbitral award. The STC has issued a communiqué to that effect on 07 June 2017. I am tabling a copy of that communiqué. The hon. Leader of the Opposition should understand that I cannot give any more details on that forthcoming application to the Supreme Court as same would prejudice the case of the STC.

Mr X. L. Duval: Because of the Attorney General's incompetence, it is confirmed now that the taxpayers will be paying billions of rupees in fines. The first thing I would like to ask is whether he is aware that all the matters that he raised concerning the previous allocations have been fully enquired into by the Police and that the DPP has given a no case to answer to all the protagonists of which I was not one of them. Madam Speaker, this is my first question.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Can I reply to that first question, Madam Speaker?

Mr X. L. Duval: I have not finished.

Madam Speaker: One by one! If the hon. Leader of the Opposition has got two questions, so it is one by one.

(Interruptions)

One by one!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan, don't make provocations, please!

Mr Yerrigadoo: The House would be aware that the Commissioner of Police has...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Don't get excited!

Mr Yerrigadoo: ... on that matter raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, entered a judicial review proceeding against that decision of the DPP and the matter is currently *sub judice* pending before the Supreme Court of Mauritius.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the previous Prime Minister once described the Attorney General as the worst Attorney General in Mauritius since history and this is being confirmed.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, ask your question!

Mr X. L. Duval: I would like to ask the Attorney General – he knows it very well – whether it is not a fact that the Solicitor General, on being consulted about the termination and the termination procedures, gave a report which advised Government not to proceed in the way it is proceeding, and that he, himself, personally overruled that decision. Is the Attorney General going to tell the truth, now?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is casting all sorts of imputation. The Attorney General is a law officer. The Solicitor General is a law officer. Any law officer of the Attorney General's Office on any advice he gives, his advice is privileged, be it for internal matters or to our client Ministries and cannot, by virtue of the Official Secrets Act and under the claim of legal privilege, neither affirm, confirm or say anything with regard to such advice.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Yerrigadoo: Again, I sounded another word of caution because, Madam Speaker

...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some silence in the House? Hon. Attorney General, have you finished your reply.

(Interruptions)

He has not finished his reply.

Mr X. L. Duval: He is going to repeat what he has said already. No, Madam Speaker!

(Interruptions)

He cannot repeat!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Let me see whether he is repeating!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Yerrigadoo: There is a point which is within the precinct of you, Madam Speaker. I am just saying what happens if a former Member of Government discloses, under the cloak of Parliamentary Immunity and Privilege, information which came to his knowledge when he formed part of Cabinet and Government. This is a very important issue which should not be dealt with lightly, in my honest opinion, under the cloak of Parliamentary Immunity.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, the Attorney General has been very silly. I just confirmed the truth in whatever I was saying. Thank you.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I did not confirm anything, Madam Speaker.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will continue now. On the negotiations, we had the Dufry negotiations, but now we have the negotiations with Betamax. Can the Attorney General confirm whether four or five Ministers sat with the owners of Betamax and negotiated new terms for the contract?

(Interruptions)

And I have the Minutes. Can he confirm that this is how it happened? The Attorney General sat with them and negotiated. Is that it?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, Cabinet set up an Interministerial Committee which composed of former Minister of Finance, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, myself, Attorney General, former Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance, hon. Bhadain, and the current Minister of ...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: I am asking a question.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Silence, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Silence, I am on my feet!

(*Interruptions*)

Can we restore order, please? Order in the House, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Order in the House, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Order, in the House!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, when you ask your question, allow the Minister to give his reply. He should be allowed to give his reply.

Mr Yerrigadoo: So, Madam Speaker, it is common practice in our Westminster model, just like under the previous Government, hon. Duval chaired an Interministerial Committee with so many Ministers to decide on whether the contract should be allocated to Betamax.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Silence, please! Silence!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: I never negotiated with anybody. He should bow his head in shame for misinforming the public, Madam Speaker. Can the Attorney General inform us whether in breaking this billion-rupee contract, any *mise en demeure*, any letters were written to Betamax to give them a final warning - first warning, second warning, third warning - and to

tell them that they were breaking the contract and if so, will he table because no such letters were sent to them?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, what is amazing is that the now Leader of the Opposition formed part of that Cabinet. Madam Speaker, three meetings - I am not going to go into the nitty-gritty because I cannot; those will most probably be live issues in the application to set aside the award. But I can say Cabinet set up the Interministerial Committee. There was a first meeting on 09 January 2015; there was a second meeting on 14 January 2015 and on 25 January 2015.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please! Please...

(Interruptions)

Can I ask...

(Interruptions)

We will waste time.

(Interruptions)

I am asking both sides of the House not to be nervous and not to get excited. I know that you are passionate about this debate, but I will ask both the Leader of the Opposition, the Opposition side and Government side not to get nervous about this, otherwise we will not be able to proceed with the work of the House.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, so I was saying that Interministerial Committee met the representative of Betamax Ltd, Mr Bhunjun, with his lawyers and legal advisers; they came to three meetings. One on 09 January 2015, the second one on 14 January 2015 and the third one on 22 January 2015. Madam Speaker, matters discussed in that meeting are to the knowledge of parties in that meeting and Betamax Ltd is fully aware, Mr Bhunjun is fully aware of matters which have been discussed in the three meetings and hon. Bhadain maybe can confirm to the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr X. L. Duval: Again, the Minister is confirming not one thing in writing was put, or *mise en demeure* sent to Betamax before breaking this contract which is costing us billions

of rupees. I would like to ask and I am going to mention Cabinet. I am going to say something very serious, Madam Speaker. Will the Attorney General confirm that he misinformed Cabinet by saying that it is Betamax who did not wish to continue negotiating, whereas it is the Ministerial Committee itself which took the decision to break off the contract and there will be an enquiry on this one day and he will have to answer?

(Interruptions)

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, I have already replied to the question and the threats of the hon. Leader of the Opposition do not scare me, Madam Speaker. Let me just say, on so many - I don't want to put ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem! Hon. Bhagwan! Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Yerrigadoo: I haven't finished my answer.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Yerrigadoo: Allow me to finish my answer, hon. Duval! And I said, I don't want to put credibility and probity. The hon. Leader of the Opposition cited the former Prime Minister, perhaps Mr Navin Ramgoolam, saying whatever, but, let me say, he knows, on so many occasions, he congratulated me on so many issues and he said I was an excellent Attorney General - from himself!

(Interruptions)

Démenti ça, si to vrai, démenti ça! To pas capav démenti et to koné !

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition, please continue!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: It is not Mr Ramgoolam; I am talking about Sir Anerood Jugnauth who said that about him. And you know very well!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Yerrigadoo: No, Madam Speaker.

Mr X. L. Duval: No, Madam Speaker! As far as the alleged savings are concerned, firstly, I challenge the Minister to produce the Stephenson Harwood Report so that it can be examined independently because I have a lot of questions to ask about the Stephenson Harwood Report, Madam Speaker.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, I would like the hon. Minister to, again, submit his workings concerning any alleged saving that has been made. Because from my calculation - I am not a lawyer, I am a Chartered Accountant and I have some of the invoices - not only there has not been any saving hundred or million, not even *10 sous* and we know this is a Government *10 sous*, not even *10 sous*, but instead, Madam Speaker, the country may well have paid tens of millions of rupees additional because of the termination of the Betamax contract. So, not only do we have the fine...

Madam Speaker: This is your question?

Mr X. L. Duval: Let me just explain, he may not understand!

(*Interruptions*)

I will have to explain, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Ask your question!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr X. L. Duval: Not only we do not make any saving, we are going to pay a fine, but now we are going to have no saving at all, a fine of billions of rupees!

Mr Yerrigadoo: I am informed, Madam Speaker, that the accounts of the STC are duly audited and any payments made by the STC can be checked empirically. Secondly, we

have no problem. My learned friend, the Minister of Commerce and Industry and Consumer Protection has tabled in the past, in answers to PQs and even PNQs, details. We have no problem tabling later during the day, the workings backing up the figures I have mentioned in the answer to this PNQ, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, one should know...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr X. L. Duval: ... that the billing from Betamax is variable and not fixed and with the huge fall in the price of bunker with the new deck at the port and the full capacity of the use of the ship, Betamax, in my view, Madam Speaker, would have been cheaper today than Government and I will challenge the Government on this issue to produce all the figures.

(Interruptions)

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, in reply to this, I am advised, and I verily believe, that in the Contract of Affreightment, apart from the freight charges, over and above, freight charges can be variable depending on market rates, yes so be it.

There, again, there are fixed costs which independently of freight charges would have to be paid -

1. demurrage charges;
2. escalation rates for freight and demurrage;
3. port dues and bunker consumption on STC's account, and
4. additional cargo.

All this, Madam Speaker, in the context of a single vessel full-time charter, that is, the Red Eagle had only one purpose and was supposed just to carry petroleum products only and only for the STC.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, *il nous prend pour des idiots ! Le ministre me prend pour un idiot, oui !*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Leader of the Opposition, please! I would remind the House that this House is not a forum for personal attacks. So, I would ask hon. Members to refrain from using words which can be construed as being unparliamentary. Please!

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, have some respect for the public, have some respect! Who cares the bake up of the different issues on the cost of the billing of Betamax! The only thing that matters is whether now per metric ton, the price is more or less calculated from using whatever Betamax would have charged. That is the only issue and it is that issue which must be challenged and submitted to the public so that all the Mauritians can understand what exactly the situation is.

Mr Yerrigadoo: I have just answered to that and one can refer to the Hansard edition albeit unrevised of what hon. Minister Gungah said in his speech a couple of days ago on the matter where he explained everything.

Mr X. L. Duval: Again, I will challenge that and I will ask the hon. Attorney General to kindly provide to this nation, who is going to pay billions in fine, to provide, not just a little bit of paper, the full information that he has in his files.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Yes, STC will provide to the hon. Minister and will table later, but I am informed, as I said in my answer, the freight is actually now less. The STC is paying less now. The STC is now paying USD 24.25 per metric ton and under the Betamax contract it is USD 30.79 cents and...

(Interruptions)

...and we are saving...

(Interruptions)

And the STC, Madam Speaker, is....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Yerrigadoo: And the STC, Madam Speaker, is saving USD 6.54 cents per metric ton...

(Interruptions)

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, those figures are incorrect and my calculation, STC with Betamax would have paid around 21 dollars to 23 dollars per metric ton. I say this and I challenge STC which is providing the hon. Minister with shameful wrong information, not to do so in the future.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Mr Yerrigadoo: Was that a question, Madam Speaker?

Mr X. L. Duval: I want to ask the hon. Attorney General whether he is aware that, in trying to obtain the supposedly cheaper price - which is not a cheaper price, which is, in fact, a more expensive price – and they will also have to answer for the wrong information that they are giving him. I am looking at them, Madam Speaker, and STC...

(Interruptions)

...whether they have used ships which are 20 years old and more, putting in danger, Madam Speaker, our island's environment and our tourism industry?

Mr Yerrigadoo: There is no such question about putting in danger whatever. We have acted in public interest and I have demonstrated in the answer I have given to that PNQ that Republic of Mauritius, STC has saved. As undertaken earlier, we will provide figures which STC shall be giving to its substantive Minister and I will happily table same by the end of today's session, Madam Speaker.

Mr X. L. Duval: Madam Speaker, I will also table just now two Press articles confirming that there were, in fact, big discussions at the time in Government as to whether we should go ahead or not with this contract termination. I would like, in fact, to ask the hon. Attorney General whether he, himself, feels capable of continuing to advise Government in

the rest of these appeals that are coming up for hundreds or billions of rupees from Patel and everywhere? Does he feel comfortable, capable of advising the Government and even overruling the Solicitor General in these cases?

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, let it be clear. Just like any Minister, in his respective Ministry, does not work on technical aspects of his Ministry, but is given a portfolio. Let me say and I will be happy if there is a substantive question on arbitration cases. Those arbitrations are highly specialist arbitration questions. I am only giving answers in the public domain. In this arbitration - commercial and international arbitration - the STC, apart from having retained services of reputable Senior Counsel and Senior Attorney in Mauritius, was advised by a reputable law firm in Singapore Rajah and Tann. On all the other arbitrations which we are defending or in which the State of Mauritius is appearing, clearly in areas that we do not have expertise, we have hired services of reputable law firms and their respective partners to advise Mauritius and to appear for Mauritius on those matters. So, one must be exact and careful and I will be very pleased to reply to any specific question so that we enlighten the House on any such arbitration matter and not making sweeping remarks.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, time is already over, but I will allow you two additional minutes because the hon. Minister, in one instance, asked that the question be repeated. So, I give you two additional minutes for your last question.

Mr X. L. Duval: I have two questions.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, one final question! Your final question!

Mr X. L. Duval: One final only!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Yes.

Mr X. L. Duval: I will ask this, Madam Speaker. In view of the maladministration, it is clearly shown the tampering with negotiations, the incompetence that has been shown; deliberately misinforming the public as to who broke up the negotiation. Madam Speaker, I am challenging this Government to bring forward legislation to make Ministers who do such

acts against the public interest, be personally responsible for their cases so that they pay personally for any of the damages and claims that are made against the Government as a result of their own misdoings.

Mr Yerrigadoo: It is amazing, Madam Speaker, but the final question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition is the echo of Navin Ramgoolam asking in a Press Conference.

(Interruptions)

What an amazing fact, Madam Speaker! I do not agree at all with whatever the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said. I am very sorry, the inescapable...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Yerrigadoo:conclusion one can reach is that he being the mouthpiece of Navin Ramgoolam in this Parliament.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Time is over! However, I wish to remind hon. Members that Private Notice Question is the privilege of the Leader of the Opposition and as far as I am concerned, there is only one Leader of the Opposition. So, I can't allow any supplementary questions ...

(Interruptions)

...unless the hon. Leader of the Opposition has exhausted his questions.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, you are provoking! I have drawn your attention several times not to make provocations so as to allow the House to work in serenity.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, last time!

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. Dr. Husnoo!

(12.13 p.m.)

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Dr. A. Husnoo): Madam Speaker, I am deeply honoured to address this august Assembly on the occasion of the Budget debates 2017-2018. At the very outset, let me extend my heartfelt congratulations to hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for presenting the third Budget of this Government.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some silence in the House, please, because I can't even hear the speech of the hon. Minister!

Dr. Husnoo: Madam Speaker, let me reply to some of the questions raised by hon. Salim Abbas Mamode last week during his speech. Firstly, concerning the stray dogs as indicated by him, I have to inform the House that there is an on-going agreement with the Mauritius Society for Animal Welfare for control of dogs and cats in the premises of our health institutions against a monthly payment of Rs100,000.

As regards the lack of facilities for SAMU, I have the pleasure to inform the House that we are procuring five ambulances for SAMU to deal with the ever increasing requests for ambulances.

Regarding water leakage in our health institutions, we have already started waterproofing the building since last year on a priority basis. A contract for waterproofing for SSRNH has already been awarded and the site was handed over to the contractor.

Madam Speaker, as far as the H1N1 vaccines are concerned, since delivery of the vaccines was slightly delayed, we closed the centre for one day. However, the vaccination process restarted the next day and is proceeding as programmed. Just for the record, at present, we have 69,000 doses of vaccines and we are receiving 50,000 in about a week's time. Normally, we are using about 5,000 to 6,000 vaccines every day and we have a good stock for the time being.

Let me add as well, because now the hospitals are providing vaccines on Saturdays and Sundays till 6.00 p.m. as well.

Now, as far as a point raised by hon. Osman Mahomed, when he was talking about *marchands ambulants*, is concerned, he said that he agreed that we had to put order. I am glad to hear that. But he said that there was no plan B. I am surprised he said that. He seems to have not been in the House because so many times I have answered, the project at La Gare Victoria is on. And he is the only one, I think, who is not aware of it.

Madam Speaker, if you will allow me to continue formally with my intervention now.

Budget 2017-2018 which is presented under the theme of 'Rising to the Challenge of Our Ambitions' represents an important milestone in driving our country into the league of high-income nations. It arranges for sustained strategies to further pave the way for Mauritius to achieve the second economic miracle with the objectives and targets as spelt out in Vision 2030.

Budget 2017-2018 meets peoples' aspirations and expectations for an enhanced quality of life. The five overarching strategic directions of the Budget 2017/2018 target critical areas such as -

- fostering higher growth for more and better jobs;
- massive investment in the infrastructure of tomorrow;

- further improving the quality of life of the population;
- ushering a New Social Paradigm, and
- consolidating macro-economic fundamentals.

These pragmatic measures will, no doubt, contribute to attain the desired economic growth rate of 4.1% in 2018. They will be the major drivers to elevate our country to the league of high-income countries. And it is expected that our *per capita* income will increase from the current level of USD 9740 to USD 13600 by the year 2023.

Madam Speaker, if you would allow me now to express myself on my sector. Health constitutes an essential sector of our national economy. It makes a significant contribution to the GDP. Productivity in all other sectors hinges on the good health of the people. For 2017-18, the financial envelope of my Ministry will be Rs11.67 billion, representing an increase of Rs845 m. as compared to the allocation of Rs10.9 billion made for the current financial year 2016/2017.

Government expenditure on health as a percentage of GDP has increased from 2.42% in financial year 2016-17 to 2.54% in financial year 2017-18. *Per capita* expenditure on health in respect to the budget of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is estimated at Rs9,558 in financial year 2017-18 compared to Rs8,866 for financial year 2016-17.

Madam Speaker, it goes without saying that good health contributes to sustain economic growth. Mauritius has no other resources than its human capital. As the Government is pursuing its efforts to make Mauritius a high-income country and to improve the living standards of the whole population, it is more than essential to ensure that our human capital enjoys a good health. This places a duty upon my Ministry to provide quality health services to all Mauritians in a sustainable manner.

The Mauritian health system is among the best in Africa and its improvement is on-going under the current political leadership. In line with the Government Vision 2030, the health systems are being further strengthened in view to improving the quality of life of all the citizens of Mauritius. Emphasis is more on performance towards quality.

In 2015, the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 17 goals to be met by 2030. Goal 3 is on health, namely to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages. Health is positioned as a major contributor to the other SDGs: without health, many of the other SDGs cannot be achieved. It is worth noting that Mauritius

has already achieved some of the health related SDG targets. For example, in 2016, under 5 Mortality Rate was 14 per 1,000 live births in Mauritius compared to the global target of 25 to be attained by 2030.

Madam Speaker, budget 2017-2018 builds on the succession of the two previous budgets of this Government. However Budget 2017-2018 is not only about the proposed allocation of funds and budgetary policies to achieve economic and social outcomes, but it is also an economic and social plan. It incorporates a Three-Year Strategic Plan from financial year 2017-18 to financial year 2019-20.

The main objective of the Three-Year Strategic Plan in the health sector aims at promoting the health of the nation and improving the quality of life through the development of an affordable and sustainable health care system. To achieve these objectives, Government will invest significantly in health. An estimated total amount of Rs5.5 billion will be invested during the forthcoming three Financial Years to enhance the provision of healthcare infrastructures in the public sector.

As far as the ageing population and the NCD is concerned, that is, the Non-Communicable Diseases, my Ministry will leave no stone unturned to deal with the growing challenges of the ageing population and the rising prevalence on Non-Communicable Diseases. NCDs such as diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases, which mostly relate to affluence, unhealthy lifestyles and poor dietary practice, are major health concerns in Mauritius. In 2015, the prevalence of diabetes was 23% among the adult population of 25-74 years. Pre diabetic is 19.4% making a total of nearly 42% of the population at risk of complications of diabetes. The prevalence of hypertension is 25%. I will continue with some more statistics, Madam Speaker.

Besides what I have said about nearly 42% of the population at risk of diabetes and hypertension 25%, 56% of the population is either overweight or obese. Only 23% of the Mauritian adult population does regular exercise, which means that nearly 77% of the population does not do regular exercise. And we all know the importance of doing exercise. 19% of the population currently smoke and the prevalence of alcohol consumption in Mauritius is 52%. What a situation, Madam Speaker!

Cancer as well is increasing. In 2015, there were nearly 2,500 new cases of cancer and this is increasing compared to the 2014 figures. As far as Diabetes is concerned, Mauritius is the first in Africa and third in the world ranking. As you are aware, this

problem leads to other complications like cataracts, cardiovascular problems, amputations and kidney failures. An estimate of nearly 80% of the hospital budget is spent on patients suffering from Non-Communicable Diseases and their complications.

With such dire statistics, the control of NCD is being reengineered, Madam Speaker. We need a multi-pronged approach.

The whole NCD service needs to be modernised with new modalities of treatment and proper follow-up of patients. If we want to make a real improvement in NCD, we have to pay more attention to our diet and make sure that the Mauritian public does regular exercise. These are two most important things, diet and exercise because the major problem in Mauritius is Non-Communicable Disease and if we want to improve the NCD, we have to concentrate on these two: look at the diet, what we are actually eating and encourage people to do regular exercise.

In this regard, we are going to recruit additional nutritionists in the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life. We have to review the health education regarding diet in primary schools as well. We are putting up a computerised diabetic management system for better follow-up. Overall, Madam Speaker, we have to review the whole management of the Non-Communicable Disease because Mauritius is in dire straits, to tell you frankly.

As mentioned at item 225 of the Budget Speech, we have to get more people, young and old, men and women to practise sports, to engage in physical activities. A new national sport policy is going to be set up to encourage greater participation of young adolescent girls in sports activities. Promoting exercise at the workplace and encouraging sport for school-aged children after school hours.

As far as smoking is concerned, we have to control this as well. In fact, this morning I was at a workshop where we stressed on the importance of control of tobacco in Mauritius. As I mentioned earlier, the prevalence of smoking was 19% in the adult age group and the population, as I mentioned, who consume alcohol is 52%. We welcome the 5% increase in tax for beer and alcoholic products and the 10% for tobacco products. It has been shown that increasing the duty on tobacco decreases the prevalence of smoking, especially among young people.

To provide better NCD service, we are going to decentralise the NCD clinics to the Medi Clinics, community health centres and area health centres. This will give a better service to the population and less time will be wasted in queues at the hospitals.

As far as cancer is concerned, we are going to encourage young girls to do the HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer. Screening of breast and cervical cancer would be expanded and a palliative cancer care will be set up. Terminally ill cancer patients have multidimensional needs including physical, social, emotional and practical needs. Palliative care will be decentralised to support these patients in the different hospitals of the island.

Madam Speaker, all these investments and the re-engineering of our on-going programme will no doubt contribute to the overall enhancement of the health status of our people. Our key goal is to raise the average life expectancy at birth to the same level as high income countries by 2030, that is, from 74.6 years in 2015 to, at least, 75.4 years by 2020 and 76.2 years by 2030.

Our present fertility rate is 1.3 well below the replacement value of 2.1. What does that mean, Madam Speaker? I am going to explain it. Suppose in one generation of the population you have hundred people, if you want to have hundred people in the next generation, you must have a fertility rate of 2.1, that is, for hundred in the first generation to have hundred in the second generation. But now, in Mauritius, our fertility rate is 1.3. We are having less and less number of children who are being born. On the other hand, we have more and more people in the older age group. If we continue with this fertility rate in about five years' time, the population of Mauritius will start decreasing and we can guess the effect, the consequence of the decreasing population in the socio-economic system of our country.

We have to improve the care provided to our ageing population and, in this context, we are going to set up an early dementia diagnosis service. Suffering from dementia is a real tragedy for the patient and the family alike. This service will be provided in the five regional hospitals as outpatient to enhance the quality of life of individuals with dementia, their caregivers and their family members.

It is estimated that there are about 10,000 persons suffering from dementia in Mauritius and with an increasingly ageing population this number is expected to double by 2030. My Ministry has already prepared a National Strategy for Dementia in line with the WHO Global Plan on Public Health Response to Dementia 2017-2025.

The decentralisation of the psychiatric service is also very important. At Pandit Sahadeo Area Health Centre, Vacoas, psychiatric nurses are operating one psychiatric clinic for Modecate injection since the year 2011. Psychiatric nurses working at Brown Sequard Mental Hospital have received training in community psychiatric service. The region of Flacq has been identified for implementation of community psychiatric service on a pilot basis. Once the work plan is finalised, the project will start soon. It is very important to develop community psychiatric services. I don't think all the patients suffering from psychiatric problems should be locked away at BSH.

In the same vein, we are going to help the NGOs which are doing a wonderful job of looking after psychiatric patients in the community. The service of a treating psychiatrist will be made available to Friends in Hope, for example, half a day on a weekly basis to assist in reviewing beneficiary cases, holding talks, staff coaching and training is the latest update of psychiatry.

Similarly, as you are aware, we have a number of children and adults suffering from autism. Autism Mauritius is giving a service which is not being given by the Government service. So, a grant will be made available to Autism Mauritius so that they can continue to provide support to these children and some adults for this debilitating disease.

On a different idea, Madam Speaker, my Ministry also intends to implement a blindness prevention programme. Recent data suggests that a large number of people are blind due to high incidence of cataract and vitreous retinal bleed mostly as a complication of diabetes and high blood pressure. Vision screening programme will be implemented on a large scale to detect individuals suffering from these pathologies. Moreover, the ophthalmologist service will be expanded to SSRNH and Souillac Hospital so that treatment can be given to these patients early to prevent them from going blind.

Madam Speaker, I would wish now to mention some measures and some new service that are being planned. Key capital projects to be implemented in the next three years include

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- (i) the construction of a new ENT hospital with a grant provided by the Government of India;
- (ii) a new cancer centre at Solferino;

- (iii) a new modern warehouse for pharmaceutical products and other medical consumables with proper facilities. As you are aware, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life is criticised for the improper storage of drugs year in year out in the Audit Report. So, we have to act now to provide a place where medicines can be kept in good condition;
- (iv) we are working also on the new hospital at Flacq;
- (v) the implementation of the e-health system;
- (vi) setting up of new Dialysis Units at Long Mountain Community Hospital and Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
- (vii) setting up of a national health laboratory centre;
- (viii) a new Neurosurgery Unit at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital;
- (ix) Yves Cantin Hospital will be upgraded and provided with inpatient facilities;
- (x) construction of Medi Clinics at Quartier Militaire, Stanley and Bel Air;
- (xi) Area Health Centres will be built at Bambous and Rivière du Rempart;
- (xii) Community Health Centres at Saint François Xavier, Plaine Verte, l'Esperance, Quartier Militaire, Cap Malheureux, Trou d'Eau Douce, Camp de Masque, Grand' Baie and Baie du Cap, and
- (xiii) acquisition of high-tech medical equipment including two linear accelerators and brachytherapy amongst others for the new cancer centre.

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, the Linear Accelerator at Victoria Hospital was bought about 20 years ago. The lifespan of this Linear Accelerator is 10 years, but, unfortunately, no replacement has been made over the last 10 years. Hence, the catastrophic situation we are in now with the breakdown of this crucial lifesaving equipment.

We have to send patients regularly to India for their treatment. And you can imagine the difficulty for these cancer patients who are weak and sometimes in very poor physical condition to travel to India for treatment. But we are working on it. We are working to replace, to put a new linear accelerator urgently at Victoria Hospital. This is going to cost Rs150 m., but I think our patients deserve it. As I mentioned, cancer is a major public health concern internationally and in Mauritius. The number of new cancer cases registered in 2014 was 2,387 as compared to 2,107 cases in 2013. At present cancer services are clearly outdated and the country is in dire need of a modern, responsive and comprehensive service.

Palliative care for cancer patients is almost non-existent. A new state-of-the-art Cancer Centre is being set up to address the gap in our cancer services. This project will be

implemented in two phases. We'll need highly technical input for this hospital, and I am in discussion with HSCC from India for this project.

The most important phase will be Phase 2. This will comprise the construction of a new Radiotherapy Block including two Bunkers with two Multi-leaf Collimator Linear Accelerators, CT Simulator, 3D Treatment Planning System and Accessories. amongst other equipment.

As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, this setting up of the new Cancer Centre is a must because we are facing a major problem with the increasing prevalence of cancer in Mauritius.

Construction of a new ENT Hospital is in the pipeline. This hospital, as you know, is presently accommodated in an old colonial wooden building, which is subject to termites attack, water leakages and seepages during the rainy season.

With a view to alleviating the problems, my Ministry under the G 2 G agreement with India, will construct a new state-of-the-art ENT hospital, with a total surface area of 12,498 m² and comprising among others, three operation theatres, six bedded Intensive Care Unit with all the required facilities; there will be three wards of 30 beds each. The preliminary budget estimate is Rs571 m. including VAT. Construction of the ENT hospital is expected to start in September 2017 and will last for 18 months.

The next project is a new Eye Hospital. Presently, as you know, it is accommodated in a concrete building which is not amenable to any upgrading or renovation and expansion work for further development. The Ministry has decided to construct a new Eye Hospital on a portion of land of approximately 10 arpents situated along the Dual Carriageway opposite Apollo Bramwell Hospital at Réduit. The acquisition procedures are underway.

The new eye hospital will provide technologically advanced health services to the population. At present, the hospital is overcrowded. The specific project objective is to -

- (i) ensure universal coverage of specialised eye care services in the country;
- (ii) increase capacity of clinical treatment and non-clinical services which will automatically result in economies of scale;
- (iii) cater for increasing demand of services due to the ageing population and rising burden of non-communicable diseases;
- (iv) reduce waiting list for surgeries and other medical treatment.

The new eye hospital will operate as a Centre of Excellence. The new hospital will help to adapt to changing public health needs of the country.

Madam Speaker, now I am going to say a few words about the e-health. My Ministry is planning to introduce the e-health project on a pilot basis at Dr. A. G. Jeetoo hospital. The overall objective of such a project is to facilitate the processing of patients' files, minimise duplication of entries and enable easy access and timely retrieval of patients' data. At the same time, the project provides for better management of human resources, stock taking of pharmaceutical products and eventual monitoring of patients' files in hospitals. Upon successful implementation at the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital, the project would thereafter be rolled out to include the five medi clinics and the Community and Area Health Centres in Port Louis. Eventually, it is going to expand to the four other regional hospitals and the associated health centres to cover the whole island.

In Black River, as far as the Yves Cantin Community Hospital is concerned, Rs15 m. have been provided for the upgrading of Yves Cantin Community Hospital at Rivière Noire to provide for additional facilities and inpatient services. At present, we do not have an inpatient service there. So, we are going to introduce inpatient services. I am sure this will make a difference to the lives of the inhabitants of Black River.

As everybody is aware, physical inactivity is one of the risks of NCDs and, as I mentioned before, about 77% of the population is not doing sufficient physical activities. About 50% of the cause of death is due to cardiovascular disease. To provide additional facilities, my Ministry will continue its policy of constructing Health Tracks in several parts of the country. This will complement to some degree the infrastructural development being undertaken by my colleague, the Minister of Youth and Sports, to help in this direction. If we want to prevent NCDs, there is no better way than to encourage the population to do regular exercise. This is a *sine qua non*.

Now, I am going to talk about two other projects which are a bit closer to my heart. Firstly, the Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICU) which presently exist in three regional hospitals, namely, Victoria Hospital, SSRN Hospital and J. Nehru Hospital. The NICU bed capacity in all the three hospitals is only 13 beds.

Such number is highly insufficient for the neonatal population. Very frequently, the paediatrician has to wait long before he can transfer a sick baby to a Neonatal Intensive Care

Unit. In view of the increasing number of premature births due to several increasing risk factors such as teenage pregnancies and late pregnancies, my Ministry intends to increase the number of beds to 34. Provision will be made so that there is no shortage of place at the Intensive Care Unit for newborns for the next 15 years.

In addition, my Ministry is also going ahead with the provision of a Paediatric Intensive Care Unit. Previously, I talked about the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit, now it is the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit. When we start medical school, the first thing we are told is a child is not a small adult. He is different physiologically. He has different psychological and emotional makeup.

Presently, children above the age of one, whenever they need Intensive Care Unit, they are admitted to the adult ICU and, believe me, this is not the best place for a very sick child to be in an adult ICU. Thus, a PICU will be set up to cater for these sick children. It is the first one we are setting up and eventually, we are setting it at Dr. Jeetoo Hospital and, if need be, we are going to increase it to different hospitals as well.

Appropriate training is also being given to the medical and nursing staff to look after our children population.

Another main theme that was discussed in the budget was the National Healthcare Waste Facilities. The National Healthcare Waste Facilities Project will be implemented during the 2017/2018. Presently, contaminated healthcare wastes generated from public health institutions are being disposed of in incinerators located mainly in the regional hospitals most of which are located in residential areas. Frequent complaints have been received regarding air pollution associated mainly with smoke emissions.

In this context, my Ministry has embarked on the implementation of a National Healthcare Waste Disposable Facility at La Chaumière on a plot of land of the extent of two *Arpents* 50. This facility will basically aim at improving the healthcare waste management. The terms of reference for the consultancy service in respect of this project have already been finalised. Bidding documents for the procurement of the consultancy service are being prepared. It is expected that the bid will be launched by the end of June 2017.

In the meantime and as a backup facility, new incinerators will be installed at SSRN and Victoria Hospitals to replace the existing non-functioning ones.

Tobacco use is the second leading cause of death worldwide causing about 7 million deaths every year. Moreover, some 600,000 people died due to tobacco exposure every year. In Mauritius, it is estimated that around 1,000 people die every year due to tobacco smoke. Tobacco consumption and exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke is responsible for a number of chronic diseases including cancer, lung disease and cardiovascular diseases. Studies have shown that a 10% increase in the price of tobacco products will result in a 5% decrease in consumption.

Moreover, it is submitted that young people are two or three times more responsive to tax and price changes than older people. Tobacco tax increases will have a significant effect on reducing tobacco consumption among young people as well as on reducing the chance of young people moving from experimentation to addiction.

Most of our acute admissions at Brown Sequard Hospital and in the adult male ward in the regional hospitals are due to alcoholism. So, we hope that the 5% tax increase in alcohol will make some difference to the problem of alcoholism in Mauritius and we welcome the tax increase both on tobacco and on alcohol.

Madam Speaker, please allow me to say a few words on Rodrigues now. Following my last visit to Rodrigues and discussions held with the different stakeholders there, it has been agreed to extend the Queen Elizabeth Hospital to provide for additional health facilities in view of the increase in demand. Accordingly, a sum of Rs36 m. is being allocated to the healthcare sector in Rodrigues as follows –

- Rs30 m. have been provided for the renovation of the hospital as well as Rs9.7 m. for the conversion of one ward into a paediatric unit, and
- in addition Rs8.5 m. have been provided for La Ferme Area Health Centre and Rs5 m. for the haemodialysis service in Rodrigues.

Madam Speaker, over the next three years, there would be a lot of development in the health sector in Mauritius which we are sure is going to improve the quality of care provided to our population.

I wish to thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for providing me with the opportunity to modernise the healthcare infrastructure bringing in in-depth reform to healthcare delivery and supporting me in fighting more effectively the non-communicable

disease, which, as we know, is in epidemic proportion now. This will help to bring down the burden of disease in our society.

The objective is to adopt a patient centred healthcare and strengthen our health system so that instead of sending patients abroad, it will be possible for us to treat them locally. I am sure, Madam Speaker, that the development in the health centre over the next three years will change the physical infrastructure of a number of our health facilities and, more importantly, provide a much better quality of care that our population rightly deserve.

I thank you again, Madam Speaker.

Thank you, very much.

Madam Speaker: I suspend the sitting for one hour.

At 12.51 the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 1.59 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East):

Thank you, Madam Speaker; I have, as all of us, listened with a lot of interest to the interventions of all the previous Members in this Assembly. I am happy to note that hon. Dr. Husnoo has taken the front bench of the Government side, but it is unfortunate for him that it is not a promotion but only a simple matter of musical chair.

It has not been in my habit to have him faced any music whatsoever but allow me to say that I will have to comment on what he has stated in his intervention or what he has failed to address in his intervention. Madam Speaker, each and every time the Minister of Finance of any Government comes to this Assembly and presents his work, his plan, his vision for the coming year or years to the population. Now we have it. We have live broadcast. People are willing to sit down and listen to everything that is being stated more so when it comes to a Budget Speech.

It is my contention, Madam Speaker, that nothing will be able to change with the way that people view the presentation of a Budget if we do not go to the very fundamentals that need to be changed. What I mean by that is the following. It is clear that whatever this Government is going to propose, it has to obtain *l'adhésion populaire*. It has to obtain the

approval of the people. It has to obtain the assent not of us, we will just do what has to be done but the people out there they have certain expectations.

It is not the opinion of Government that counts. At the end of the day, it is not necessarily even the opinion of the Opposition that counts because what does matter is what the people outside watching us believe this Budget brings to their daily life. I have asked people not of only my Constituency but nationally; I have asked people from various walks of life: 'what does this Budget mean to you?' I have asked people going to the sugarcane fields, what does this Budget mean to you?

It obviously means something different to someone working in the Cyber City, someone working in the call centre, someone who is a pilot, someone who is a medical doctor, someone who is a simple plumber but so important because we need people like that. A simple electrician but not simple because we need people like that. People working in industries, people working in the export sector, I have asked all of them: 'what does this Budget mean to you?' There is one common denominator that I always hear, that they expect that any Budget would bring a reduction in the cost of living. They expect that. Has this Budget met with the expectations of the people, Madam Speaker, and what are those expectations? As I have said, the mother and the father of a family, they expect that this Budget will reduce the cost of living, the expenses they have to incur with regard to family expenses. They expect that it will bring something positive for the children who are going to school - their children. They expect that somehow the burden that they have to carry every day, the sacrifice will be looked into, will be addressed by the Budget. To simplify matters, Madam Speaker, they expect as simple as that - when they go to the shop or the hypermarket next door or a little afar; when they look at what they have spent, there is a reduction in it. They do not expect more than that when you think about it. Has this Budget really addressed what people are expecting outside? And the answer is 'no'. Why it will never be able to address it? It is because it is clear.

When I listen to Members of Government who come as Ministers to read pre-prepared documents to defend the budget of their ministries, when I look at the Government defending the very essence, even the backbenchers coming to say that everything that Government is doing is perfect, there is nothing wrong with it, there can be no room for improvement. No one has had the courage, Madam Speaker, to come and try to be different; to try to have a critical analysis of that Budget. Every single one of the Members of

Government has come and said everything is perfect and there can be no wrong, there will be no wrong as long as it is hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth who is Prime Minister just like before him it was his father. There can be no wrong, there will be no wrong, he makes no mistake he is the perfect being.

This, in itself, destroys the very essence of a debate and whenever the Members of the Opposition decide that they will have to be critical in their approach even though constructive, just because we do not agree with Government and what they propose, we have the fireman *de service*, hon. Sinatambou who will go for a Press conference and go as far as to say that Opposition Members who have a different opinion are not patriots.

So, either you bow to the ways of thinking, the methodology and the vision of Government or if you do not bow to them, you are, therefore, not a patriot. Where, therefore, is the very concept of agree to disagree? Where is, therefore, the very nature about democracy? In this august Assembly, we are supposed to have a debate, not a pre-prepared script. This is what our Standing Orders say, Madam Speaker. In this august Assembly, I am supposed to hear people talk on the spur of the moment, and come and tell us why they agree? What they may think could be done to be different, but what we see, Madam Speaker, is not that. It is just a conflict between Opposition and Government and nothing else. It is just politics that is in essence being given *la priorité* and not economics. It is politics and in essence the very advantage that each political party is going to try to vie for position, political supremacy. This is what becomes more important than vision, national interest. This is taken in the back seat.

I was here listening very carefully to hon. Dr. Husnoo and hon. Dr. Husnoo, I am sad to note, is a Member of my own Constituency, an elected Member. I am not sad because he is a Member of that Constituency. Far from it! He will note, Madam Speaker, that I have never stood up in this Assembly, criticised him or even said anything against him with regard to his previous or this Ministry. I only put questions, but have never gone below the belt. But there is something which I view with sadness today; it is that I would have expected him today to address issues pertaining to Constituency No. 3. True it is, he is a hon. Minister who has to come and defend his portfolio, but he is also a Member of Parliament of Constituency No. 3.

In Constituency No. 3, today I have met people who are listening, who are listening to him and were expecting to hear from him as to what exactly he proposes as an elected Member in the Government of that Constituency. What does he propose to do to address the

issue of a drug substitution therapy of Methadone, how it has gone in such a disastrous direction? How it is being delivered next or in vicinity with the school? This was never, I am sure, his own idea, but the fact is today he is the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, Member of Parliament of the Constituency, Madam Speaker, and therefore he owes it to the constituents whom he represents to give them a solution and not to allow such a situation to rot because this is precisely what is happening, a rotting situation where Methadone is being delivered next to schools. People from the school go into the garden, next to where the users are receiving their Methadone, and there is an intermingling which is not to the liking of the parents of that locality. He knows it better than I do. I expected him to address this.

I expected him to address the very important issue which is the rise of prostitution in our Constituency. I expected him to be truthful in his approach by coming to admit that the Government may have started a Commission of Enquiry on Drugs, but the very fact is, that this has not reduced the consumption of synthetic drugs in our Constituency and in many towns and villages out there, Madam Speaker. The use of synthetic drugs is rampant today. If they are to make us believe that because of a simple Commission of Enquiry that is making headlines once in a while, they have tackled a very important *fléau* that is killing our youths, they are wrong. How has this Commission of Enquiry reduced in any way the use of synthetic drugs? How has this Commission of Enquiry in any way reduced the number of people who are dying because of synthetic drugs? How has this Commission of Enquiry in any way addressed the sadness in the hearts of parents and family members and citizens of this country who have to see deaths leaving their homes because precisely Government has been incapable of addressing the issue of drugs? Simply to come and say: “well, we have set up a Commission of Enquiry. The former Judge, Mr Paul Lam Shang Leen, is there, tackling issues. This means we are having a control on it.”

We have seen in the Press, heroin in a majority of cases, being stopped at the airport or in the port or in the gas cylinders, but what about synthetic drugs? This is the poison of the modern world; the world we are living in, not only in Mauritius, but in other countries as well. But when a Government sits down, when the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life, who is responsible for the dossier of the delivery of Methadone or Suboxone from his previous colleague, previous Minister of Health and Quality of Life who had the goals – let us only remind the people watching us today, Madam Speaker, what hon. Gayan said: “this was not the cause of any death or whatsoever and it was not an emergency. It was not an urgent problem. It was not a problem in actual fact”. But, unfortunately, hon. Dr. Husnoo is

now sitting on that hot seat. People are still dropping out there. He is in Government, but each time that I will come and say something like that, then you will have *le pompier de service*, hon. Sinatambou, who will come and with his *mop de service*, try to clean up the mess by saying: “What! Or well, you were in Government, what did you do?”

Well, let me just simplify matters for them, maybe they have not understood. In the beginning of a mandate you can turn around and say: “you were in Government.” In the beginning of a mandate you can turn around and say: “you messed up, that is why we won.” You have already passed the stage of *mi-mandat*.

Now that each and every time that you turn around and say: “You, what did you do?” It shows that you are coward, a coward who cannot even face the fact that there are problems out there that the Government cannot, in any way, solve because of sheer incompetence and negligence. But if it is not incompetence, if it is not negligence; what can it be? Ignorance! Ignorance of the obvious! Let us turn one’s eye to the obvious and let us open our heads, the sword of Damocles hangs by a slender thread until it will drop and destroy the very strength of this nation. Each and every time they turn around and look in the rear view mirror: “What did you do? What did you do?” They are in Government, Madam Speaker, I am not! And if I were in Government and all such things had happened, I would have been ashamed. We have a Government which is today in power, and let me say that for all to hear and even *le pompier de service*.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mohamed, please! Don’t continue to refer to the hon. Member as ‘*le pompier de service!*’ I stated last time that hon. Members are entitled to use severe language, but so long as it is within the bounds of order.

Mr Mohamed: I will not address the hon. Member as ‘*pompier de service*’. Anyone who wants to act as ‘*pompier de service*’ maybe they will recognise themselves. Anyone who wants to act like that, what do they have to do? Why don’t they go out there and explain issues of that nature. Now, only one who wants to clean up the fire that is brewing.

Just now, I heard the hon. Attorney General’s speech. The hon. Attorney General says that he will not divulge matters with regard to Betamax. He will not divulge the legal opinion that has been delivered. Why? Because it is privileged! But it is trite law. It is simple law for anyone who is a first year student in the field of law to understand that, and he can easily be consulted even by those who are not lawyers; that privilege does not belong to the lawyer

but privilege belongs to the client, and, in this particular case, the client was Government and it is for Government to decide whether it wants to be transparent and whether it wants to give the document or not. If he holds on to that privilege, it is his choice, not the choice of the lawyer or the legal team delivering the advice.

So, Government, in spite of the fact that they have the right to waive that privilege and give that legal opinion, they decide not to. Why? What are they trying to hide? When I heard the hon. Attorney General standing in this Assembly and saying that, at that time when this contract was signed, the Betamax and the STC contract, it was against the advice of the State Law Office.

(Interruptions)

But it is amazing! Thank God for Hansard! I, here, will refer to a document. This is a document where my good friend, hon. Uteem - PQ No. B/73 - STC – Betamax Shipping Ltd - Petroleum Products - when he put a question to the hon. Minister Gungah, and in that particular document, hon. Uteem says, I quote -

“Following up on my learned friend’s question, can the hon. Minister tell the House who was the legal adviser who gave that advice? Because answering to a PQ on 24 May 2011, the hon. Minister Soodhun, in an answer to a question put by me, stated that –

That is what hon. Soodhun stated -

“In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the advice of the SLO was that the agreement is legally in order.”

So, I said to myself when I heard the hon. Attorney General this morning saying that the advice was that they should not proceed with it because allegedly it was against public procurement legislation.

But here, I read that hon. Soodhun, himself, when he was Minister stood up in the Assembly, if I am not mistaken, where hon. Adrien Duval is sitting today, this was the position that he sat in. And I said: “Let me go and see 24 May 2011, what exactly was said.” I saw that question, in fact, was indeed question No. B/391 in 2011. A question put on Betamax Petroleum Products and Transportation.

And in this particular question, hon. Uteem wanted to know precisely what was the advice obtained prior to entering into that contract. Maybe Members of the august Assembly,

on the other side, have to know, maybe they are not given all the information, maybe backbenchers there, Madam Speaker, have to know. They are not given all the information. Ministers choose to give some information and are economical with some other information. It is important, therefore, to be transparent because people outside are listening to us, Madam Speaker, and they also have to know. Today, this Government says that supposedly the State Law Office decided that they should not proceed with this contract with Betamax, *parce que supposément il y avait une illégalité dans le processus. Comment se fait-il alors, Madame la présidente, qu'en 2011, maintenant le Vice-Premier ministre, alors ministre du Commerce, debout dans cette Assemblée, a dit -*

«In regard to part (b) of the question, I have been informed by the STC that the reply is in the affirmative.”

Therefore if you want the smoking gun, if you want the evidence, if you want the unshakeable evidence, that, in fact, a Member of this Government, opposing to us, was, in fact, standing in this Assembly in the position of Minister of Commerce, in charge of that particular file of Betamax, saying that the State Law Office advice was, indeed, taken and it was legally in order, therefore, Madam Speaker, whose version are we to believe?

The population is watching us today. You have heard the Attorney General say one thing, they have now the evidence that hon. Soodhun said something else that is diametrically opposed. Either, one is true and the other is false; it cannot be that both of those facts are true.

Who, therefore, will take the hat and put it on their head and will pass for the clown? Because the population out there does not want to be made a fool of! The population out there does not like them being taken for a ride; the population out there does not like it that they are being taken for fools. Because, today, the population has two versions: one of hon. Soodhun and one of the hon. Attorney General. Many versions! We will have a third one most probably from hon. Sinatambou later on. Which is which? It is very simple. Either A or B, which is which? It cannot be that hon. Soodhun was lying, or could it be? It cannot be that the Attorney General was lying this morning, that he was hiding the truth from us. Could it be? Or can't it be? Which is possible?

We are, therefore, in the realm of a lottery. We are not in the realm of a Parliamentary democracy, where we expect people to speak the truth. We are just in the realm of a lottery. In Creole, they called it *pik poul*. Who is the *poul* and who will be doing the *piké*? *En tout cas*, it should not be the population because the population, at the end of the day, is *le dindon*

de la farce, because here it is a farcical situation. I challenge both of them, hon. Soodhun and the hon. Attorney General, to meet up and come to the population and tell us by the close of business today who is the one speaking the truth and who is not.

When hon. Soodhun was in Parliament, I was Minister with him and I was sitting just behind. I remember he defended the case of Betamax with all his might, with all his conviction. He defended the case of Betamax and that file, and said that it was totally in order and it was in the interest of the people and the SLO had said it was in order, and that's it.

Today, he is Vice-Prime Minister on the front bench and because of the incompetence of Government, we are today sitting down on a time bomb, because the fact is that the bomb will blow up. And what is that bomb, Madam Speaker? To mistake the people out there, *la population de l'île Maurice, les jeunes, les enfants, même ceux qui ne travaillent pas ont aujourd'hui une dette*, shoved on their head, a noose tied around their neck suffocating the population because of the sheer incompetence of the Government that decided to bring an end to a contract against an advice of the Solicitor General. That is a fact! That is why I say that this Budget will never *obtenir l'adhésion populaire*? Never! Because, today, we have a Government that is a *gouvernement de contradiction*! In the midst of that Government, you have several versions of the truth. And there are not two truths, there is only one truth.

But the fact is, we have a Government that does not believe in transparency. We have a Government that says it is going for the Freedom of Information Act, but does nothing for the Freedom of Information Act. What has it done?

Today, we have an Attorney General *qui cache la vérité et aujourd'hui il se cache derrière une opération de la loi, quand il dit que soi-disant ce conseil des avocats a été donné et c'est un des conseils confidentiels*.

Let me add to this why today we did not have time to bring up, sheer incompetence of Government. Do we know how much Government has paid to their lawyers in Singapore for this particular matter of arbitration? Do we know that, in fact, *la population aussi commence à savoir et doit savoir, à cause de l'incompétence de ce gouvernement* - each and every time I see the interested feature of my good friend, hon. Jhugroo. I cannot blame him; he was not part of that Government. So, don't worry, he is not to blame. Because he was not part of that Government, he was here as Chief Whip when this blunder was committed.

And what is interesting is that the award goes as far to say that the legal costs of Betamax have to be paid by the State Trading Corporation. Not only its own legal costs, but

the legal costs of the State Trading Corporation! And to go further, each and every day that goes by interest, it is going up. I am informed that the legal costs go as far into several millions of US dollars. Therefore, almost Rs150 m. to Rs200 m! Et encore une fois l'incompétence de ce gouvernement a créé une situation révoltante. La population de l'Ile Maurice, Madame la présidente, se voit maintenant avec une ardoise salée, *almost poisonous!* But then every Minister who is responsible for that will tell you 'I am immune from any prosecution'. They will show the Public Officers Protection Act up there 'I cannot be taken to task because I was acting in my public official capacity.'

But we need a law and this is when we will start building trust again with the population. There is the need for a law. Il y a besoin d'avoir une nouvelle loi qui met la responsabilité, qui met les ministres devant leurs responsabilités quand ils prennent une décision qui va à l'encontre d'un avis légal, qui va à l'encontre d'un rapport qui a été soumis par le *Solicitor General*, quand ils décident d'agir comme courtiers de par eux-mêmes. On n'a jamais entendu quelque chose comme cela. Des ministres qui se voient attribuer le rôle de courtiers commerciaux pour négocier avec les préposés de Betamax. Where are we going? That you set up a Ministerial Committee in order to look at an independently produced report, yes, an independent assessment, yes, but not to go and negotiate in lieu and instead of people, officers of the State Trading Corporation. This is treason against the people!

When did Ministers of Government have the right to negotiate contracts to be entered into by the State Trading Corporation? When? Who gave them that power? This has never been done in the past! Anyone else may say that this was done in the past, but this was never done in the past. There was an inter-Ministerial Committee which analysed independent reports with regard to Betamax - whether it was a good contract or not. Let us not forget that for the Betamax contract, BDO, the very firm that this Government swears by because they believe in the credibility of that firm, was retained and BDO approved the very nature of this contract and said it was a good one.

So, this Government does things and then what? They are going to come and try to give another angle to it and say that they were right, in the name of what? In the name of good governance! Can this Government give us lessons about good governance? Let us talk about good governance. I am sad, in fact, just to get back to hon. Dr. Husnoo. Hon. Dr. Husnoo was talking about Saint Francois Xavier Community Service. I was looking here and the only thing I saw is the upgrading of Community Health Centres.

The only thing I saw here at page 207 of the Estimates for 2017-2018 item 419 - Upgrading of Community Health Centres, for last year it was Rs9 m. and for this year it is Rs10 m. But there is no mention here of how much is going to be spent on the construction of a new Community Health Centre, he never said upgrading, just now in his speech, he said construction. But if there is going to be construction, la moindre des choses est qu'on doit pouvoir consulter les documents qui donnent les détails des dépenses de ce dit ministère et vérifier. Where is it? It is not here! It is not even mentioned and he goes as far as to talk about the Eye Hospital, let alone in our constituency, it is not even made provision here, but for Eye Hospital, the only thing that is provided for in terms of the Eye Hospital is for preliminary preparation and design which was Rs5 m. last year and Rs10 m. this year. So, it was preliminary preparation and design. We do not even know what the hospital is going to cost. We do not even know! There is no provision for that. There is no estimate for the cost and he talks about the new Eye Hospital, where it is going to be built! The land itself has not been acquired as yet and he is already announcing it *en fanfare* as though it is going to be such a great measure.

The very fact and the truth is I started a project in the constituency which was for the construction of a school, Abdul Rahman Abdul. Today, that project had already started when I was Minister and today it has halted, it cannot even go ahead, God knows why because there is no follow-up, there are not people who can ensure that projects are implemented.

Secondly, he goes on talking about projects in the constituency. Dr. Idrice Goomany Government School, I implemented that project. If he wishes I can even show him all the documents and the meetings that I chaired with regard to all those designs and he says it is him. If he wants to take *la paternité*, fair enough! I have no issues. But then what else has been done in that constituency ever since 2015? Nothing! We cannot give a medal to Government simply because they say 'we have tarred so many roads'. That is your duty, for God's sake! What! We are going to give you a medal because you made drains! Obviously, that is your duty. You are paid for it. But what else have you done? What sport facilities have you built? What schools have you constructed? What new ideas have you had? How many homes have been built for the poor in that constituency? Should I say the word 'zero'?

Today, when you look at that constituency, it is falling in disrepair. The Police officers who have to be at important junctions are not present and there are traffic jams everywhere. This is *une circonscription délaissée*. And, today, when I read the Press,

l'Express of today, and when I look at the figures of the hon. Minister of Labour with regard to unemployment in Port Louis, the highest place where there is unemployment on record is Port Louis and I am convinced about that, Madam Speaker. *Il y a beaucoup plus de chômeurs enregistrés au ministère du Travail et de l'Emploi, les habitants de Port Louis sont en grande majorité. La raison pour laquelle c'est le cas est précisément parce que le gouvernement ne s'occupe pas des habitants de Port Louis.* Is it because they were not elected as much as they wanted to be as opposed to other areas? Are they being forgotten? Les laissés-pour-compte simplement par revanche politique? Pourquoi alors se fait-il que la majorité se trouve à Port Louis ? Why? And we talk about arbitration!

I have to talk about what hon. Gayan also did and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for having had the courage - I don't very often do that towards you, but I have to say it today: whenever you are doing something which I admire, I will say so. This has to be fair. Because hon. Gayan, when he spoke on this Budget and he is still a Member of this Government, I am not Prime Minister, I never will be, but had I been Prime Minister, I would have fired him! I would have fired him without any explanation because I do not accept that anyone who is Member of this Assembly can stand up and make remarks of a communal nature! It is not once that he has done it; *il récidive. A chaque fois qu'il essaye d'être intéressant, il récidive et comment se fait-il que quand il a parlé à l'Assemblée Nationale, Madame la présidente n'a pas laissé passer.* Madam Speaker stood up and intervened –

« Hon. Gayan, I will ask you to refrain from making communal remarks (...).”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker had the courage to call him to order and if Madam Speaker has done that, it must be because it must have offended the Rules of the Parliament, it must have offended, in other words, your own appreciation of having to be a place where we should make no difference between communities and this I bow to you for having done that, Madam Speaker.

But what did he say? He brings us back to 1968. What has 1968 and the PMSD got to do with the Budget of 2017? Because it suits hon. Gayan to talk about 1968 and what did he say? He talks about how 50 years of independence the country has moved and the PMSD has not moved and he accuses the PMSD to be stuck in time ‘you are frozen in time’. But he is the one who is frozen in time! He is still talking a despicable language of a racist.

(Interruptions)

He talks about that and what does he say? He goes on to say, hon. Adrien Duval was talking about Curepipe, –

“Who does not remember what happened: ‘*malabar nou pas ouler, enveloper nou pas ouler.*’

The words of hon. Gayan and he is still Minister in this Cabinet.

(*Interruptions*)

And he is still a Member of this Government. And this Government expects us to believe in the Leadership of a Prime Minister, who is weak! A weak Prime Minister who does not even have the courage to dismiss a Minister who has made such a communal remark! This is not unparliamentary?

Madam Speaker: Do not attack! Do not attack the integrity of the hon. Prime Minister! No! Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, I have said that everybody who intervenes, he intervenes within the parameters of what should be said. You can have whatever language you want, but please do not attack the integrity of people. You cannot attack the conduct of people. You cannot attack the characters of people. I will not accept that.

Mr Mohamed: Madam Speaker, it takes a leader with resolve, it takes a leader with strength or purpose, it takes a leader who is not scared of his alliance falling to bits and pieces and going into smithereens, it takes a leader who believes in a cause, it takes a leader who believes in national unity, and not only the words that compose this phrase. It takes a leader who acts and not just does words, and plays to the gallery; it takes a leader who is a real leader, with strength of resolve and conviction, to be at the head of this country today. And such a leader would have not accepted that the Minister, with such remarks, continues to form part of his Cabinet.

(*Interruptions*)

And what is worse, Madam Speaker, you called him to order, but has the Prime Minister called him to order? The least that could have been done by the Whip of the Government is to ask him to apologise. Did he withdraw the words? No! Therefore for all intents and purposes, those sickening, racist words still are on Hansard, and they emanate from the ranks of Government, and not a single Member of Government can come and tell me the contrary. Look at this! Look at this!

I was coming across why should we believe a Government of this nature? Let me talk about that. How many promises have been made with regard to jobs to be created by Government? Let's go back! Today, we have Government coming forward with a Budget, and, once again, fooling the population, making them believe that they are better than the rest. That they will create employment and they go as far as to tell us that the people out there believe them. They themselves among their own ranks do not believe themselves. They will create employment? And you judge them on what they have done in the past. Let's look of what they have done in the past! What about the projections and promises that have been made by Government? Let's not forget the 2015-2019 Government Programme. What did they say then in the programme? Some 15,000 jobs will be created annually. In 2015-2016 Budget, the Magician, the one who was supposed to bring us this new miracle, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, who is no longer Minister of Finance, he said, he was talking about 'steer the economy towards the path of high investment and high employment.' He said that there would be the creation of thousands of jobs at a rapid pace. And then in the speech of the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, the second economic miracle, Sir Anerood Jugnauth *avait dit en août 2015, Madame la présidente, qu'il y aura la création de 100,000 emplois directs et indirects, créés en 5 ans. Ce qui veut dire un minimum de 20,000 par an. Ça, ce sont les paroles de ce grand monsieur qui est l'ancien Premier ministre, de ce grand monsieur qui est le ministre mentor, et celui-là qui dit qu'il va créer 20,000 emplois par an, minimum.* And, *en 2015-2016, n'oublions pas que seulement 16,000 emplois ont été créés. Et il dit que 16,000 emplois vont être créés. Ce sont ses paroles. Il dit que* more than 7,000 vacancies will be filled in 2015-2016. And he talks about the Youth Employment Programme for 2,500 jobs, placements under the Youth Employment Programme. *En 2016-2017, the actual Minister of Finance, now Prime Minister, talks about the new era of development to create more job opportunities for all.*

And he goes on to talk about 21,400 youths, men and women who will be taken out of unemployment. But let us look at the figures, Statistics Mauritius. They can twist and turn as much as they wish, but the statistics are very straightforward, other Members of this National Assembly have said it before me that only 300 jobs net were created *en 2016. Ce gouvernement a créé que 300 jobs net en 2016! Ce sont les chiffres de Statistics Mauritius.* There are tables in the Statistics of Mauritius Report that show exactly that; they cannot now come and say otherwise. Children outside who are going to school, students of University, fathers and mothers, citizens of this country have access to Internet, they can all go to the

Internet and download the 2016 Report for labour creation. And they will see what it was. Only 300 net!

And there is something *que l'actuel ministre du travail ne le dit pas. Et 'zot compran'* *pourquoi l'actuel ministre du travail ne dit pas cela dans son discours. Parce que surement il n'est pas supposé venir donner toute l'histoire. Parce que l'histoire aussi ce n'est pas seulement que l'année dernière, il y a eu que la création de 300 emplois net, et pas plus. Pas les chiffres de 20,000 ou de 21,400 ! Mais au fait, ce que l'actuel ministre du travail ne vient pas dire, que les statistiques pour Workfare Programme 2017 que j'ai dans ma main. Ça ce n'est pas sur son site Internet ! Ça ce n'est pas sur le site du ministère ! Ce n'est même pas sur le site du Statistics Mauritius. Le nombre de workers qui ont été admis au Workfare Programme pour juillet 2016 à mai 2017 sont 5,080. Ça veut dire que ceux qui sont éligibles pour le Workfare Programme ont été admis à ce programme. 5,080, de juillet 2016 à mai 2017 !*

Mais il y a beaucoup plus encore, qui, en d'autres mots, ont perdu leur travail et qui sont maintenant chômeurs. Il y a eu destruction d'emplois. C'est la raison pour laquelle ils ne sont pas là. Pourquoi ? Auparavant, quand moi j'étais ministre du travail, sur notre site, on avait le nombre d'usines qui avaient fermé, le nombre d'emplois qui avaient été perdus. Comment se fait-il qu'auparavant il y avait des chiffres, la transparence totale sur le site Internet du ministère, et comment se fait-il que cette année-ci ces chiffres qui démontrent le nombre d'entreprises qui ont fermé ne sont plus là. Les chiffres qui démontrent le nombre d'emplois qui sont perdus, c'est plus là, pourquoi ? Mais moi, Dieu merci, j'ai les chiffres ; plus que 10,000 personnes en moins d'un an ont perdu leur emploi. Plus que 10,000 personnes en un an ont perdu leur emploi, et aujourd'hui le gouvernement vient nous dire qu'ils ont créé des emplois, 300 emplois net.

Et ce qu'ils viennent dire, ce qu'ils doivent aussi admettre, c'est qu'en 2015, quand on compare 2015 à 2016, le labour force en 2015 était : 584,600 ; en 2016 : 581,000. Ça veut dire qu'il y a moins de jeunes, moins de personnes, moins de mauriciens et mauriciennes qui forment partie de ce *labour force* ; qu'il y a eu, en d'autres mots, un *drastic drop in the labour force*. Comment ils vont expliquer cela ? Moi, j'aimerai que quelqu'un des rangs du gouvernement puisse venir expliquer précisément cela, qu'il y a eu moins de personnes dans le *labour force* entre 584,600 et 581,000 ; un *total drop. Why?*

So, where, therefore, Madam Speaker, are those great figures that have been referred to by the former Prime Minister? Where are those great figures of job creation referred to by the actual Minister of Finance? This never used to be done when I was Minister of Labour because we have to be transparent. As I have said, we always gave the real figures. Those are the number of people who lost their employment. Those are the number of enterprises that have closed. Those are the number of people who went on the Workfare Programme, but this Government clearly does not believe in the concept of transparency. *J'ai l'impression que c'est le mot d'ordre qu'on ne doit pas donner la vérité. Un gouvernement de contradiction. Ils viennent dire qu'ils ont créé de l'emploi, qu'ils croient soi-disant dans le* Freedom of Information, but do not share those figures on the website. Why? I am also very surprised. We are talking about various sectors of the economy where people have to see that things are progressing.

Hon. Minister Mentor, I recall here, in his speech that he pronounced on 22 August 2015 and even now the actual Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech goes on to talk about the Port being a driver of the economy. Why does he not tell us the truth about the figures pertaining to the Port? Let us talk about the figures about the Port. Productivity figures Cargo Handling Corporation Ltd. - there are other figures that are not published, but I managed to get my hand on them. Why is it that those figures are hidden? Why is it that those are hidden from the population? Why is it, Madam Speaker, that the population is not allowed to look at the reality of things; that this Government when they are at the helm of the country, productivity goes down and productivity is destroyed.

January 2017, let us look at those figures. There is a total drop with regard to the ships' productivity. We are talking about the ships' productivity in forties, January to December 2016, but there is a second drop, volume went down by more than 9% in productivity in the Port in January 2017; February, March, April and May, a sudden drop of productivity in the Port by more than 9%! Why is it that the Government does not talk about those figures?

The hon. Minister of Finance takes the money belonging to taxpayers to publish beautiful little books as addendums to his Budget. Why are the statistics not there? Why is it that it is not there *en couleur, en caractère gras, dessiner* in terms of a graph to show that we are even plummeting? Plummeting meaning we are going down and we are not being productive in the Port area. Still they talk so much about them going to be able to use the Port

as a driver of productivity, and economy, and to create jobs. Let us not forget hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, in 2015, for his vision 2030 or 2020, God knows what, because finally it turned not to be a vision, but more to a nightmare. Nothing of what he said has been done! Nothing of what he has said has been achieved! So, this is a Government *non seulement de contradiction*, but this is a Government of non-achievers. They cannot achieve what they say and they set out to do. Beautiful words, but nothing in actual facts.

Hon. Minister Koonjoo is not here; mostly probably he is slowing turning the corner somewhere.

(Interruptions)

Let us not forget, I have got one hour to speak. I have got it!

(Interruptions)

They have spoken for 50 minutes. Please do not start!

The Maritime Labour Convention that was once under the responsibility - I am still within time - at some point of the hon. Minister of Labour. Now, it is the Maritime Labour Convention which I signed. We ratified, as a country, to the advantage of people; for the benefit of people working in that particular field. We have two years *de délai*. *Elle aurait dû entrer en vigueur à Maurice en 2015*, the Maritime Labour Convention legislation; it should have been ready according to our engagements and promises with the International Labour Organisation since 2015 for higher salary, better conditions of work for people working on vessels. What has this Government done? Is it a Government of achievers? Had this been a Government of achievers, can hon. Minister Koonjoo come and give us an explanation as to where the Maritime Labour Convention is? Why hasn't it been implemented ever since May 2015? Why are we late? Or maybe we should then refresh his memory as to what exactly is the Maritime Labour Convention. Maybe he does not know. Is this Government the one that we can really think is credible?

Madam Speaker, I believe that this Government should not be believed. It cannot be believed, it has no credibility. We cannot trust them. They are not worthy of the trust of the people because you know respect is something that goes two ways. As long as the system of Government that we have does not change, no Government will be able to create a revolution in this country that will bring us the double digit growth figures that we really want. As long

as this Government does not really face reality and accept that there are things that are fundamentally wrong with the system of Government, we will never be able to achieve what we need to achieve.

Let us look at hon. Koonjoo again. They want us to believe that they are not going to create jobs for the boys, that they will not give jobs to family members of theirs. Explain to me! How is it that one, Mr Sanjeev Kumar Babooa, lands up at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy? This very Academy that they say will train Mauritians in order to give them jobs in that particular sector. How come someone called Mr Babooa, who has a case...

Madam Speaker: Do not mention names!

Mr Mohamed: Okay! Mr S. K. B.

Madam Speaker: Because the person is not here to defend himself!

Mr Mohamed: Fair enough! Hon. Gayan when he spoke, he mentioned four names of people who were never in this Assembly, who could not even defend themselves.

Madam Speaker: This is my ruling!

Mr Mohamed: He mentioned four names.

Madam Speaker: You can tell the initials, the result will be the same.

Mr Mohamed: So, let us not forget about this person, I have just mentioned his name, so, S. K. B. who has a case before the Court, being prosecuted for what under the Prevention of Corruption Act.

But then, again, maybe c'est dans la manière de faire de ce gouvernement de nommer les gens même s'ils ont une affaire intentée contre eux au criminel par le Directeur des Poursuites Publiques pour affaire de corruption. Ce n'est pas vraiment quelque chose qui est important parce que c'est le gouvernement qui décide. Ce sont eux qui sont au pouvoir. Ce sont eux qui décident de ce qui est bon et de ce qui n'est pas bon.

Let us not forget that this very hon. Koonjoo, he, himself, has gone as far as to give an aquaculture permit to a company, a company called Mascareignas Oysters (Mauritius) Ltd.

(Interruptions)

No, that is us!

(Interruptions)

Let us not confuse issues. That is a brand name that we will stick to. Do not take it from us. It is only those who know how to go for that.

Let us not forget Mascareignas Oysters (Mauritius) Ltd. Now, he is the owner of Mascareignas Oysters Ltd.? Who? Is it not someone related to hon. Koonjoo? How come it is a nephew of hon. Koonjoo?

(Interruptions)

I will not say his name. I will not give his name. What is the point? It is a nephew of hon. Koonjoo, but then, again, we are to believe them that they are credible, that they want the success of the country, that they want the rise of our economy, that they want to create employment. At the same time, who are they creating employment and opportunities for if it is not for members of their own family! What about Barbara if we are to give it an English intonation?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Gayan is even better. I am trying not to mention names, but V. S.! But now what about hon. Collendavelloo? K. S.! K. S. being the best person who is so qualified to be nominated as an Ambassador. This is an insult to all the career diplomats at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as though she who is close to hon. Collendavelloo is better, because of what? Her closeness! And then they were on their moralising horses standing up saying: 'The Labour Party did this'. The hon. Prime Minister went as far as saying that they could use the private residence of the Prime Minister to hold a dinner for more than 100 people and it was in order.

This is not in my concept. He went as far as to say - because it is a private residence - that the former Prime Minister, he even talked about orgies that were committed there in the past regime, but did he see the orgies? Does he have any evidence of orgies or does he come to throw in attacks simply like that, just to satisfy himself, Members around him and his small dwindling electorate? Does he have any evidence of orgies? How could he, therefore, be allowed, Madam Speaker, to throw accusations against people who are not even in this Assembly by talking about orgy making?

What is in fact an orgy? And what is in fact incestuous is the number of people belonging to this Government who allow Members of their own family to obtain jobs and positions and nominations within Government and the parastatal bodies of this Government. That is incestuous, that is an orgy and I do not need evidence of that because I have it. You have people, Madam Speaker, people who are named as what?

(Interruptions)

I have it here and that we have to remember, Choomka! She starts out as a Chairperson and she ends up as being the Director.

(Interruptions)

Chooma nahi bhai! Choomka! And then, she ends up not only doing that but being a courtier, asking for God knows what, using her position as a courtier to obtain contracts in the field of electricity. Then, you have the actual Deputy Prime Minister, let him come and tell this Assembly to explain how come Alvaro Sobrinho - I mean him we can mention his name, he is so well-known to everyone now. He is known.

(Interruptions)

Zenfant lakaz! How come he has bought property in Royal Park, Balaclava and that Royal Park, Balaclava tells him to come and tells this House that he did not accompany him on that land, to show the Land! Tell him to come and tell us that Monsieur Maigrot for Royal Park was not his client! Tell him to come and tell us that there is no established, in fact, relationship between him, Maigrot and Alvaro Sobrinho! Tell us that it is not true! Tell the people out there that this is not true, that this triumvirat *d'enfer* to facilitate the process of someone who has a very bad reputation outside of Angola but the Government of Mauritius does not know. Tell us about all!

I skipped Barbara just now, I just mentioned the name. But Barbara managed to get - once again *colistier de l'honorable Koonjoo qui obtient un contrat gratuity. Zéro, rien à payer!* Is it because she is, in fact, this person who obtained it!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Adrien Duval, I will not allow this! Even from a sitting position I will not allow you to do this.

Mr Mohamed: And then, something else, Madam Speaker. I remember I went to Qatar in order to sign one agreement with Qatar which was for circular migration. The hon. Minister talks about circular migration, the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance talks about circular migration in his annexes. Let us know one thing how many people have gone outside Mauritius for circular migration ever since 2015? In fact, the figures are very sad to admit, not very proud to write home about. And you know why that is the case? Because my good friend, the hon. Minister of labour is not being given the respect that he deserves. He is not being given the tools that he requires. He is being demeaned by his Ministry for not tackling the file totally for himself for circular migration. Had he had total control on the budget, he would have shown figures and mentioned it in his speech.

Today, I see that hon. Soodhun has gone as far as to issue a communiqué saying that the Republic of Mauritius is stopping all diplomatic ties with Qatar, a country where we have hundreds of Mauritians working, whom I have had the honour of meeting when I was there. And they write home, called home, worried that the diplomatic ties no longer exist because the hon. Vice-Prime Minister has written there and said it does not exist, in order to satisfy another friendly State of ours, of Mauritius, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Why has he not been called to task? The Government expects us, Madam Speaker, a Government that knows that with Brexit! When I look at this Budget, what is in this Budget to tell me that geopolitically, strategically we have given time to reflect? Reflect upon what?

What to do with regard to bilateral trade agreements between Mauritius and the European Union and the United Kingdom following Brexit? Rien! Rien n'est planifié! But what this Government, Madam Speaker, is good at? Of promises, promises and promises! They talk, talk and talk, but they can't even walk the talk. The people outside, Madam Speaker, are people whom I admire. The people of Mauritius, I admire their strength, I admire the resilience of those people. Many times we have come across difficult moments in our history where economically we have had to rely on the people of Mauritius to get us out of the doldrums, to get us out of the difficulty. We have, therefore, to call upon the resolve, the ethics of the people of Mauritius. We have to trust; the trust has to be rebuilt. But this Government is not trusted. This Government is not trusted because, as I have said, people who are close to the family members of Government are given jobs, jobs for the boys, jobs for the girls, jobs for the cousins, jobs for the daughters, jobs for the sons, jobs for those who are close to MSM and they had the *toupé* to talk about *la méritocratie*.

I am for a revolution of the system. I am for a new set of laws whereby you bring morals and legality in the approach of Ministers in Cabinet. They cannot go on acting in Cabinet and taking decisions as though they are the demigods of the day and that nothing will happen to them and the taxpayers out there will have to come and pay for the mess that they have created. We need a law to make Government Ministers responsible and they have to be prosecuted, they will have to pay and be disqualified because of their incompetence. We need a law to stop Government Ministers from nominating any single member of the family in any position of Government or parastatal bodies.

I have been a Minister. Sir Anerood Jugnauth had named my father Yusuf Mohamed as Lawyer when I was not in Government. But I go as far as to say even that should never happen in the future. Even me, I should not see any member of my family who are named in any position in Government, be it as a Lawyer or otherwise, because a line has to be drawn, we have to be responsible and we have to take the first step, a step towards change and this is what the population wants.

But this Government does not understand what I mean because they will be fast to say: "Oh, what did you do? What did you do?" But they will not do what has to be done because they have not got the courage to do what has to be done; neither have they got the resolve to do what has to be done. I believe in a new system where the position of Vice-President is just simply annulled, deleted from our books, because I believe we have to start being responsible as a nation. I believe in a system where Members of Government will not have the right to choose, handpick whom they will put in positions of power and decision.

But it should be a bipartisan Parliamentary Committee that sits down and decides who will be in State-owned enterprises, in positions of boards and CEOs decision-making positions. This should not be a Government who talks of meritocracy but meritocracy only for their people. It is only when you change drastically, Madam Speaker, that you will be able to ensure that this bond of trust with the people that no longer exists is rebuilt because the people are more important than any of us. I am not important. I am not important at all! It is the people that are important and the people do not appreciate what is going on. The people condemn Government.

I have heard about the *métro léger*, and I will finish on that. The *métro léger!* Hon. Bodha goes on to give us figures around Rs17 billion. Tell him to come and tell us whether or not *les deux soumissionnaires qui ont déjà donné leur prix ont quotté beaucoup plus que R*

20 milliards. Tell him to come and tell us it is not true! And when you look at the provisions in the Budget, it is for 13 kms only. And let us not forget the wise words of Sir Anerood Jugnauth because now I must say he was wise before the elections and he lost it afterwards. The wise words of Sir Anerood Jugnauth before the elections being interviewed by Nawaz Noorbux, and I can still see this video where he says: “*Projet métro out! Li na pas viable ça!*” Those are not my words, those are his words: “*Li na pas pou viable! Li pou out ça! Seki nou bizin, c'est faire flyovers partout!*”

So, it was not viable before the elections and he gave the solemn guarantee to Nawaz Noorbux on a video that still can be shown to everyone, that I will post on my Facebook page a few minutes later on, that this is not viable, it will be out. How come, therefore, he is going on with the project to more than Rs20 billion for 13 kms when, in fact, what did Sir Anerood Jugnauth say in this recording: “*R 50 milliards pou couté ça!*” He said in his own style. I cannot imitate. Hon. Rutnah can do that, I can’t. He said it will cost Rs50 billion; that is why it has to be out. Those are the words of the Minister Mentor, but if the Minister Mentor said it will not be viable, *que le projet ne sera pas viable, qu'il faut mettre à la porte le projet, que cela va coûter R 50 milliards. Aujourd'hui, les chiffres prouvent qu'on avait raison. Les chiffres prouvent* that the people have been taken for a trail ride. How come? *Parce qu'aujourd'hui 13 kms va coûter quoi? R 20 milliards et quelque! Plus de R 20 milliards! Et 26 kms, qui est au fait le trajet initial, va coûter presque R 40 milliards.* And today, this Government comes and tells us that they are better than us.

Madam Speaker, this is a Government of contradiction. This is a Government that I do not trust and the people out there do not trust. But then, again, *la même rengaine va continuer. On va avoir ceux qui se prennent pour des pompiers de service, qui vont venir dire qu'on a tort et ils ont raison. Mais quand, eux, ils viennent dire qu'on a tort, ce qu'ils disent au fait c'est que la population dans la grande majorité, eux, ont tort. Mais s'ils ont le courage, aussitôt que l'honorable Bhadain démissionne, give the election and put a candidate and we will show you exactly who is right and who is wrong because it will be a referendum election, and you will be beaten down. Met Christelle, met Samputh candidat!* And you will know exactly what will happen to you!

Thank you, very much.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou!

(3.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, and Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr E. Sinatambou): Thank you, very much, Madam Speaker. I would like, first of all, to quote the famous American Author, Mark Twain, who actually said quite rightly –

“A half-truth is the most cowardly of lies.”

I am saying that, Madam Speaker, because I have heard so many half-truths, on the other side of the House, not only in the course of the previous intervention, but in the course of the debates which have been on-going before this august Assembly on the Budget Speech.

May I first start by saying to the previous intervener through you that I have not come with a pre-prepared document which I will be reading out to this House? I think this is what is the first half-truth because if the hon. Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East actually stated, he should not forget that so many other hon. Members, on his side of the House, come with a pre-prepared document and read them out. So, as a matter of politeness and elegance, I don't think that we should just state what the others do when on our side itself, we are doing it. As we say, *il ne faut pas voir la paille dans l'œil de son voisin et il ne faut pas voir la poutre qui est dans le sien.*

Now, I am certainly not one of those who would say that everything Government does is great and that there is nothing to improve. Contrary to what I have heard earlier. I am not among those who would say that everything which Government does is perfect, as has been said over there. I will not say that there is no wrong or that there can be no wrong on the side of Government. Never! In fact, every time I have had an opportunity to address any public gathering, I have made it a point to say that Government accepts constructive criticisms. But what Government cannot accept are those criticisms which are made in bad faith, which are made up of lies, which are made up of half-truths, which are actually dishonest. This is what we cannot accept. In view of the virulent attacks, I have heard in the course of the last hour, I will have to highlight some of those half-truths, and in fact, I will even quote a famous Baptist Pastor who lived in the 19th Century and who said something which is very true also. He said –

“A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.”

This is why it takes so long to undo many of the lies which we hear time and again from the other side of the House. Let me start with what I consider to be the first one.

Someone who said: “*C'est un budget nul*”. From my perspective, it is either a lie or at least a half-truth. One may not agree with the contents of the Budget. One may not agree with the principles underlying this Budget, but if there is one thing one cannot say is that ‘*this budget est nul*’. Because if that were to be said, it would be an insult to the more than 100,000 Mauritians earning less than Rs10,000 a month who are going to benefit from negative taxation. Now, this is so wrong that the lie comes out. It has the time to go halfway around the world before we can actually dispel that lie to show that, in fact, even if we do not agree with the contents of the Budget, at least, this one measure covering more than 10% of our population, cannot make of this Budget *un budget qui soit nul*. I must say, Madam Speaker, I heard so many things just now. Maybe I should start with the Betamax issue, because I could hear, for days now, so many virulent attacks. And I must say that I am not here to discuss the rights or wrongs of the decisions taken. I am just here now, on the Betamax issue, trying to enlighten each and every one about a number of facts and figures.

The first fact is when I heard my good friend, hon. Uteem, stating very strongly, and rightly so, that the MMM was against the award of the Betamax contract. He said it very strongly, I took note and I tried to find out in his speech, when he mentioned the reasons of this Betamax issue, is that the MMM criticised the Betamax contract not because they had anything against the people behind Betamax, just like us. Government is not against the Betamax contract because we had anything against the people behind the Betamax. Not because you had anything against Betronix, nor do we. But as he stated in his speech, we were not agreeable with the way that we were going to bind this population for the next 15 years, a contract that was signed in total opacity without any tender procedures being followed.

Now, I for one, was not part and party to the contract, but I can say that today when I came to know about what had gone on, I must also say that Government is certainly not agreeable with the way that the population of Mauritius was bound for the next 15 years. Similarly, this side of the House is not agreeable to this contract which was signed in total opacity. So, we are speaking the same language. But what I do not understand is why then after receiving advice from both experts and lawyers in the field – not only technical advice, but legal advice - why then should Government not terminate a contract which is binding the population in a monstrous manner which has actually been signed in total opacity, when now

technical and legal experts come and tell Government that this contract has breached rules of law and rules of technicality. Why am I saying that Madam, it is because when we look at the facts and figures, the clauses in the Betamax contract, what do we learn? We learn, Madam, that the clauses of the contracts according to technical and legal experts were either unusual, exorbitant and well above market rates, unheard of in the freight market and contrary to market practice.

Mr Mohamed: I have a point of order, Madam Speaker. If there is a quote made from any report, then it must be tabled. The Minister cannot quote from a report if he is not going to table it. That is Standing Orders. So, maybe he should withdraw the quote because if he is quoting on it which is already done, then he has engaged himself in line with the Standing Order to table the report.

Mr Sinatambou: This is not a report, it is my writing.

Mr Mohamed: It is not the report, so what is making us believe it is a report?

Madam Speaker: If it is a report, he would have given the source of the report. I do not think I heard him giving the source of the report. So, it is his personal opinion which he is expressing, I believe.

Mr Sinatambou: It is my document. Now, I repeat it for those who have not heard. If it is actually the case, as we were advised that the clauses are either unusual, exorbitant, well above market rates, unheard of in the freight market and finally contrary to market practice, should such a contract not be terminated? I am not saying about who was in power. I am explaining the principle as to why this contract has been terminated. And I would like to invite the Members on the other side to please, not interrupt me. I listened so carefully without interrupting anyone in the last hour.

(Interruptions)

I do not need you to give me an answer.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sinatambou, please sit down. I would advise all Members, be it on this side or on the other side, not to engage in a conversation with someone who has the floor. Please!

Mr Sinatambou: Now, subsequently, as the hon. Attorney General stated earlier in his reply to the Private Notice Question, it was found out by the Ministerial Committee, upon

advice, that the law, the procedures had been flouted. And as a consequence of this, isn't it therefore proper...

(Interruptions)

I hear someone saying 'fausse'. I think this has to stop.

Madam Speaker: Do not interrupt, please! Please resume!

Mr Sinatambou: So, I can vouch for the veracity of it. In fact, in an earlier speech from one of the debaters, reference was made to a 32-minute video of the Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance explaining the ins and outs of all the illegalities and breaches of procedures and one even gave the website address. You just have to actually type 'Bhadain-Betamax' and you can have access to the 32-minute video, explaining all those illegalities and flouting of procedures.

Now, why am I dwelling on this issue, Madam Speaker, it is because the way I hear some of the Members of the Opposition, it is as if they are praying that we end up having to pay this award of Rs4.5 billion. And one wonders whether they are 'praying' or they are again like vultures 'preying'. Looking at some of them, it is the second version. It is as if they are begging Government that this country might have to pay Rs4.5 billion in terms of damages in an award.

Again, if it were not good enough to show that on the basis of illegalities and flouting of procedures that we had to terminate this contract, the figures speak also for themselves. I went to find out what actually were the amounts payable. And I think it would be a sad day if this country had to pay Betamax Rs4.5 billion. I believe it will be a very sad day, but I am very hopeful that this day will never happen and I will tell you why, Madam Speaker. Because on the calculations that I worked out in the course of the three odd years that this contract had actually been on-going, that is, from May 2011 to January 2015, in this award for the whole affair, we would stand to lose Rs4.5 billion. But in the course of the three odd years during which we have been paying Betamax, this country has paid Rs4.4 billion to Betamax and we had a 15-year contract!

So, here we are for three plus years out of a 15-year contract. This country had already paid Rs4.4 billion to Betamax and we would have had to pay even more for another 15 years. So, to me, if the price to stop this contract is Rs4.5 billion, even if it would be sad, we should accept to pay it. We are challenging it. We are going to apply to the Supreme

Court in order to set this award aside, but I am showing that on the trend of the payments, one could not accept to keep paying looters of our economy that type of money.

And, I must say that I was quite surprised in the course of the Private Notice Question when I heard that the Leader of the Opposition is challenging the figures of the STC to the effect that in the course of the now two odd years since we stopped the contract that we have saved nearly Rs600 m. Now, there is a saying which says that: 'he who asserts must prove'.

(Interruptions)

I just heard someone else, again, on the other side of the House saying '*fausse*'. Well, I would invite them to come up with their figures if they allege that they know more. I stand to be corrected, but I have no reason to doubt the veracity of the figures given by the STC that we will have saved since we stopped this contract, Rs600 m. approximately. These are indeed, as stated by one of my colleagues, audited figures. I mean, the accounts of the STC are audited. So, I have again no further reason to doubt this. But if you could have heard a few minutes ago that 'because of the incompetence of the Government, we are sitting on a time bomb', they created the bomb!

(Interruptions)

They put everything nasty and dirty into that bomb!

(Interruptions)

No, we are trying to deactivate it.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

Mr Sinatambou: You see, Madam Speaker, those half-truths! The bomb had already been activated. I thank hon. Ameer Meea for actually coming with this half-truth even if it is meant to be then the most cowardly of lies.

(Interruptions)

You see, Madam Speaker, the bomb was not only created by them. The bomb was activated by them, but, at least, hon. Ameer Meea allows me to dispel that half-truth. And I would have hoped that the MMM would have helped us to deactivate the bomb because, as they said,

they were the first to criticise it. *'Ils ont dénoncé cet accord'* disait l'honorable Uteem. So, I was expecting them to actually do the right thing; help to deactivate the Betamax bomb in view of its illegalities and the flouting of the procedures, especially if, as I understand, they are still against the Betamax contract. I believe that, having heard Members on the other side belonging to the MMM party, they are still against the Betamax scandal.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: Forget the cuisine!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Minister is talking about the MMM, he has the right to talk! He is not addressing anybody personally.

(Interruptions)

Mr Sinatambou: Madam Speaker, it is not a question...

(Interruptions)

It is not a question of which kitchen you are in! This is where perhaps I join the previous orator. It is not about scoring political points here. I am not trying to have any political gain out of the Betamax scandal. I am urging this country to help deactivate the Betamax scandal and bomb because as they rightly uncovered the scandal, they say, now that we have also received advice both technical and legal expertise stating that: 'yes, they were right'. Why don't we together fight to ensure that this country does not end up paying looters, paying people who have been acting in such a nasty manner.

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order! He has just used a very, very dangerous word against parties who are not here. To say ‘parties’, therefore, he is saying Betamax are looters. Therefore, he cannot do that. No one has been found guilty of anything. There is no case. The DPP has said there is no case. So, he cannot now *s’arroger le pouvoir de venir dire que* they are looters. I insist that, on the simple principle of the Standing Orders, he should withdraw that!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Again, I would refer maybe to Standing Order 40 subsection (2) which says that –

“It shall be out of order to use unbecoming words or expressions or to use offensive language (...).”

Please, I would request you not to use offensive language and if the hon. Member considers the word ‘looter’ which you used to be offensive to somebody who is not in the House, then simply withdraw it!

Mr Sinatambou: May I...

(Interruptions)

If that word is offensive, I indeed withdraw it. But I would like to say that I have pinpointed to no individual, but I consider that if a country has to pay Rs4.5 billion as regards to a contract *qui a été dénoncé par un parti avant* and now with hindsight after obtaining expert advice, both technical and legal, telling us that the law has been flouted and that the procedures have been flouted, then I would call that plundering. And whether it pleases someone or not, there is nothing offensive, I have pointed to no one, but I believe that it would be the duty of any patriot, of any person who believes in the proper running of this country, to help to terminate this contract because quite clearly there are a number of people who know more about it and who have not spoken. And I would appeal to those people to come forward and there is no scoring of political points here, I am acknowledging what the MMM did and I...

(Interruptions)

Sorry?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: *Non!* Hon. Member, you continue to interrupt the hon. Minister! Please!

(Interruptions)

I am appealing to you not to interrupt the hon. Minister. I can understand that when on this side of the House you were talking, then, the hon. Minister had stayed silent.

(Interruptions)

Please! I have given my ruling and I don't think we should argue on this, please!

(Interruptions)

No, I have already given my ruling. Hon. Bhagwan,...

(Interruptions)

...is it a point of clarification?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, clarification because several times my good friend, hon. Etienne Sinatambou has made mention of the MMM because I represent the MMM, so, when the whole issue of Betamax case was discussed, initiated, the MSM and the Labour Party were together. The case has gone to the arbitration and now the case is before the Supreme Court.

(Interruptions)

It is in the process or something like that, it is their own cuisine and their own doing, why confront us with that!

Madam Speaker: No! Hon. Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, no! Hon. Bhagwan, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Bhagwan, please! I allowed you, you said it is a point of clarification; a point of clarification should not be controversial. It should not be controversial, it should be only factual, and you should not introduce any other element in it, please!

Mr Sinatambou: I was expecting hon. Bhagwan to actually say yes, we were against this contract, and we are still against this contract just like we are now. So, I think that, in fact, they are being given a golden opportunity to correct what they, themselves, found to be nasty and wrong. So, I do not think it is a question of who was with whom, and when. The question is: should those who actually unfolded the scandal, should those who actually unveiled the illegalities - not now - be together to stop what otherwise is going to be a plundering exercise of our country? That is what I believe should be the case regardless of whether it pleases the Labour Party or not.

Now, this being said, Madam Speaker, I would like to add something because I note that the previous orator actually felt that there was nothing. He had asked around him, everywhere and there was nothing in this Budget which actually was worth noting. He had checked with people who work in the sugarcane fields. He had spoken to plumbers and electricians. He had spoken to people in industries. He had spoken to people in the export sector and there was apparently nothing good enough to be the subject of any mention here. Well, I am sure that anyone in the small and medium enterprises sector, who is especially involved in the export segment, would applaud a decision which reduces the tax rate from 15% to 3% annually. Nowhere in the world today do you get an 80% reduction in your tax bill. Nowhere! As someone rightly said on the other side of the House, SMEs are the backbone of an economy. So, it is here, it employs about 60% of the manpower and surely we should applaud a measure which actually involves a substantial reduction of 80% in the tax regime of that sector.

Actually, this reminds me, many people, on the other side of the House, have been saying that there was nothing for the SME sector. Then, I would like to draw the attention to the first cluster which is addressed in the Budget because it contains no less than eleven measures for the SME sector. In fact, apart from the reduction in the tax regime, I saw with much interest because a lot has been said about the non-provision of funds to the SME sector. Someone even went on to say that only Rs71 m. had been disbursed to the SME sector when, in fact, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development had stated that there will be Rs2 billion per year.

(Interruptions)

Well, for those who do not read, I think they should better read the Budget speech. It is clearly stated in the Budget Speech that Government has kept guaranteeing loan schemes to the SME sector from commercial banks, and that from 2015 to this day no less than Rs3.2 billion have been borrowed by the SME sector, so much therefore for the Rs71m. which they have erroneously given to this House. We must appreciate, Government does not claim to be right every time, but what we believe is that we should not let lies go on. I like very much this saying from this Baptist pastor called Charles Spurgeon, because really, the lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is still putting on its shoes.

This is exactly what seems to be happening in this country, and for those who call me the fireman, this is what we are doing every week. We are telling the truth to this nation because somehow, they just come up with insinuations; no fact, no figure, just accusations. But when you actually look at the facts and figures, you will see that so many things that they say are wrong; if not wrong, are false. For those who say that this Budget unfolds nothing for this country, at least, let them be informed that the whole country has acknowledged the social measures which have been decided upon by the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

Regardless of the social measures, Madam Speaker, I would like to refer to those who actually generate the wealth in this country. Who generate wealth in this country? All those who generate wealth in this country, apart from the SME side for whom we have already catered, are to be found in two organisations mainly one is Business Mauritius, one is the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Business Mauritius now regroups all the members of the Joint Economic Council, the defunct JEC, and all the members of the Mauritius Employers' Federation together. What did they have to say? I was surprised, the hon. Leader of the Opposition stated –

« Le Budget ne contient aucune mesure pour permettre à Maurice d'atteindre le niveau de pays à revenus élevés. »

Yet, Business Mauritius stated –

« Le Budget va dans la mouvance d'une économie qui souhaite devenir un pays à revenus élevés. »

So, the Leader of the Opposition tells you there is no measure whatsoever *dans la mouvance d'un pays à revenus élevés*. The body which generates wealth in this country tells you –

« Que le Budget va dans la mouvance d'une économie qui souhaite devenir un pays à revenus élevés. »

That it contains measures to go in that direction. In the meantime, the lie is travelling around half the world. Fortunately, truth now has put on its shoes and truth, when it strikes, will be lethal. Now, if this were not enough, because I said there are two institutions; the first one is Business Mauritius and the second one is the Mauritius Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which have stated quite openly that this Budget is going to favour the generation of wealth for this country. What more do we need? These are the apex bodies in the generation of wealth for this country.

Now, if that were not enough, I made it a point to find a third body which contributes substantially to the development of our economy, and that is the *Chambre d'Agriculture*. The Secretary General of the Chamber of Agriculture, stated that the Budget contained, I'll quote her –

“Des mesures intéressantes et positives.”

So much for the prophets of doom on the other side of the House, who see no measure, no good measure, nothing!

The Rt. hon. Minister Mentor used the right expression that *narien pas bon* syndrome. I do not know where we will get the vaccine, but we will need to find it because we will have to stop this. What is this doing, Madam Speaker? This is rotting the morale of this country. This is rotting the well-being. People, when they wake up in the morning, when they say: '*Oh, Betamax scandale*'. Not that we have to stop this scandal. What is very odd and from my perspective unacceptable is that the victims should become the accused. This is the nasty game which some people, on the other side of the House, are playing. The victims are becoming the accused parties. We are doing what is right in the Betamax issue. They find fault, and fault, and fault.

In that respect, I will have also to say a few words on the BAI scandal because indeed I was quite surprised to see both the Leader of the Opposition and the first orator for the Opposition on the MMM side to say that there had not been a single word in the budget

regarding the victims of the BAI scandal. I just explained how I do not agree with the Opposition when victims become accused. When this Government is trying rightly to stop a plundering exercise, that we should be the ones with whom they find fault.

This time what I find unacceptable is when the Opposition converts the accused into victims. This is an exercise which is so wrong for the morale of this country. Let us go back to this BAI scandal. What is the crux of the matter as far, at least, as I am concerned? The crux of the matter is that the independent investigator from Singapore found something out of the ordinary that from the whole amount of money which should have been in the BAI group, that is, Super Cash Back Gold, Bramer Asset Management, BAI Insurance, etc., etc., Rs17 billion are untraceable. Now, if from the money under the custody of the owners/managers/custodians of the BAI group, Rs17 billion become untraceable, are they the victims? Or should they be the accused? That is what this is about.

Lately, I have seen a tendency on the part of the other side of the House to try and make of the accused, of those who should have been found guilty to be the victims. Out of the Rs17 billion, already Rs10.5 billion had been repaid more than three months ago. Now, those Rs10.5 billion have been paid to nearly 70% of the Super Cash Back Gold investors and more than 91% of the Bramer Asset Management investors. As I said, once when we saw the political vultures going around, we were wondering, but why is that so? If Government has already repaid more than 91% of the Bramer Asset management investors, the totality of their money and for nearly 70% of the Super Cash Back Gold investors, the totality of their money again. Why all this?

I must say I use this pejorative terminology because when do vultures go around people in the desert? *Comme on dit en Kreol, kan zotte a terre.* Then vultures come to see what they can take. This is where we speak of cheap politics. People coming for cheap political gains! Anyone who did not know the SCBG and the Bramer Asset Management saga would have thought that Government is heartless, that Government is refusing, has done nothing to pay those poor souls. Yet, Government had paid the totality of all the monies to nearly 70% of those people and more than 91% to the Bramer Asset Management people.

(Interruptions)

No, Government decision! It was a Government decision that this was paid.

Now, what is the case, Madam Speaker? Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of this country who is also the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has found again further ways and means to pay more of those people so that today, as I am speaking to you, an offer is on the table whereby those investors are going to get back between 50% and 100% of their money. I cannot understand how people could have tried in the last few months to depict Government as wrongdoers, as if we were drinking the blood of those people.

On the contrary, Government has expressed its sympathy to all the victims of the mega fraud of the BAI, all the victims of the Super Cash Back Gold and the Bramer Asset Management scandal. The Prime Minister not only listened, but he said that this was a priority of Government and that he would actually help to find a solution and a solution he has found. A solution has already been proposed and I believe this is the best that this country could do. Rs17 billion! Another time bomb of that other side! Rs17 billion, Madam Speaker! Those Rs17 billion, Madam Speaker, are....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Sinatambou: ... actually more than the budget of 17 Ministries to be found in the Appropriation Bill 2017/2018. They have actually allowed the wrongdoers in the BAI scandal to plunder Rs17 billion. Untraceable! But we know that there are properties in Washington, in New York, Castles in Italy, big apartments in London and in Paris.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Sinatambou: Leave him alone! He has got nothing to do with it!

(Interruptions)

He allowed the loot. He was part of it. So, keep peace and quiet!

Madam Speaker, this is why, we, on this side of the House, will not shirk from our responsibilities. They may say whatever they want on that side. They are guilty of those wrongdoings. But I will be first to acknowledge. They are not guilty of everything wrong which went on in this country, but they are guilty of some of the biggest crimes committed against this country. That to me is unforgivable. If they think that the people do not trust us,

they should see what the people do to them. Because I have already taken, I understand, 50 minutes from the one hour which is imparted to me.

(Interruptions)

Yes, those people who talked...

(Interruptions)

Exactly! I heard something very good. They are speaking of popularity. They have not been able to hold one 01 May meeting in the last three years and they come and give lessons now! I would like to end on a few notes, Madam Speaker. First of all, especially when they say that the people,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, hon Jhugroo!

Mr Sinatambou:... especially when they claim falsely that nothing is done for the people, I happen to be vested with the portfolio of Social Security and National Solidarity and the Budget allotted to my Ministry has increased by 10.08% to reach the phenomenal sum of Rs20.75 billion for social assistance for our countrymen and countrywomen.

Nearly Rs21 billion just for social assistance! 217,000 people aged above 60 will be eligible for Basic Retirement Pension amounting to Rs15.6 billion. 19½ thousand widows will be eligible to Rs1.3 billion. 30,000 beneficiaries of Basic Invalidity Pension will receive around Rs2.2 billion. 405 orphans will receive Rs23 m. 15,000 beneficiaries of child allowance will be entitled to Rs325 m. And around 23,000 beneficiaries of severely handicapped persons, guardians of orphans and beneficiaries of inmate allowance will receive other basic pensions to the tune of Rs1.1 billion.

It's nearly 20% of this country's Budget which will go to the vulnerable people of this country. And, this, without taking into account the billions of rupees which are actually dispensed as subsistence allowance to those 8,000 plus families who fall under the Ministry of Social Integration. Now, this is, indeed, what the Opposition does not like to hear, they will always be mumbling and bustling with other works.

Before ending, I would like to say one thing about the protection of coastal zones because I heard the Leader of the Opposition alleging that nothing is being done for the

protection of coastal zone, that there is hardly any money. Let me inform the House that the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, which falls, again, under my portfolio, is implementing several coastal adaptation measures to cope with sea level rise and to increase the climate resilience of coastal communities. Among the measures -

1. is the coast and adaptation work at three vulnerable sides, namely – Quatre Soeurs, Rivière des Galets, and Mont Choisy, and
2. is the construction of a state-of-the-art refuge centre; it is the fourth of its kind in the world; two are in the United States, one in Japan and we are the first refuge centre of the kind in the whole of the Southern Hemisphere;

We have an ecosystem-based adaptation with the plantation of 20,000 mangroves in the coastal belt of Grand Sable and Quatre Soeurs. This project has gained international recognition by the United Nations Development Programme as an instance of best practice for Small Island Developing States. There are another eight measures, but time not permitting, I will not go further onto that. I would like to say something which is of importance because I have been six months now at the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Social Security and National Solidarity, but I have also been six months as Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation.

My good friend, hon. Sawmynaden, is going to address a few issues, but there is one issue which I would like to come before this House. It is that this year when you take the seven most important ICT indicators in the world and there are, at least, six or seven of them, in each and every one of them, Mauritius ranks first in Africa. Now, this will not see the first page of any newspaper or of any radio information programme, but I thought that people might say: "Well, this is Africa!" So, what we did at that time was to compare with two IT giants, which are India and China.

What came out from the comparison is that out of the seven parameters in four of them, Mauritius does better than India and China. In two of them, Mauritius did better than one and less well than the other. In only one out of the seven parameters, China and India do better than us. Now, this is why I feel so sorry for my country when I find this type of attempt to demolish the country with a gloom and doom being portrayed by some people on the other side.

Sometimes nonsense, sometimes fallacies, sometimes half-truths, sometimes absurdities, sometimes the attitude of *pense petit* and I really believe that this ought to change. Because if you look at this, out of those indicators we are challenging IT giants like China and India. If that were not good enough, Madam Speaker, the icing on the cake came last week when it was found that in the Global UN Cybersecurity Index, we are now number six in the world.

At the last count, we were ninth. When we were ninth, we were *ex aequo* with France and Denmark. India was in front of us, it was sixth, we were ninth,...

(Interruptions)

...what has happened, not me, it is Government, it is the team.

Madam Speaker: Now, why are you interrupting him? Allow him to conclude his speech.

(Interruptions)

It is not your problem. Whatever Ministry he can address, it is not your problem.

Mr Sinatambou: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now, what I am trying to say is that a giant like India was sixth, we were ninth. This year, we become sixth in the world and we are doing better than, I think, every country in Asia-Pacific. The only European country which does better than others is Estonia. No country in Europe is before us in that indicator of Global Cybersecurity.

But I am sure my good friend and colleague, the Minister of Communication, Technology and Innovation, is going to have more to say about that. Now, why am I saying this, Madam Speaker? I am saying this because I believe whatever, let us say, shortcoming in the budget, because I am sure the hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development would never claim that everything is perfect in the budget, and I would subscribe to this type of view from the hon. Prime Minister.

But one thing we must acknowledge is that he must be congratulated for presenting a budget which, from my point of view, skilfully addresses major challenges in our endeavour to attain our ambitions and which carefully addresses major social, economic and environmental concerns of the country. I am convinced, Madam Speaker, that the 2017/2018

Budget will accelerate our social and economic development, that it will improve the quality of life of the population and bring more social justice in our country.

I am also convinced that it will allow our countrymen to generate more wealth. I am sorry for the prophets of doom and gloom who keep doing a very negative job in our country because what they are doing is simply demoralising our population. As the then Rt. hon. Prime Minister once said: "*Faisons la différence entre les bâtisseurs et les démolisseurs. Nous, nous sommes de la partie des bâtisseurs.*"

(Interruptions)

We want this country to leave aside *les démolisseurs*, and with these few words, I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, once again, and I thank you for your attention, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I will now ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

(4.06 p.m.)

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): M. le président, un budget est une occasion pour fixer un nouveau cap. L'honorable ministre des finances pouvait donner l'élan nécessaire pour relancer l'économie mauricienne mais il a raté l'occasion. Tout le monde est sorti de l'exercice du jeudi 08 juin avec une drôle d'impression, celle d'avoir raté quelque chose.

En campagne électorale de 2014 et en début mandat de l'actuel gouvernement, les Premier ministres successifs que nous avons eus: deux Premier ministres, trois ministres des finances, nous avaient promis un deuxième miracle économique ! Un terme qui semble avoir disparu du vocabulaire gouvernemental. Et là, M. le président avant que je ne rentre dans le vif du sujet, le budget lui-même, laissez-moi répondre à deux ou trois points par rapport à l'intervention du précédent orateur, notamment sur l'affaire BAI.

M. le président, à mon humble avis, la plus grosse bêtise de ce gouvernement, une fois accédé au pouvoir, était de s'en prendre à la BAI et en ne respectant pas les procédures d'usage, propres à un état de droit. La BAI, pour moi, M. le président, était malade.

D'ailleurs, c'était nous-mêmes, au MMM, qui avions tiré la sonnette d'alarme en premier. Mais, M. le président, je vais m'expliquer en termes figuratifs: quand quelqu'un est malade et vous êtes le docteur - ici le docteur est le gouvernement, les autorités - qu'est-ce que vous faites? Quel est votre devoir? C'est de le soigner. Mais ce gouvernement, au lieu de soigner la BAI, il l'a tué carrément. Et, aujourd'hui, qu'est-ce qu'on a? On a des réclamations par milliards de toutes parts. On a des réclamations de R 35 milliards de l'ex-patron de la BAI. Là-dessus, M. le président, je vais être honnête dans mon propos parce que n'oublions pas ce qui s'est passé en 2015 avec l'arrogance de certains ! N'oublions pas ce qui a été dit lors des débats télévisés à la MBC ! N'oublions pas ce qui a été dit dans des débats à la radio avec l'arrogance de certains ! Et comment aussi oublier les propos de l'ancien Premier ministre à l'effet quand il est un capitaine d'un bateau, quand il sait que le navire va faire naufrage, alors il retire son argent en premier.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, dans quel pays sommes-nous en train de vivre? C'est un délit! Un délit initié *inside a dealing* ! Et pas seulement l'ancien Premier ministre, y compris son ministre des finances et le ministre de la bonne gouvernance. Ce sont ces gens-là qui viennent dire qu'ils sont des bâtisseurs de la nation. Des bâtisseurs qui nous coûtent l'abus des procès qui vont nous coûter des milliards, M. le président.

Donc, je disais, qu'aveuglé par le plein pouvoir ou par excès de confiance, ils ont foncé, tête baissée. Autant que je sache, aucune plainte n'avait été logée de la part des milliers de clients de la BAI et le gouvernement, fort de sa majorité, a procédé unilatéralement au démantèlement de cet important conglomérat sans mesurer les conséquences. On a agi comme dans une république bananière. Il y a eu ni plan B, ni plan C. Cela a été une décision hâtive, irréfléchie, irresponsable et dangereuse. Et maintenant on est en train de payer le prix de cette décision irréfléchie et irresponsable.

Comme je l'ai dit avant, nous attendons des procès, des dommages en série, hypothéquant les générations à venir. Pour notre cher pays, personne ne souhaite un dénouement désastreux. Le gouvernement s'est rué à la télé pour faire le procès de la BAI et ils ont eux-mêmes tranché et passé à l'acte. Il y avait même des débats télévisés à la radio et à la télé comme je l'ai dit. Le gouvernement s'était substitué au tribunal devant une population ahurie. Si nous perdons ces procès, plusieurs milliards de roupies et d'autres réclamations

s'ensuivront, jour après jour, et ce gouvernement n'aura plus le droit moral de diriger ce pays et devra démissionner par pure et simple décence envers la nation.

Donc, M. le président, c'est dommage que l'honorable ministre est en train de partir parce que j'allais aussi parler sur la sécurité sociale...

(*Interruptions*)

... sur les châteaux...

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Ameer Meea: Durant son intervention, il a mentionné qu'il y avait des châteaux en Italie, au Malte, en Espagne et des appartements à Washington. Mais la question parlementaire que j'avais moi-même posée à l'honorable ministre de la bonne gouvernance, dans sa réponse officielle, écrite - et j'espère que ça n'a pas été modifié – mais lui-même il n'a ni *castle*, ni château, ni appartement, ni à Washington, ni au Malte, ni en Espagne, ni en Italie. Rien! Il n'y a rien dans les documents officiels sur la liste des *Assets and Liabilities of the BAI*. Donc, comment venir lâcher ça, et puis il part maintenant! Il aurait dû être là pour pouvoir écouter ce que j'avais à dire.

Donc, laissez-moi venir directement sur l'analyse économique du budget, M. le président. S'il est vrai qu'on n'attend plus rien du budget 2017-2018, cela intervient dans un contexte économique incertain et tourmenté et c'est tout sauf rassurant pour l'avenir. Qu'y a-t-il à l'horizon? Pas grand-chose qui embrigade la nation. Il ne convainc guerre tant il manque d'inspiration, brille par son absence d'ambition et présente des incohérences. Ce qui est grave surtout c'est qu'il ne se concentre pas sur les priorités économiques actuelles.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ameer Meea : Reléguer ainsi l'économie au second plan dans le contexte actuel de morosité économique, frise l'irresponsabilité. Un budget, c'est surtout une occasion pour insuffler un nouveau dynamisme à l'économie car il y a la gravité de la situation par rapport à la chute aiguë de l'exportation mauricienne. En 2016, les exportations des produits mauriciens ont baissé si nettement au point qu'elles finançaient seulement la moitié des importations de nos marchandises. On s'attend à un nouveau recul cette année alors que le Brexit aura des conséquences sérieuses sur notre déficit commercial.

Un autre problème économique qui n'a pas été abordé dans le budget est l'investissement privé. A peine si ce terme a été utilisé durant le *Budget Speech* et combien c'est important l'investissement privé. Le Premier ministre se félicite de le voir enregistrer une croissance positive de 5% en 2016. Mais ce n'est pas un indicateur déterminant car le montant d'investissement privé, R 55 milliards environ, était bien inférieur à des années précédentes. Donc, nous avons atteint des chiffres dépassant les R 60 milliards. Et celui de 2017 ne va pas dépasser encore une fois les R 60 milliards. Donc, le budget de l'année dernière n'a pas atteint son objectif d'un taux d'investissement de 18.9% du produit intérieur brut pour l'année 2016/17 et en réaliser 17.6% c'est l'investissement privé qui amène la création de l'emploi. Il répond à une logique interne, s'il n'y a pas d'investissement privé, il n'y a pas lieu de parler de création d'emploi. Il n'y a que de l'emploi dans le secteur public, et d'ailleurs on recruterai quelques 2,000 fonctionnaires et le budget elle-même ne dit rien sur l'investissement privé, M. le président.

La gravité de la situation économique surtout par rapport aux difficultés du secteur *offshore*. Ici aussi le discours budgétaire entretient le flou et l'incertitude en indiquant que, *I quote -*

"We will also reform our tax regime for global business companies so that it evolves and meets the new international requirements."

Après avoir sacrifié les bénéfices du Traité de non-double imposition entre Maurice et l'Inde, le gouvernement envisagerai de revoir le taux de 3% appliqué aux revenus de sociétés *offshore*.

M. le président, l'impact de la révision du Traité que Maurice avait avec l'Inde sur l'*offshore*, nous n'avons pas encore ressenti cet impact. Parce que l'*offshore* emploie des milliers de personnes, des milliers de jeunes, directement ou indirectement dans les sociétés *offshore*, dans les firmes comptables, dans les assurances, dans les banques, les chauffeurs de taxi qui vont aller chercher ces employés qui travaillent fort tard pendant la nuit, les petits commerçants qui vendent de la nourriture, donc c'est un *multiplied effect*. Et tous ces jeunes qui font leur étude dans la comptabilité, c'est surtout le secteur *offshore* qui génère tous ces emplois-là. Et je parle en connaissance de cause. Moi, je suis extrêmement tracassé à l'avenir de ce secteur, surtout comme je l'ai dit l'effet n'a pas encore été ressenti.

Donc, en essayant de revoir le taux d'imposition sur les sociétés *offshore*, le gouvernement est en train de céder aux pressions des organisations des pays développés, sans

égard à notre souveraineté fiscale. Il est vrai que la juridiction mauricienne ne devrait pas continuer à fonder sa compétitivité sur un avantage purement fiscal. Mais il lui faut des mesures d'accompagnement comme l'industrie sucrière pour diversifier ses produits et ses marchés. Ce secteur est en pleine transition avec la fin du Traité indien, et ce budget n'a fait aucune mention, on fait comme-ci de rien n'était, alors que c'est déterminant. Les sociétés *offshore*, aujourd'hui, payent 3% au lieu de 15% de *corporate tax*. Est-ce qu'on va revoir tout cela ? Ce sont des mesures surtout qu'exigent l'OCDE. Donc, je disais où sont les mesures d'accompagnement ?

Ce qui saute aux yeux aussi, M. le président, c'est que d'une année à une autre, le gouvernement annonce des gros projets d'infrastructure, établit les dépenses d'investissement, mais à la fin de la journée, l'enveloppe pour le développement est sous-utilisée. Comme preuve, pour l'année fiscale se terminant 30 juin 2017, le gouvernement n'a dépensé que R 9.8 milliards sur un budget totalisant R 14.4 milliards. Quant à la dette publique, M. le président, en excluant l'aide de l'Inde avec une enveloppe de R 35.2 milliards pour le financement d'une série de projets, la dette publique franchira pour la première fois la barre de R 300 milliards, soit presque 67% de notre PIB. Ainsi les *Budgetary Estimates* accompagnant le discours du budget prévoient un endettement de R 301.6 milliards soit 63% du PIB, pour passer à R 347.1 milliards au 30 juin 2020. Il faut se rappeler que selon le *Public Debt Management Act 2008*, le taux de la dette publique doit être ramené à 50% du PIB l'année prochaine. Et comme je disais, en excluant l'assistance financière de l'Inde de R 35.2 milliards, la dette plutôt par tête d'habitant se montre à R 238,600, soit l'équivalent d'un salaire moyen annuel.

D'ici à juin 2020, soit la fin du présent mandat de l'Alliance MSM-ML et transfuge, la nouvelle détérioration de l'endettement de R 51.4 milliards pour atteindre R 347 milliards ou une dette par personne, *per capita*, de R 275,000. Et là, je dois mentionner, le fait selon moi, on aurait dû amender le présent budget par le montant qu'on doit payer aux victimes de la BAI. Comment peut-on présenter un budget huit jours de cela et aujourd'hui le gouvernement accepte de payer R 6.5 milliards, et ce montant ne se trouve pas dans ce même budget ! C'est l'irresponsabilité financière, M. le président, et on nous dit que le déficit budgétaire va être de 3.2% mais si on ajoute les R 6.5 milliards qu'on doit payer à la BAI quand on sait...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Armance, allow me to listen to the hon. Member!

Mr Ameer Meea: ...que notre GDP a atteint R 44.7 milliards, donc on prend notre GDP, on divise par R 6.5 milliards de dette additionnelle, notre déficit budgétaire va augmenter par 1.45%, M. le président. Qu'est-ce qu'on va faire ? On va amener un budgét supplémentaire dans quelques mois? Tout ça c'est joué maintenant, et moi je propose qu'on amende le budget, et je vais faire une proposition au *Committee Stage* quand ça viendra, M. le président.

Maintenant, M. le président et sans oublier les R 3.5 milliards que la Banque de Maurice a déjà avancé à la MauBank, etc. Donc, déjà en termes de *taxpayers' money, public funds*, on est arrivé à R 10 milliards seulement par la décision irréfléchie de ce gouvernement. Et l'ancien orateur qu'est-ce qu'il disait, nous sommes des bâtisseurs, des bâtisseurs d'emprunt, des bâtisseurs de *loans*, des bâtisseurs qui sont en train d'engager les générations futures. C'est ça que représente ce présent gouvernement.

M. le président, au lendemain de la présentation du Budget 2017-2018, les chiffres sur le *Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)* pour le premier trimestre de cette année constituent une véritable honte de choc. Ces données confirment une baisse de 32% du montant du FDI avec un montant de R 2 milliards, soit environ USD 60 millions seulement injectés dans l'économie mauricienne. Le secteur porteur tel que RES, et autre IRS, a, semble-t-il, pris un véritable ralentissement en ce début d'année et qui s'annonce de très mauvais augure pour l'économie mauricienne.

Dans son rapport de perspectives pour l'économie mondiale, la Banque mondiale a revu à la baisse l'estimation qu'elle avait faite en janvier dernier concernant la croissance de l'économie mauricienne. La Banque mondiale fait alors un état d'un taux de 3.4% contre 3.5% annoncé en 2017 et prend même à contre-pied les estimations de la FMI et les autres autorités locales dont la Banque de Maurice et *Statistics Mauritius*. La Banque mondiale revoit également à la baisse la croissance pour 2018-2019 initialement projetée à un taux de croissance de 3.8% pour les deux prochaines années. Les nouvelles provisions sont de 3.5% en 2018 et 3.3% en 2019.

Il faut souligner que la FMI avait estimé dans un rapport publié en avril dernier que la perspective économique mondiale, que la croissance pour 2017 serait à 3.9% et celle de 2018

à 4%. La banque de Maurice, elle, prévoyait une croissance de 3.9%. Tout a été revu à la baisse, M. le président.

Donc, M. le président, qu'est-ce que la population attend de ce gouvernement ? C'est tout simplement une amélioration de leurs conditions de vie, plus de sérénité. Elle s'attend à des perspectives d'emploi pour nos jeunes avec une révision du système éducatif pour répondre aux exigences d'une société moderne. Mais au lieu de tout ça, on a opté à des mégaprojets au coût de milliards de roupies, des projets annoncés bruyamment mais sans résultat. Là je fais référence au projet *Heritage City*, M. le président. J'avais raison quand je m'étais opposé à ce projet qui allait endetter l'île Maurice, nos futures générations jusqu'au cou et tout cela au détriment de Port Louis qui allait devenir une ville morte. L'*Heritage City* a été validée par le Conseil des ministres, un Conseil des ministres spécial mais c'est le même Conseil des ministres qui vient désapprouver le projet *Heritage City*. Quelle incohérence, quelle inconsistance, quel manque de compétence de la part d'un gouvernement d'une décision aussi grave faite à la va-vite ; des milliards de roupies dans un projet pour finalement aller tuer ce même projet, M. le président.

Qu'est-ce qu'on avait dit pour Port Louis? On avait dit qu'il y aurait des investissements de l'ordre de R 52 milliards. On avait brandi l'investissement et par qui? Par le secteur privé. Le secteur privé allait investir R 52 milliards dans une ville morte ! Je me rappelle de cette conférence de presse par l'ancien ministre des Finances, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo avec, à ses côtés, l'honorable Nando Bodha et l'honorable Dr. Husnoo. On allait transformer le bâtiment d'Emmanuel Anquetil en appartements ! On allait transformer tous les bureaux gouvernementaux par des bâtiments résidentiels. Il y aurait eu 300,000 m² de bâtiments résidentiels pour une ville morte, pour une ville dont on retire le Parlement, dont on retire tous les ministères d'envergure, et tous ces gens-là allaient venir à Port Louis. Voilà ces bâtisseurs, M. le président! Voilà ces bâtisseurs de Rome, de Port Louis plutôt, M. le président.

En passant, *in the process*, qu'est-ce qu'on a perdu ? On a perdu R 47 millions qu'on a payé à Stree Consulting, M. le président. Pour Stree Consulting, là aussi on a débattu la question, ici, à l'Assemblée Nationale et qu'est-ce qu'on a eu? Aucun rapport ! Aucun rapport, ni sur Stree Consulting et qu'est-ce qu'on disait de Stree Consulting ? C'était un G-to-G agreement, une firme de Dubai de grande envergure et alors quand on vérifie tout cela

sur l'Internet il n'y a rien, M. le président. R 47 millions de *taxpayers' money* qui s'est volatilisé, M. le président.

Maintenant, par rapport au développement économique, laissez-moi dire quelques mots sur le métro express. Nous voilà pris dans une spirale d'endettement extraordinaire. Je ne compte pas m'attarder sur ce projet, tellement il y a eu des points de vue contradictoires exprimés de part et d'autre. Peut-on s'étonner de constater que la population se laisse gagner par le pessimisme et le découragement après avoir été bercée par des chansons ! Le métro express est un projet grandiose sur lequel le gouvernement compte s'appuyer pour s'orgueiller mais cela n'a pas suscité une enthousiasme populaire. Sans cette adhésion populaire, ce projet d'envergure pourrait être un échec, M. le président.

Laissez-moi passer au secteur des PMEs, M. le président, où l'insatisfaction est généralisée. Il n'y a que R 100 millions qui ont été allouées et, tenez-vous bien, pour les trois prochaines années, pour l'implémentation d'un *10-Year Master Plan* pour le secteur des PMEs. Dans cette optique, la SME Mauritius remplacera la SMEDA comme principale institution du soutien des PMEs. Les R 100 millions allouées pour l'implémentation du *10-Year Master Plan* pour les trois prochaines années sont nettement insuffisantes d'autant plus que ce secteur contribue à lui seul 40% du PIB et qui est le plus grand employeur du pays. Le précédent orateur avait parlé des PMEs, il y a eu une *reduction in the tax regime*. Mais il devrait préciser la réduction par rapport à l'exportation, ce qu'il n'a pas fait.

(Interruptions)

Peut-être que je n'ai pas entendu. Mais, M. le président, le problème c'est que dès le départ les PMEs n'ont pas les moyens d'exporter. Combien de PMEs exportent ? Donc, ce baisse du taux fiscal, combien de PMEs vont en bénéficier, M. le président ? Très peu de PMEs exportent. Qui ne se souvient pas des R 10 milliards promis par l'ancien magicien, excusez-moi, par l'ancien ministre des Finances, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo ! R 10 milliards promis aux PMEs, R 2 milliards par année. Et là j'aurais aimé revenir sur les propos du précédent orateur à l'effet que R 3.2 milliards ont déjà été injectées.

Mais ces R 3.2 milliards, il oublie de dire que ces *loans* sont avec des banques commerciales, avec des taux commerciaux; pas avec la SMEDA ou bien avec la MauBank. Si j'avais pris ces *loans*, ça aurait été sans garantie, avec un taux préférentiel. Maintenant, ils prennent ces emprunts avec des banques commerciales, auto-commerciales et beaucoup

d'entre eux, ils prennent ça pour *re-finance* des *existing loans*. Donc voilà par rapport aux PMEs, M. le président.

Laissez-moi dire quelques mots sur le *Negative Income Tax*. L'introduction d'un système de *Negative Income Tax* pour les personnes en emploi et dont les salaires ne dépassent pas les R 10,000. Le gouvernement *Lepep* - *soi-disant lepep* - avait annoncé qu'il viendrait avec des propositions pour un salaire minimal.

(Interruptions)

Ça viendra ! Est-ce que tu vois quelque chose apparaître ?

The Deputy Speaker : Order !

Mr Ameer Meea: Tout à l'heure, je donnerais des exemples, pendant deux ans et demi, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait? Anne, ma sœur Anne ! Beaucoup a été dit, mais rien n'a été fait, M. le président. Dans ce budget, le Premier ministre n'a même pas mentionné le salaire minimal. Avec le soutien financier accordé aux employés au bas de l'échelle, le Premier ministre admet le fait que ces personnes sont mal rémunérées. Il refuse simplement de traiter le problème à la source et procéder à une répartition plus égalitaire de la richesse. C'est une volte-face de *l'Alliance Lepep* et une légitimation des inégalités à Maurice.

(Interruptions)

Attends avant que tu partes, il y a un truc pour toi là !

M. le président, laissez-moi venir à la réforme de la pension ! Et c'est bien que l'honorable ministre Etienne Sinatambou est là. D'ailleurs, je croyais qu'il allait parler sur la réforme de la pension. Au lieu de parler sur des châteaux en Espagne et en Italie, il aurait dû parler sur la réforme de la pension qui est un item extrêmement important, au lieu de jouer au *Teletubbies*, M. le président. Donc, il n'y a rien sur la pension des personnes âgées. Et en dépit du fait que le gouvernement avait mis sur pied un comité pour se pencher sur la question de l'universalité de la pension, il n'y a rien sur ce sujet alors qu'on sait qu'il va devenir un poids de plus en plus important sur notre économie. Il n'y a rien sur la politique démographique du pays. Il n'y a rien dans le budget.

(Interruptions)

L'honorable Gayan nous dit qu'il a lu ça, peut-être qu'il a lu ça *en bas là-haut*, mais moi, je n'ai rien trouvé.

Dans les années qui viennent, la population du pays aura diminué. La fameuse pyramide avec les jeunes en bas et les vieux en haut, va s'inverser pour devenir une toupie. Et est-ce qu'on va attendre que cela arrive pour se pencher sur la question ? M. le président, gouverner, c'est prévoir. Et moi, je croyais que le ministre responsable - il nous a dit qu'il était ministre responsable de la Sécurité Sociale, de l'Environnement - de six mois - et aussi de l'ICT, qu'il a acheté des appareils - allait nous dire ce qu'il pense par rapport au vieillissement de la population qui est un fait indéniable.

M. le président, maintenant, laissez-moi passer sur nos terres agricoles. Il y a plusieurs dimensions concernant nos terres agricoles. Je ne comprends toujours pas - et je vais être honnête là-dessus, les différents gouvernements successifs - comment est-ce qu'on peut prendre nos meilleures terres, comment est-ce qu'on peut prendre nos terres les plus fertiles qui sont dans le milieu du pays - quand je dis nos meilleures terres, c'est Highlands, Côte d'Or, Bagatelle, toutes ces régions là - on est en train de les transformer, bâtir des structures en béton. Et le paradoxe c'est qu'on est en train d'investir des millions, sinon des milliards dans le nord pour le *derocking*. Je n'arrive toujours pas à comprendre cette incohérence. On prend nos meilleures terres pour mettre du béton et pour les terres qui ne sont pas fertiles, on doit investir des milliards pour faire du 'derocking', M. le président. Je dis cela en relation du *Food Security*.

(Interruptions)

Non, je l'ai dit, j'ai dit des gouvernements successifs ! Donc, on est en train de mettre en péril le *food security* de notre pays parce qu'on doit garder ces terres pour les générations futures, M. le président.

Maintenant, un autre item du budget par rapport au *land conversion* des *golf courses*. Mention est faite dans le budget et également comme je l'ai dit, il y a beaucoup de paradoxes ; d'une part, il y a une volonté de préserver nos terres agricoles, mais d'autre part, il y a une *incentive* pour convertir les terres agricoles, et parmi il y en a quatre mesures phares. Rapidement je vais vous en dire. *Government is exempting Land Tax Conversion for the following purposes : Golf course, etc.*

M. le président, soit on garde nos terres agricoles a des soins productifs, mais comment dans un premier temps on dit cela pour garder nos terres, mais d'autre part on encourage à en faire des *golf courses* ? On sait qu'à Maurice, il y a environ, si je ne me trompe pas, 11 *golf courses* et tout le monde sait que le *golf course* est un gouffre financier. Déjà dans le pays, à travers les hôtels, à travers des groupes, il y en a plusieurs *golf courses*, mais pourquoi avoir permis dans ce dernier budget d'encourager des gens qui ont des terres productives, des planteurs qui font une activité économique, à vendre ces terres à des gens qui en veulent pour faire des *golf courses*, quand on sait que les *golf courses*, comme je vous ai dit, n'est pas une activité économique, M. le président ?

M. le président, laissez-moi parler maintenant de la télévision privée. M. le président, imaginons que les radios libres n'existaient pas ! Imaginons qu'il n'y avait que la MBC, M. le président ! Imaginons que chaque matin, l'unique information radiophonique fut la MBC/Radio ! Imaginons la couverture médiatique par cette chaîne en période électorale ou lors des grands sujets, d'autres scandales qui ont secoué le pays.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Duval, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: Imaginons le pays s'il n'y avait que la MBC, quand il y avait le scandale de *bal kouler* ; quand il y avait tout récemment le scandale de Betamax, mais aussi le scandale de l'affaire biscuits, biscuits achetés à R 10 et vendus à 40 euros, M. le président. Imaginons la couverture médiatique par la MBC ! L'absence de la télévision privée envoie une mauvaise image de notre pays, une image arriérée alors que beaucoup de pays d'Afrique, et surtout dans la région, ont pris une sacrée avance sur nous. Là encore, c'était une promesse de la campagne électorale. Peut-être qu'on va me dire qu'on est en train de travailler là-dessus.

Le fait que le gouvernement refuse de laisser opérer une télé privée ne révèle pas d'une démocratie éclairée pour équilibrer, mais une énième tentative de museler cette démocratie. M. le président, c'est une honte à l'île Maurice, c'est une insulte à l'intelligence des mauriciens. Dans cette affaire, M. le président, il s'agit plutôt de liberté d'expression, de démocratie, d'un pays qui respecte ses citoyens et qui croit dans sa maturité et son intelligence. Que le Premier ministre arrête de trouver des prétextes et qu'il arrête d'insulter l'intelligence des mauriciens parce que la MBC le fait suffisamment tous les soirs à 19h30, M. le président !

Laissez-moi dire quelques mots par rapport à l'alcoolisme et le tabagisme, le volet social que j'aurais aimé parler. Pour combattre les méfaits de l'alcool et du tabagisme, on va augmenter les prix. On va augmenter les prix des boissons alcoolisées et les cigarettes, trop simpliste comme solution, M. le président. Trop simpliste parce que de tels fléaux requièrent un travail en profondeur, une campagne de sensibilisation et d'optimisation des services, des ONG, des organisations citoyennes et des ressources humaines disponibles. Si de telles mesures budgétaires sont censées diminuer la consommation, comment explique-t-on que l'État s'attend à une augmentation de R 2 milliards comme taxe indirecte ? M. le président, je crois que l'honorable Barbier aussi en avait parlé et comme il avait expliqué, la demande est inélastique ; même si on augmente les prix, la demande va rester pareille. Un vice est un vice ! Or, on ne se débarrasse pas du jour au lendemain. Pour se payer les boissons alcoolisées et les cigarettes, on va inévitablement puiser ailleurs, on va puiser au détriment des enfants,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Ameer Meea: ... on va puiser dans le budget de la famille, que ce soit la nourriture ou l'éducation. Donc, il y a pour moi toute une étude qui doit être faite par rapport aux méfaits de l'alcool et du tabagisme.

Dans le même ordre d'idée, laissez-moi venir sur la drogue, M. le président. M. le président, laissez-moi dire que la toxicomanie persiste et là-dessus j'aurais bien aimé dire que pour moi je place ce combat *above party politics*. Ce fléau, la drogue, ne doit pas être une politique partisane. Et là, je vais profiter de cette occasion pour quand même féliciter le gouvernement par rapport à l'institution d'une Commission d'Enquête sur la Drogue. Bravo ! Pourquoi ? Parce que moi-même en tant que député dans le précédent mandat, j'ai insisté plusieurs fois sur la nécessité d'avoir une Commission d'Enquête sur la drogue. J'ai posé plusieurs questions au Parlement sur la nécessité d'avoir cette Commission d'Enquête. Pourquoi ? Parce que la dernière Commission d'Enquête date de plus de 25 ans ou 30 ans. La Commission Rault !

Pour moi, c'est une bonne chose qu'on ait mis cette Commission d'Enquête, mais je dois dire que jusqu'à l'heure, visiblement la Commission est en train de faire son travail convenablement, mais j'espère qu'elle y aille jusqu'au bout. S'il faut appeler des gens qui

sont proches du pouvoir, s'il faut appeler des gens qui sont des avocats des parties au pouvoir, il faut les appeler. Je dis bravo à l'institution, mais il faut que le travail se fasse convenablement et en toute indépendance. Et là, on va attendre, même s'ils sont des nominés politiques, je ne vais pas citer des noms et croyez-moi il y a beaucoup comme ça, mais je ne vais pas entrer dans les détails. D'ailleurs, je profite de cette occasion, même l'ancien *Leader* de l'Opposition, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, est allé déposer à la Commission d'Enquête sur la Drogue.

Donc, pour moi, M. le président, le mouvement antidrogue y mène une croisade, mais il ne bénéficie d'aucun soutien digne de ce nom, de l'État. Au lieu d'utiliser la MBC à des fins de propagande, on aurait dû la mettre au service de ceux qui militent au péril de leur vie contre tous ces fléaux qui gangrènent notre société tels que la drogue et le sida. On aurait dû utiliser la MBC à bon escient, M. le président.

Maintenant, M. le président, laissez-moi dire des choses concernant ma circonscription. En premier, M. le président, je vais parler du problématique des marchands ambulants. L'année dernière dans le *Budget Speech*, mention a été faite pour caser 1,000 marchands ambulants, mais, M. le président, nous savons tous qu'ils ont été déplacés temporairement. Mais là, on est en train de leur dire qu'on va leur déplacer encore une fois. Tous ces projets annoncés en fanfare, les milles places, le projet va être financé par le secteur privé. Donc, ils n'ont aucune idée sur le coût du loyer, combien le loyer va coûter, ou l'espace va être. Qui va louer tous ces espaces? Qui va déterminer le loyer ? Et qui plus est, M. le président, le projet lui-même qui n'a pas encore démarré, est supposé de terminer en novembre 2020 - de toute façon vous n'aurez pas été là.

Donc, M. le président, pour moi, un gouvernement responsable, quand on prive quelqu'un d'un travail, il faut lui donner une alternative. Quand on les a privés des jobs dans le secteur public dans les années 80, ils sont devenus des marchands ambulants. Aujourd'hui, on les empêche de travailler, il faut leur donner une alternative pour qu'ils puissent gagner leur vie correctement et convenablement.

Et là, je vais revenir sur les deux sites qui ont été alloués, le site de Decaen et le site à la gare du Nord. M. le président, ils sont dans un état déplorable. Il n'y a aucune infrastructure. Ce n'est pas couvert. Il n'y a rien. Ils ont couvert avec des abris de fortune. Il y a une insalubrité totale. Il y a un manque d'hygiène. Les gens n'osent même pas entrer.

Quand on descend sur l'autoroute et quand on entre à Port Louis, on regarde à gauche, c'est comme des *slums* qu'on voit dans les autres pays. C'est comme un genre de petit bidonville.

Tout cela, on a mis les marchands ambulants là-bas, M. le président. On ne leur a proposé aucune alternative crédible et beaucoup d'entre eux ont dû abandonner cette activité et aujourd'hui ils sont dans le noir. Je vous le dis en connaissance de cause parce que le nombre de personnes qui viennent me voir pour une aide financière et pour une aide quelconque a considérablement augmenté. Ces gens-là, avant, jamais ils ne venaient me voir. Pourquoi? Parce qu'ils travaillaient ; ils gagnaient leur vie convenablement. D'accord, qu'il fallait mettre de l'ordre, mais en tant que gouvernement responsable, on aurait dû prévoir une alternative et une alternative crédible, M. le président.

Autre sujet que j'aimerais aborder par rapport à ma circonscription - c'est dommage que le ministre, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo, ne soit pas là - c'est le projet Concorde. Le projet Concorde est un projet où on aurait érigé un *Multi-Purpose Sports Complex* dans le jardin de la Plaine Verte. Je ne sais pas qui est cet abruti qui a eu cette idée de venir construire un bâtiment dans le jardin de la Plaine Verte. C'est le dernier espace vert qui reste à la Plaine Verte et on est en train de venir maintenant mettre un complexe sportif, M. le président.

M. le président, c'est un cri du cœur que je relaie au Parlement aujourd'hui de la part des habitants des régions avoisinantes. Il faut à tout prix préserver cet espace...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Abbas Mamode!

Mr Ameer Meea:... sinon les générations futures vont nous blâmer. Comme je vous ai dit 'gouverner c'est prévoir', et une fois cet espace vert disparaît, c'est pour l'éternité et cela ne va jamais revenir. Ce projet va à l'encontre de l'écologie ; quand même il y a une solution assez simple par rapport à ce projet. Comme nous savons tous, il y a le centre *Idrice Goomany* qui est là plus de 40 ans et ce centre, aujourd'hui, est en état de décrépitude totale. Année après année, on est en train d'investir des millions en termes de rénovation alors que la solution la plus simple aurait été de démolir ce centre. Il y a suffisamment d'espace pour rebâtir un bâtiment futur, moderne où on aurait pu faire le *Sports Complex* mais aussi bien d'autres projets, M. le président.

D'ailleurs, concernant les projets d'infrastructures, je l'ai dit, il n'y a aucun projet d'envergure dans la circonscription No. 3, que ce soit à Plaine Verte ou Roche Bois.

Et je dois dire aussi ma déception par rapport à la force policière dans la circonscription No. 3. Aujourd'hui, si vous prenez une route telle que route des Pamplemousses ou la rue Desforges, vous n'avez qu'à voir par vous-même. Prenez la rue Desforges, au commencement jusqu'à la fin, il n'y a pas un seul policier, M. le président. C'est aussi le cas de la route des Pamplemousses où des milliers de gens transitent jour et nuit ! J'ai déjà expliqué cela à l'ajournement des travaux ; il y a un nombre croissant d'habitants de Port Louis qui seront installés à Vallée des Prêtres, à Cité la Cure, à Abercrombie, à Ste Croix et tout le monde transite par la route des Pamplemousses et jamais il y a un policier. Il y a aussi et surtout de l'incivisme ; je suis d'accord qu'il y a des gens qui garent leur voiture n'importe où, mais c'est le travail des autorités pour mettre de l'ordre.

Aujourd'hui, pour rouler en voiture dans la circonscription No. 3, c'est devenu comme la loi de la jungle, M. le président. Et le ministre Dr. Husnoo est responsable du gouvernement mais il est aussi député de la circonscription. C'est à lui de régler tous ces problèmes en s'adressant au Premier ministre et au Commissaire de Police. Il n'est jamais là. Il n'est jamais dans la circonscription, rarement on le voit !

M. le président, une dernière chose par rapport au stade St François-Xavier qui se trouve à un jet de pierre de ma demeure. C'est un stade où on a apporté de grandes innovations au coût de millions de roupies avec l'apport de la FIFA. Mais on y joue très peu - quelques rencontres de première division et la raison c'est parce qu'il n'y a pas de *fog light*, il n'y a pas de lumière prévue pour les matchs de la soirée. C'est un stade vraiment moderne, construit au coût de plusieurs millions de roupies. J'avais adressé cette question, plus d'une année de cela, à l'honorable ministre Sawmynaden qui a répondu qu'il faut attendre les jeux des îles pour y installer ces lumières. Donc, tous ces jeunes qui habitent la région ne peuvent pas bénéficier de ce stade parce qu'il n'y a pas de lumière. Combien est-ce que ça coûte pour qu'il y ait de la lumière dans un stade, M. le président ? Le ministre des Sports, l'honorable Toussaint est là, peut-être qu'il va essayer de faire Amende honorable parce que le stade va être utilisé par tous les gens qui habitent Plaine Verte, Camp Yoloff, Roche Bois et on pourra faire beaucoup avec ce stade si cela a été *upgraded*.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me say a few words on CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) which was a system that was introduced in 2009, whereby companies were required to devote 2% of their profits for carrying out CSR activities under approved programmes as per published guidelines. The then Minister of Finance, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, stated to the House, in answer to a PQ, that the CSR system has been too rigid and cumbersome with its complicated set of guidelines. It was difficult for companies to allocate funds to eligible NGOs. Accordingly, he removed all CSR guidelines, but the obligation remains that under the Income Tax Act for companies to allocate 2% of their profit after tax towards CSR. Thus, in July 2015, all CSR guidelines were removed and companies were allowed to use CSR funds according to their will. The moment the CSR guidelines were removed, it is then that all the problems started, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir.

Two and a half years have elapsed since this Government came into power. We have lost so much time and money in the fight against poverty due to the incompetency and amateurism of this Government. And what we see now is a set of new regulations. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We do not deny the fact that there are new targeted areas which are important, but what we cannot understand, what we dispute, is the fact that these priority areas of intervention such as the environment and sustainable development, field of advocacy - I don't know what it means - peace and nation building.

What does the CSR have to do with peace and nation building, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir? And the biggest joke...

(Interruptions)

No, it is not drug! It is road safety and security. Corporate Social Responsibility: the primary objective of CSR was eradication of absolute poverty and vulnerable groups. Now, we have amended the regulation so that CSR can be used for road and safety. We are already pumping billions in terms of tax on fuel and diesel for the RDA. Now, we want to use the CSR for the RDA; *il ne nous reste que le métro léger, on aurait pu construire le métro léger avec le CSR si on prend cette même logique, M. le président.* And answering to Parliamentary Question B/766 on free Wi-Fi spot project implementation by Mauritius Telecom, it went unnoticed, but it was in the electoral manifesto that Mauritius Telecom used their CSR money to finance the Wi-Fi hotspot. But by doing so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no money will be left for the true NGOs doing the job.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now say a few words on the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). I have been a member of the said Committee since 2010 and I am of the opinion that the Finance Minister should have a fresh look at the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee. I am saying this because the mandate of the Public Accounts Committee has not been changed since 30 years and it no longer suits the current public finance management framework. As we are aware, the PAC derives its powers from Standing Orders and presently the only role of the Public Accounts Committee is that we debate the Report of the Director of Audit.

It is like an *ex-ante* event, that is, it has already happened and reported. We debated. We called the public servants and then we questioned them and then we wrote a report. And an *ex post facto*! And the report is not even debated in the House. The PAC does not have the power to choose subjects for examination outside the audited report. If the PAC can act to detect issues, its enquiries might have been a deterring effect. Relevant important subjects would look beyond the issues identified in the audited report for the largest system weakness that makes individual problems such as contract issues inevitable.

The PAC does not currently have the power to convene Ministers nor can the PAC accept the testimony of outside experts or the general public. The Committee does not have technical staff at its Secretariat, necessary to support it to achieve its mandate.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ameer Meea: Inadequate follow-up of mechanism: there is no mechanism for Government to report on whether the PAC's recommendations have been approved and implemented. Besides, the local practice is to seal the evidence of previous committee proceedings once a new Parliament has been elected. This practice limits the mandate of the PAC to investigate or to review past expenditures of Government and also limits the continuity, scope and timeliness of the PAC review process. The PAC so far, does not report and recommend disciplinary actions to relevant authorities in case of fraudulent practices.

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few words again on the PAC, but in relation to international practices. Many countries have reformed their budget procedures in order to focus more on the results of public expenditure. It has become clear that there is a common ground in these reforms, but also there is wide divergence in approaches followed

by individual countries, of course. But, I must say, that different Chairpersons of previous Public Accounts Committees, be it hon. Alan Ganoo, be it hon. Xavier Luc Duval, be it hon. Baloomoody, they have all stressed on the necessity to reinvent our PAC so as to be more effective and in line with international practice.

Many countries in the Commonwealth and the Francophonie have already done and I must say that I am ashamed to say that we lag behind on this issue and we would urge the hon. Minister to look into this matter seriously. And I must say that when hon. Baloomoody was Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, we had a meeting with the then hon. Prime Minister. Hon. Jhugroo also was present. I think hon. Henry also was present and he was very agreeable to the necessity of a reform in the Public Accounts Committee. *Il était très réceptif. Il était d'accord qu'il fallait changer la donne par rapport au PAC*, but then I don't know what happened to his willingness to change the PAC. And I must say that *ce n'est pas avec la gaieté de cœur qu'à chaque semaine je me rends aux réunions du Public Accounts Committee. Je le fais par devoir. Je le fais parce que j'ai décidé de former partie de ce comité, mais croyez-moi le travail qu'on fait dans le Public Accounts Committee n'est pas valorisant du tout et surtout en comparaison aux pays étrangers, M. le président.*

Donc, M. le président, laissez-moi avant de conclure dire quelque chose par rapport à Agaléga. Agaléga, comme vous le savez, est dans la circonscription No. 3 et ça fait partie intégrante de la nation mauricienne. Récemment, nous avons débattu la question, ici, à l'Assemblée Nationale et dans le budget, mention est faite que c'est une décision historique de refaire la piste d'atterrissement. Mais c'est totalement faux!

This has been with us for the last 10 or 12 years. Look at all the Budget Speeches! Mention is made for Agalega airstrip, for a jetty to be constructed in Agalega. Now, talking about a historical decision; this Government has been in power for two and a half years. What have you done for two and a half years? Nothing! It is now that we hear that this will be done! But still two and a half years, half of the mandate is over and even the previous Minister of Outer Islands, hon. Koonjoo, I don't know whether he has been to Agalega or not...

(Interruptions)

He has been, but nothing has been done!

(Interruptions)

Everything...

(Interruptions)

As he said: «He did not get the flowers there ».

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Ameer Meea: M. le président, laissez-moi conclure maintenant. Il faut venir avec des mesures concrètes au plus vite pour assurer tous ces gens sinon leurs craintes pourraient devenir contagieuses et se répandent dans la société créant une psychose générale, très mauvaise pour la relance de l'économie. Peut-on être si naïf pour croire que les investissements étrangers vont se bousculer à notre porte et les valises pleines de capitaux pour se disputer, les secteurs où ils vont investir.

Déjà nous avons une image à refaire, tout un climat de confiance à établir. Pour qu'on nous prenne au sérieux, il faut envoyer des signaux forts et surtout nommer des gens hautement crédibles dans des secteurs vitaux de l'économie. Pas de membres de la famille, pas de petits copains, pas de petites copines !

On a menti à l'électorat. On avait parlé d'un deuxième miracle économique et une nation d'entrepreneurs. Mais après deux ans et demi, on est loin de cela. Les deux ténors des années 80, l'ancien Premier ministre et l'ancien ministre des finances ne sont plus au poste où ils étaient en 2015. Ils ne sont que le pâle reflet de ce qu'ils étaient avant. Ils se sont tout simplement trompés d'époque. Le premier qui a fondé tous nos espoirs est devenu ministre mentor en jouant au retrait. L'autre est allé au ministère des affaires étrangères pour jouer au profil bas parce qu'il disait que sa santé ne permettait pas d'être ministre des finances mais sa santé le permet d'être ministre des affaires étrangères. Ce sont les seconds couteaux qu'ils ont monté au crâne pour prendre des décisions importantes. Des échecs en échecs, des voltes en voltes, des contradictions en contradictions, le pays s'enfonce davantage dans le désespoir.

Ce gouvernement aurait dû prendre le taureau par les cornes et tenter de redresser la situation en donnant le bon exemple dans le sens du sacrifice d'abnégation et du sérieux. Mais on a eu droit à des nominations des proches avec des salaires mirobolantes faisant des grands titres de la presse. Est-ce le signe avant-coureurs d'une fin de règne, M. le président ?

Pour se défendre, le gouvernement fait usage éhonté et abusif de la télé. Comme si c'est sa propriété personnelle. Le bulletin d'information est grossièrement trafiqué et manipulé pour que la majorité des téléspectateurs se tournent vers d'autres chaînes. Or, notre station nationale aurait dû être notre fierté nationale, un outil de prédilection pour unir la population autour des idéaux nationaux, un outil efficace pour notre nation building.

A en juger, M. le président, ce qui se passe à l'étranger par rapport aux élections. On se demande si on ne s'achemine pas vers un raz-de-marée balayant tout sur son passage pour instaurer une nouvelle horde politique dans un décor nouveau et dans un paysage nouvel, M. le président. Il y a un manque de *leadership*...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Aliphon, please!

Mr Ameer Meea: Il y a un manque de *leadership*...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Hon. Bhagwan, please !

Mr Ameer Meea : ... éclairé et une mauvaise répartition de richesses dans notre pays. Les innombrables scandales et l'arrogance du pouvoir fait que l'usure commence à se faire sentir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, allow the hon. Member to...

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea : M. le président, pour terminer, la politique est une roue qui tourne en permanence et cette roue est en marche pour botter ce gouvernement hors du pouvoir et ce ne sera que justice naturelle.

Merci, M. le président.

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

At 5.16 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.53 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sawmynaden!

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before congratulating the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for this Budget 2017/18, let me, first of all, reply to the hon. Member Aadil Ameer Meea who spoke just before me.

I have been listening carefully to the hon. Member. He is making the public understand or make the public realise that the BAI group has been a victim of this Government as if the BAI group was running so well that, all of a sudden, the Government just got in and decided to crash the whole thing.

Je pense que l'honorable membre devrait demander à ces employés de la BAI quel trauma ils ont traversé pendant l'année 2014. Les propriétaires de bâtiments qui louaient leur emplacement au group BAI, que ce soit pour Courts ou pour l'assurance, avaient des *loans* à rembourser mais ils ne pouvaient pas honorer leur engagement parce que le loyer n'était pas payé. Allez demander à ces petites et moyennes entreprises qui fabriquaient des meubles pour Courts à l'époque ; ils n'étaient pas payés mais avaient des traites bancaires à honorer. Allez demander à ces propriétaires de voitures, qui ont payé pour leur voiture qui n'a jamais été livrée. L'honorable Sewocksingh n'est pas là, elle allait être une victime. Elle a eu sa voiture à temps sinon elle aurait été sans voiture alors que la voiture était déjà payée. Même moi, j'ai été une victime.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Sawmynaden: M. le président, heureusement que ce gouvernement a pu prendre le taureau par les cornes, et ces petites et moyennes entreprises ont été sauvées de justesse. On a su prendre les décisions qu'il fallait à l'époque. Maintenant, en écoutant l'honorable Ameer Meea qui parlait des terres agricoles, je sais que l'honorable Ameer Meea n'était pas candidat ni membre du MMM en 2005 alors que nous, nous étions en alliance avec le MMM-MSM. Quand j'entends l'honorable Ameer Meea parler, comme si son nouveau guru politique maintenant c'est Navin Ramgoolam !

(Interruptions)

Quand il disait à l'époque les terres d'Ébène, sur des terres mauriciennes, on va construire un éléphant blanc, quand il disait qu'il fallait les laisser telles quelles pour pouvoir promouvoir l'agriculture, nous avons payé le prix pour cela. Quand le parti Travailliste menait une campagne contre nous pour dire qu'on était en train de construire un éléphant blanc, l'honorable Rajesh Bhagwan est au courant de cela, parler de *Illovo deal* mais je pense que l'honorable Ameer Meea doit revoir sa copie et en parler avec son *leader* parce qu'on a tous été victimes de cette campagne mensongère en 2005 et nous avons payé le prix fort pour cela.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will, first of all, congratulate the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, for his Budget 2017-2018. As he rightly branded it, this Budget is meant to help Mauritius rise to the challenge of its ambition.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Sawmynaden: *Under his guidance, this country is setting off to greener pastures.* M. le président, la population Mauricienne aujourd'hui doit savoir *who is the Prime Minister of this country*, qui est le Premier ministre de ce pays. C'est un homme de principe, un homme d'honneur, un modèle pour les jeunes et surtout un bon père de famille. Un homme qui a gardé les pieds sur terre. Ici, au sein de l'Assemblée Nationale, tous les honorables Membres savent très bien qu'à chaque *lunch break et tea break*, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth est avec ses députés pour prendre le déjeuner ou même le *tea break*. C'est la même chose pour l'honorable Bérenger. Je sais que mes amis du PMSD se sentent un peu orphelins parce qu'eux, ils sont tous seuls sans leur *leader*.

(Interruptions)

Voilà, il mange dans son bureau !

(Interruptions)

Voilà! Better not talk of the former Prime Minister, *amateur de cigars* who was hiding millions if not billions in his coffers, who was busy *tousse sali* instead of sitting in Parliament.

I will give one clear example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when hon. Pravind Jugnauth became Prime Minister, what was his first trip abroad? When others rushed to the UK for a white Christmas and Christmas pudding and the roast turkey, he went to Rodrigues to meet our brothers and sisters of the Republic of Mauritius!

(Interruptions)

He did not go for roast turkey or for Christmas pudding, he went for *salade ourites* and a *jus de limon*.

(Interruptions)

Mais, M. le président, cela fait beaucoup de jaloux tout comme quand mes deux collègues, l'honorable Seeruttun et l'honorable Jhugroo, sont partis pour Agaléga ; cela a fait beaucoup de jaloux de par l'accueil qu'ils ont reçu. M. le président, laissez-moi vous dire que nos frères et sœurs Rodriguais et Agaléens ont exprimé leur sentiment et surtout le respect. Ce sont là les valeurs sûres de cette République. Malheureusement, c'est triste de le dire, le PMSD ne connaît pas ces valeurs en maltraitant le Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues en personne pour ne pas répéter les mots de l'honorable Henry. Et les pauvres enfants d'Agaléga qui n'ont fait qu'exprimer leur contentement à leur propre manière !

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some Members of the Opposition brag about him being a part-time Finance Minister. Well, that Budget clearly proves that hon. Pravind Jugnauth is, in fact, a dedicated Minister with the prosperity of our country as major priority.

Un homme de terrain qui a mené des consultations pré budgétaires élargies avec même des *backbenchers*, une première dans les annales. M. le président, l'Opposition réclame des élections générales sous prétexte que Pravind Jugnauth n'a pas la légitimité. Je rappellerai à ces détracteurs que le *leader* du MSM a été choisi par sa majorité comme Premier ministre et de toute façon notre Constitution est claire là-dessus. Il a été élu dans sa circonscription et commande une majorité au Parlement. L'affaire est très claire. *Crystal clear !*

A tous ceux qui parlent de *deal papa-piti*, ils ont un *selective memory*, M. le président. Il est bon de leur rappeler qu'en 1992, l'honorable Sir Gaëtan Duval a démissionné du Parlement pour que son fils, aujourd'hui le leader de l'Opposition, l'honorable Xavier-Luc

Duval, puisse faire son entrée. Il a même été *Acting Prime Minister* ! Là il n'y avait pas de problème ! Il n'était même pas élu.

(*Interruptions*)

Pour ne pas dire, après, quelle déclaration il a fait, je préfère ne pas tomber dans cette bassesse.

(*Interruptions*)

On a more serious note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the motto is clearly: 'work for a better Mauritius'. And to reach that goal, let us not forget that he has a solid and trustworthy team around him.

Depuis qu'il a pris les rênes aux finances, les indicateurs sont revenus au vert. Le secteur de la construction, véritable baromètre de la santé économique du pays, est à nouveau en croissance, pour preuve, quand vous passez par le triangle de Réduit au niveau de la Cyber Cité, vous ne verrez bien pas moins d'une dizaine de gratte-ciels en construction. Ailleurs, à travers l'île, on construit des *village halls*, des terrains de football et tout ceci alors que la NDU, une corporation en faillite sous l'ère Travailliste, recommence à se remettre à flot.

Je suis passé ce weekend par Rose Hill pour aller vers Flic en Flac, que ce soit à Réduit, que ce soit à Rose Hill, la Rue Labourdonnais, que ce soit à Quatre Bornes, que ce soit sur la route Mont Roches/Saint Martin, que ce soit à Bambous, que ce soit à Flic en Flac, vous voyez des drains en construction, vous voyez des routes réasphaltées, même l'autoroute est en plein travaux.

(*Interruptions*)

Même à Rodrigues !

A ceux qui disent jalousement qu'il n'y a que le Numéro 8 qui connaît des développements, je les inviterai à aller voir un peu partout dans le pays, les chantiers qui sont menés. Nous vivons là une période qui ressemble beaucoup aux années 85 - 87 avec une île en pleine mutation où divers chantiers sont en cours.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the gist of this Budget. In this age of increasing uncertainty on the global front with defenders of globalisation having to face a strong and resurgent protectionist movement, there is an urgent need to ease the environment

for doing business in the country so as to raise the level for the country to graduate to a high economy status.

Since this Government has taken office, we have not spared any efforts to bring measures to boost up private investment in this country. Several initiatives are being taken to allow enterprises or other organisations to operate in a more business-friendly environment. For an economy to sustain this dynamic and competitive world, there should be no hurdles to the processing of applications for licences and permits so as to operate a business, hence, innovation is the keyword.

As a matter of fact, we are engaged in a new paradigm whereby we need to reinvent ourselves so as to cater for the next generation. We are working to create jobs that do not exist now. We have to anticipate on the trends that we shall come in 10 or 15 years. This is why we are setting the ideal environment, with a battery of measures meant to harness these future needs. It is in this context that the Government, under the visionary leadership of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, presented a recipe for a modern Mauritius driven by the Vision 2030, which was put on track by the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we shall not only boost ourselves of our rank on African or world rankings, we all know that our dream of a higher income economy or society is directly linked to our capacity to come up with new areas, sectors of development. Since 30 years, all Government have come up with incentives to boost employment, but concretely, these approaches have not met expectations. This is because the world has changed and that acquisition of technology has rapidly overtaken basic human resource needs. Doing business today is very much dependant on technology. Digital transformation which is in the essence of the profound and accelerating transformation of business organisation and society to fully leverage digital technologies to drive new value for customers, employees and citizens, is ruling the planet today.

Digital transformation opens a new world for us. The world has by now already taken cognizance that data is the new oil. A man-made resource that has infinite potential when mixed with technology. The young start-ups of today look at what value they can derive from data, so to create new business, products and services around it. We should know that since our Government took power, the average number of jobs created in the ICT sector has increased by 10.4% per year compared to the equivalent statistics for the previous Government. It is clearly the sector where employment is buoyant and its growth is steady.

The Government has taken the pledge to enhance the tendency, but we are no more talking of mere call centre operations, we are now concentrating on e-services, mobile apps and other innovative services and it is this Government which will give impetus to that movement.

Being a responsible Government, we embark under Open Data Odyssey in a well-planned and structured manner. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as we all know, Open Data is the data that Government, businesses, organisations, individuals put out in the public domain for youths, reused and redistributed freely. Open Data is necessary for the emergence of a mobile eco-system in Mauritius. By using data developers, we will be able to create mobile applications which will enhance the lives of Mauritians as well as tourists visiting our country. In view of identifying the public data sets that can be released with maximum impact for business and society, the Government, with the assistance of the World Bank, has formulated an Open Data Readiness Assessment Report. 29 quick-win datasets have been identified, ranging from budget data, metrological forecasts to help statistics.

My Ministry is at the forefront of easing the life of our citizens by introducing e-services in different sectors and has also developed a National Data Policy 2015-2016 which formulates the guidelines and process for Ministries and Departments in the release and management of Government Datasets as Open Data to make this vision of ours a reality. The National Computer Board, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, is working on the setting up of an Open Data Portal, which will host the Open Datasets. This portal holds the promise of developing innovative products and services on the basis of Business Insights that may generate from the Open Datasets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now share with this August Assembly the work of my Ministry on the Info Highway, the next big thing in terms of innovation in the public sector. Info Highway provides one of the most robust service delivery platforms, conceived for business facilitation and other e-government initiatives. It is a unique infrastructure providing the most innovative mechanism for sharing of data across public sector agencies. It is important to note that my Ministry has already implemented 38 data sharing requests and 80 e-services using the Info Highway. For example, the time taken for the development of the Tourism Authority e-licensing solution has been reduced thanks to the Info Highway. Now, customers are using this e-licensing solution benefits from a shortened application process which is online. Citizens of businesses are not required to submit the same information every

time they interact with a Government agency, and this is transforming the way we are doing business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, let me turn to the open source software. Adoption of open source software has become a global phenomenon. Recognising the transformative power of open source software, my Ministry elaborated a National Open Source Action Plan in 2016 which puts into action the recommendation of the National Open Source Policy, Strategy and Action Plan for Mauritius.

One of the fundamental measures under the Action Plan is the setting up of the free and open source Society of Mauritius to provide guidelines, policies, standards and interoperability frameworks and advice on the implementation of the National Open Source Action Plan. The plan aims at the development of an Open Source Software Programme consisting of repository of knowledge in open source software, awareness events on open source software, support to the primary, secondary schools open source software initiatives, supports of academic research on open source software, an open source software lab to support research, technology and education initiatives in open source software, promotion and coordination of research in open source software and the support of public-private partnership for the development and adoption of the open source software.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has carried out an assessment of data sharing needs among Government agencies and private organisation under adequacy of existing structures. This has allowed us to formulate a data sharing policy. We strongly believe that the implementation of the data sharing policy will reduce the number of time citizens are required to provide the same data to different agencies, reduce the duplication of data within Government, reduce the reliance on hard copies and allow retrieval of information directly from the owners of data.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot talk of business facilitation without talking of innovation. My Ministry is currently finalising the National Innovation Framework which defines the strategies to be adopted by the country for the next 5 years to become a high-income and innovation-driven nation. The Framework, the first of its kind, aims at inculcating and sustaining an innovation culture with an important human dimension engaging people. The proposed strategies cut across all spheres and disciplines.

As announced in the Budget 2017-2018, the Mauritius Research Council will be transformed into the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council, a one-stop shop for innovation. A financial envelope of Rs150 m. has been earmarked for the research and development to support matching and non-matching grant schemes in areas like high performance, computing, including proof of concept schemes.

With this measure, Government wants to address the research and development needs of academics and that of the private sector. The Industrial Property Office will also be integrated in the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council so that we can better safeguard the patent's right and our researchers and innovators.

We are introducing an eight-year income tax holiday for new companies engaged in the manufacturing of pharmaceutical products, medical devices and hi-tech products. New companies involved in the development of intellectual property assets in the country will also benefit from a tax holiday of eight years on the income derived from the totality of the IP assets produced. This innovation box regime will foster the emergence of new kinds of service providers in the country. The National Computer Board will set up a Digital Youth Engagement Programme to provide introductory courses on computer programming, that is, coding to young Mauritians. In doing so, we will allow the young Mauritians to become problem solvers. This can only be a good thing as we need a critical mass of problem solvers in order to move towards Vision 2030.

Madam Speaker, there is no doubt that with this Budget, research and development will get its rightful place in the innovation ecosystem. We are coming up with an accelerated depreciation of 50% per annum in respect of capital expenditure incurred on research and development.

Innovation will be the driving force of Mauritius for the next decade. This is why we are coming up with so many measures in innovation. Moreover, companies shall be allowed to claim a double deduction in respect of qualifying expenditure on research and development. This measure will be effective until the income year 2021/2022. To further push the frontiers of innovation, an innovator Occupation Permit will be introduced for innovative start-ups for which 20% of their operational expenditure has been devoted to research and development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now talk about the importance of investing in skills and development. Skilling our youth for tomorrow's challenge and an ever-changing work environment is our responsibility. With the increasing opportunities that exist in the digital economy, it is imperative that our youths are equipped with High End Skills in emerging technologies and they are to operate in highly competitive ICT industry. A budget of about Rs130 m. has been allocated for the *Polytechnique* so that our youngsters can be trained in the emerging skills in many fields, including ICT.

Emerging technologies will have a pride of place in the ICT field with robotics, big data and internet of things being offered at Le Réduit Polytechnique. 3D printing services will be set up and operated by the National Computer Board to support manufacturing firms, university students and start-ups, who need to develop prototypes using 3D printing technologies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development got it right when he said last year that digital economy shall be the driving force behind a new era of development. We want to make Internet become more affordable after having revolutionised access to Internet by installing 300 free Wi-Fi spots around the island and with 300 Always On spots for Harel Mallac proved that this Government inspires the private sector. In this Budget, we are going miles further. For the companies operating in the sector, the price of connectivity is a major issue. This is why the prices of International Private Leased Circuits (IPLC) and the Global Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) services have been lowered by 15% as from 01 July 2017. These measures come after the SME booster package introduced by Mauritius Telecom this year itself.

Furthermore, with the expansion of business in areas as of high and business process, outsourcing like knowledge process outsourcing, medical process outsourcing and legal process outsourcing, we have a large number of customers in Europe and as such we need to comply with the EU Data Regulations which will take effect as from May 2018. Our Data Protection Act will thus be amended to comply with the new EU Data Protection Regulation. This Government gives much importance to innovation. As I have elaborated earlier, start-up digital nomads need an oasis to survive. We, in Government, will provide the necessary infrastructure, software and ingredient for that oasis to emerge.

We are coming up with the Mauritius ICT plug and play platform which in essence will be a cloud service platform for digital nomads lauded with innovative business ideas.

This cloud set up will no doubt be a crowd-puller for start-ups inside Mauritius and for other shores alike. In addition to that, a Mauri-cloud platform will be set up by Government for the uploading and insurance of documents to be carried by agencies in the course of doing business with their customers. The citizens won't be required to carry paper documents, reducing administrative expenses as all documents will be available for verification online.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a significant increase in cybercrimes recently. The Cyberspace cannot be a no-law field where everything is permitted. Action is being taken to address this evil and it is good to note that Mauritius has just been ranked sixth on the Global Cyber Security Index of ITU. The top 10 global rankings are as follows – you should listen carefully, the companies just before and after us –

- (i) Singapore;
- (ii) USA;
- (iii) Malaysia;
- (iv) Oman;
- (v) Estonia;
- (vi) Mauritius;
- (vii) Australia;
- (viii) France;
- (ix) Canada, and
- (x) Russia.

Small and tiny Mauritius is sixth in the world and needless to say that we are No. 1 in Africa. Moreover, we need ...

(Interruptions)

Anyway, this is the result of this Government! It is not my Ministry or the other Ministries; it is the result of this Government. We work as a team and whatever results we get, we all take the gold medal.

Moreover, we need to strengthen the capabilities of the Police Department and the Judiciary to investigate and prosecute the various types of cybercrimes respectively. My Ministry will implement the National Cybercrime Strategy to be rolled out during the course of the year. A National Disaster Cyber Security and Cybercrime Committee will be set up with representatives of the PMO, the Police IT Department, the Data Protection

Office, the IT Industry Association, the civil society and my Ministry to chart the way forward on the protocol to be observed when cyber-attacks occur.

A Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Policy will be formulated to ensure that appropriate security contents are put in place to minimise any disruption in case of any security breaches. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you can judge for yourself, we are being audacious and most daring throughout the measures announced. It is this forward-looking gaze that will make it possible for a better life of our citizens and a growing economy. On the other hand, I would like to take some time to highlight other measures that I think are game changes for Mauritius.

M. le président, l'ajustement de notre politique de santé en fonction d'un vieillissement de la population était une priorité qui devait être abordée d'autant plus nous avons maintenant le taux d'espérance de vie le plus élevé dans la région africaine. En ce qui concerne les mesures visant à atténuer la pauvreté, j'aimerais dire que ce gouvernement a, depuis qu'il est arrivé au pouvoir, contribué à soutenir les familles à faible revenu. De l'augmentation de la pension nationale à l'introduction des tarifs sociaux pour l'eau, en passant par l'extension de l'allocation pour un mineur handicapé, nous avons beaucoup fait. Cela devrait être reconnu.

M. le président, permettez-moi d'ajouter que parfois les mauriciens doivent vraiment savoir qu'ils obtiennent gratuitement le service de santé, l'éducation, le transport, les subventions sur les produits de base parmi tant d'autres. Dans quel autre pays est-ce que nous voyons cela? D'autres mesures sociales sont à l'étude, par exemple, le salaire minimal, mais nos citoyens doivent se rendre compte du prix à payer pour tout cela.

M. le président, je faillirai à ma tâche si je ne parle pas sur le sport en tant qu'ancien ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports. Je suis très content que mon collègue, l'honorable Toussaint, continue le travail déjà enclenché et je suis sûr que nous allons récolter les résultats escomptés aux prochains Jeux des Iles de 2019.

Je suis fier de constater que les allocations mensuelles aux athlètes de haut niveau ont été augmentées. Le *National Young Volunteer Scheme* prend aussi plus d'ampleur sans oublier le *Hall of Fame* pour ceux et celles qui ont fait flotter très haut le drapeau national. Et M. le président, je pense qu'à travers toutes les mesures enclenchées pour le bien des athlètes, nous aurons des athlètes de très haut niveau dans un futur pas trop lointain.

S’agissant du secteur éducatif, comme vous le savez très bien, moi et ma collègue, l’honorable Madame Dookun-Luchoomun, travaillons main dans la main depuis que je suis devenu ministre. Depuis le début de l’année, nos ministères élaborent le meilleur plan pour procurer les outils et les plateformes d’éducation numérique qui accompagne la vaste réforme enclenchée dans l’éducation. Cette nouvelle façon d’éduquer avec, par exemple, l’introduction du jeu d’échecs dans les écoles primaires et notre réponse à la pédagogie moderne.

Maurice a toujours investi beaucoup dans l’éducation et continuera à le faire parce que nous jetons les bases pour un futur meilleur. Le projet *School Net* est sur la bonne voie. Il devra être une alternative plus humaine à l’industrie des leçons particulières qui est la principale cause de l’inégalité dans ce secteur.

M. le président, pour conclure, j’aimerais souligner certains épisodes récents qui viennent justifier le raz-de-marée de décembre 2014, et qui prouve que l’ancien régime devrait être chassé du pouvoir.

Il y a eu une décision sur le dossier Betamax et même aujourd’hui certaines personnes ne veulent pas comprendre que ce *deal* scandaleux a été fait pour garantir un matelas confortable à Navin Ramgoolam et ses *chamchas* et ses *goondas*. Le *Leader* de l’Opposition dit qu’il a supplié les membres du Cabinet pour ne pas remettre en question le *mega deal* Betamax. M. le président, j’aimerais savoir pourquoi il n’a pas fait de même lorsque les membres de l’ancien régime ont validé cet accord honteux, fait au détriment de la population.

Il n’a pas supplié à cette époque, il avait applaudi. J’invite l’honorable Xavier Luc Duval d’être juste dans son jugement. Je sais qu’il a ravivé son amour pour le chef du parti travailliste, qui l’a pourtant humilié à plusieurs reprises. N’oublions pas l’épisode Michael Sik Yuen, jeté du PMSD, accueilli à bras ouverts par le parti travailliste et l’actuel *Leader* de l’Opposition devrait s’asseoir dans le même Cabinet ministériel de Michael Sik Yuen. Quelle humiliation!

Mais il en valait. Lorsqu’on regarde la composition des gouvernements précédents de Navin Ramgoolam, le dénominateur commun est l’honorable Xavier Luc Duval, le complice de toutes ses actions en d’autres mots. Il n’a jamais claqué la porte du parti travailliste. Là qu’est-ce qu’on entend tous les jours, les députés du PMSD, un budget *menti menti*. Si ça c’est un budget *menti menti*, je pense qu’on doit décortiquer le pompeux *rezilta lor rezilta*.

Je vais vous lister la liste maintenant, le *rezulta lor rezulta* du PMSD. Le *mega deal* Betamax, le *Ponzi* de la BAI, le *Ring Road*, les fissures de Terre Rouge/Verdun, le Bagatelle Dam, il y aura trop à compter, il faudra une calculatrice. Voilà, M. le président, le *rezulta lor rezulta*, alors je préfère avoir un *menti menti* qu'un *rezulta lor rezulta*.

M. le président, l'honorable Pravin Jugnauth est un Premier ministre qui symbolise le respect quand on voit comment il symbolise le respect, quand on voit comment il lutte contre les barons de la drogue depuis qu'il est à la tête de ce pays.

En deux ou trois mois, on a saisi plus de drogue qu'en dix ans sous l'ère travailliste. Il mène ce combat avec conviction pour le bien de la population mauricienne, pour les jeunes de ce pays.

En tant que ministre responsable des Finances, il a anticipé les prochains défis auxquels nous sommes confrontés. D'où ce point stratégique, allant au-delà de cet exercice financier. Il est également derrière les conditions généreuses accordées par notre partenaire historique et culturel, l'Inde. Sa relation particulière avec le Premier ministre, Shri Narendra Modi, un homme mondialement reconnu et respecté, suscite beaucoup de jalousie. Mais elle apporte déjà des résultats en termes d'investissements massifs dans ses projets qui stimuleront notre économie dans les mois à venir.

L'île Maurice est au carrefour de son destin. Il y a ceux qui affichent un scepticisme pervers parce qu'ils ne veulent pas que nous progressions et ceux qui en tant que patriotes ont compris ce que ce gouvernement veut faire. Nous voulons d'une société à revenus élevés, un modèle de développement qui satisfait tous nos citoyens. C'est la feuille de route définie de ce Budget 2017-2018.

Le *Metro Express* est un gigantesque projet qui va révolutionner notre mode de vie, notre quotidien, un stimulant pour l'économie. Ce gouvernement est ambitieux et à bien des égards nous construisons des maisons pour les pauvres.

Mon ami et collègue, le Vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Showkutally Soodhun ne s' épargne aucun effort pour allouer un toit décent aux familles qui avaient été oubliées par le régime précédent. Le logement n'est pas seulement une question de confort mais aussi de dignité. C'est en fournissant de telles commodités qu'on met en œuvre des mesures comme celles incluses dans ce budget, que nous construisons une meilleure île Maurice dont les générations futures seront fières comme l'a fait Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

En conclusion, je citerai ce que George Pataki, un républicain américain 53^e gouverneur de New York, disait d'un budget –

“A budget reflects a choice - not an easy choice, but the right choice. And when you think about it, the only choice. The choice to take the responsible, prudent path to fiscal stability, economic growth and opportunity.”

M. le président, à ceux qui disent contrairement un *copy/paste* de vous, ce discours a été écrit par moi. Ceux qui pensent que les élections sont pour demain, je leur dirai quand j'étais petit, il y avait la pub à la télé qui s'appelait « *aret rever kamarad* » de J. Kalachand. Alors, je dirai aux membres de l'Opposition « *ena boucou pou atane, aret rever kamarad* » une course, on regarde la fin, la fin c'est en 2019, là on est à mi-course. À la fin, on verra ! Et laissez-moi vous dire qu'en 2020 on sera toujours là et je ne sais pas si eux ils seront toujours là-bas.

Merci, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ramano!

(6.34 p.m.)

Mr K. Ramano (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, like most Mauritians, on learning that Mauritius has secured such a huge sum of money from a friendly country, I was elated at the thought that at long last, we have sufficient capital funds to inject in the economy and take us on the path of high growth, clear the way to emerge out of the middle-income trap. My hopes, alas, were shattered when I heard the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance saying that Mauritius will attain a high income country status in 2023.

Once again, we keep postponing the year when we shall join the prestigious club of High Income Countries status. We start to lag behind while countries of our size or smaller keep outperforming us, the last being Seychelles, Malta, Trinidad and Tobago, even Ireland, Iceland, and Singapore. They have all similar problems like Mauritius and share similar attributes. What has happened that we are falling behind and losing ranks on every index? Yet, the Government's spokespersons continue to believe they are doing a great job.

Let's talk about the economic growth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have great reservations that Mauritius would achieve 3.9% growth. The records of 2004, 2005 and 2011

of two different Governments, and again in 2016, show the extent Government underachieved all the parameters. All the main international agencies consider the expected growth rate to be in the range of 3.4 to 3.6. Yet, in his Budget, the Prime Minister announces a figure of 3.9%. For this to occur, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, several conditions have to be satisfied. First, investment has to be high and, according to most publications, Mauritius would need an investment closer to 24%. In 2015, investment fell by 2.7%. As a share of GDP, investment dropped from 22.1% to 17.2% in 2016 and is expected to rise only to 17.9%, a rate below the potential of what is desirable.

With this rate, how can we expect growth higher than 4%? We should not be surprised that we are struggling in the middle-income trap and there does not appear a coordinated effort to uplift Mauritius and play in higher category. With this Government in place, ambition has gone down and is likely to play in second division rather than in the Premier league. This is not happening by coincidence. It is happening because there is no coordinated comprehensive policy that takes all the opportunities and constraints into account. Most of them have entrusted responsibilities and sectors have developed the complex that they know best and they ignore all comments and criticisms by people who are not happy with their performance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall return to this issue as this syndrome starts to undermine the performance of the country. After I have broached on certain economic variables, I must admit I am greatly perturbed by this development. Let's talk about the first variable being the labour market.

Let's now revisit the data from Statistics Mauritius and show to the House that this Government has not reduced unemployment as it pretends. Has the Government misinformed the public? I have a feeling that the reading is so superficial that Government ends up believing that they tend to repeat the n^{th} time.

The Government boasts of having brought the unemployment rate from 7.9% in 2015 to 7.3% in 2016. This looks like an achievement. It is not. Many Ministers went on the air and claimed that Government has dented unemployment. They have misled the population, being aware that very few people scrutinise technical reports. Actually, it is an underachievement. Many factors underpin what gives the impression we are harnessing unemployment, when we are not. Actually, 10,800 potential workers migrated from the economically active group, that is, labour force and joined the economically inactive, causing

a jump from 383,700 in 2015 to 394,500 in 2016. At the same time, the labour force shrinks from 584,600 to 581,000. As recorded in the Statistics Office, the unemployment falls from 46,300 to 42,400, that is, by 3,900. In paragraph 37 of the Social Indicator published by Statistics Mauritius, it is seen that some 7,100 are classified as inactive although they were not working and were available for work.

Since they were not looking for work, they do not meet the three conditions to be recorded officially as unemployed. Now, why are they not looking for work? The main cause - and this is not confined only to Mauritius - is that after some time jobseekers, frustrated by not securing a job, stop reporting to the relevant authorities and, therefore, move out of the unemployment register. In the absence of unemployment benefits, many simply get fed up. This is technically called 'depressed unemployment' and fails to be recorded. In Mauritius, matters have worsened since this Government came to power because you need protection to obtain a job. We have some specific cases to prove this.

True, a job gets advertised for cosmetic arrangement. Interviews are carried out sometimes using so-called private consultants who get paid. Your experience, the unemployment period and your academic qualifications or any sports or social/environmental activities are unfortunately not sufficient to ensure you a job. You need to have been poster stickers or to be a relative of some parliamentarians in power. This is where our country has fallen, so, obviously, many jobseekers simply give up.

On the other hand, many Cabinet Ministers in this Government have come to the conclusion that there is no competent person in the market; other Ministers find that competent persons are available only in their close family circles. All these combine to roll a very grim picture to the average youth who, in his depressed job seeking situation, simply stops reporting to an employment exchange.

If we now add this pool of depressed labour, we get a different picture. The actual unemployment figure jumps to 49,500 instead of 42,300, the economically labour force is adjusted and, therefore, rises to 588,100 which gives an unemployment rate of 8.5% rather than 7.3%. This is 2% higher than when this Government came to office. The Statistics Office wrote it clearly in the report and explained why these people were not included.

A second variable, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is inflation. This is one of the variables on which we can have a good consensus that we have achieved some progress. Actually, Mr

Deputy Speaker, Sir, the low inflation confirms the trade-off between unemployment and price stability. It confirms the trade-off between high unemployment and low inflation as expounded in the famous Phillips curve, the engineer-economist who first observed the relation. Yet, the Government firmly, if not obsessively, believes it is making serious inroad in denting unemployment. This country does suffer from a major unemployment problem; it is not creating jobs. Yet, most Government Ministers think they are doing a great job, but economic analysis, theory and figures do not lie. Inflation is low partly because of circumstances. Many products on the world market underwent falling prices like oil. Much of our inflation is imported. When we see our imports, we know how it impacts on inflation.

Let's talk, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the fiscal deficit. The budget notes little progress from last year. The budget deficit will be 3.5%, higher than the original estimates. The country faces a huge challenge. There is something abnormal. Are the departures from objectives signs that there are troubles ahead? My worry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we have closed two funds and transferred all. Without these funds, the deficit would have exceeded 5%. Next year, there will be no funds to close and rescue the Minister. So, how much will be the deficit? Are we heading for a 5% to 6% deficit? The norms for running a deficit are that it should not exceed 3%. We need to be wary of sustainability. The hon. Minister should be very careful about this.

The deficit also stems from structural problems. When the income does not grow adequately or when we are underperforming, our revenue falls. Tax is an increasing function of GDP. These variables clearly show that the Government is not able to deliver and most of its variables are in orange. We should not, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, look superficially at the data. We have to look underneath to find out what symptoms the variables are conveying to us. It is such a problem that eventually ignites the wrath of the IMF and slowly opens the way to the Greek syndrome. It is time the Government sits down and realises that it is important for us to have a deep look at the economic situation of the country.

Regarding the debt issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very rare in recent years that we have reached such grim figures on debt. Debt has to be at a reasonable level and has to be sustainable. Managing debt has become a daunting challenge, and there are strong fears that it might awaken the dragon of inflation, erode our competitiveness on the international market and stifle development because it will have to allocate a higher share to finance interest and

capital, which then leaves much less to meet the priority needs of the country. The debt of the country is a staggering Rs288 billion, reflecting a *per capita* debt of over Rs221,000.

As a ratio to GDP, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this has exceeded the limit set by international norms. At 63% of GDP, we are in the red. We need to restrain demand and set order in our kitchen; to this we need to add the USD500 m. The Government is aware that poor management of public finance will sound the alarm bell to the IMF. With this line of credit, the Government is sending the wrong signal. At 66%, as a result of the Rs18 m. under the ILOC, the debt issue will jeopardise our rating and make investors think twice before thinking of investing. We are approaching the periphery and we should make sure the firms carrying credit rating and risks like Fitch or Moody's could easily downgrade us. The Government is increasingly a poor achiever because it does not have sufficient time to look at public finance.

Our exports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, manufacturing is doing increasingly less well. Once the locomotive driving force, it is now a laggard. Currently, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our exports are declining and are falling rapidly behind imports. We are importing more. We have not a single job created last year in the export manufacturing industries and the prospects are bleak. Our firms employ low technology and are costly. Mauritius needs high-value added product. It has moved from labour-intensive products, but it has to become more productive and shift to higher technology with higher value product.

We note that many variables are approaching the red.

The forgotten, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am under the impression that Government has avoided controversial measures that have brought down the popularity of the present Prime Minister as was the case in 2005 when he had targeted pension. That has brought the downfall of the then Government.

The country faces two enormous problems: the ageing population and the pension. We have discussed this issue in various platforms. I had expected the hon. Minister to address this issue as a matter of priority because of its urgency. The population is ageing and has wide-ranging socio-economic implications: Pattern of consumptions and imports will alter; available labour in the market will undergo drastic changes, causing wages to increase and resulting in acute shortage, more particularly, manual labour, which in turn may trigger the need to shift to more capital and technology-based skills, including robotisation in some cases

or contracting jobs to other countries and envisaging more supple conditions for imports of labour.

Health and education budget may require much more funds to cater for non-communicable diseases, geriatrics, new types of specialised medicines and para-medical support while education will require a revamping of the standard and funding of education as well as part time/or attachment jobs for university students.

Immigration policy may require new agreements with friendly countries, and new legislations to replenish the dwindling population and above all, fiscal implications in terms of progressive taxes and reforms of the system.

The ageing phenomenon budget will adversely impact public expenditure and may have to be increased. This will fall on a smaller proportion of the population to support those in the labour force.

The share of people over 60 years in total population will increase from 13% in 2013 to 30% in 2050. This in turn will impact on pension spending, adding pressure on budget allocation. This mainly reflects non-contributory benefits on Basic Retirement Pension, and the relatively generous civil service pensions according to IMF.

Its pattern of consumption will change. New products will be in demand to serve a higher proportion for the older population. The fiscal burden will need to be renewed. New types of jobs will emerge. Demand for some jobs will shrink.

Only some 12,000 babies were born compared to 35,000 babies 30 years ago. This is an area which needs to be addressed urgently. Yet, in spite of the presence of several technical reports and the deteriorating climate in public finance, with unpredictable budget deficit in the short run, the Prime Minister avoids this issue. This is abdicating from responsibility on the part of Government.

This Government did not feel it was important and the budget woefully kept quiet. Yet, we know what this meant to the labour market, the nature of jobs and entertainments. The Government seems to be running from its responsibility. After reaching a peak around 2030, the population will start to decline after 2050. Apart from an obscure measure, the Government did not find it useful to come with a package to stimulate couples to marry and reproduce. The budget did not find it useful to think about child benefits nor does it find it worthwhile to explore immigration.

In turn, this has serious implications for the Basic Retirement Pension, the NPF and other related issues. The pension is not sustainable unless reforms are introduced. Anomalies persist but the Government does not have the courage to reform the system and make it more cost-effective. Should we extend the retirement age? Should workers participate in workers' participation?

This year's budget jumps to 5%, and it is expected to attain 11% when the share of all people attains 40%. We cannot leave the burden to the generation who will be in command in 2050 or roughly in three decades. Just as we benefit from the fruits of our predecessors, we need to plan and leave a legacy for the future generation. The work starts now.

The budget rightly looks at the financial services sector with high expectation. In 2019, the arrangement currently with India will expire and some of the incentives that make Mauritius so successful will terminate. It is true Mauritius has always risen above circumstances. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a tradition to plan consult and come out with different options when changes or crisis seem imminent.

Today, we take so many things for granted without examining the challenges ahead. It is vital that we stay alert and rise to these circumstances. New opportunities are prominent. However, we are taking too much time to react. For a substantial CEO is a firm anchor and gives direction and a sense of purpose to an organisation. Keeping a CEO at actingship level leads to play safe attitude and delays needed decisions. I understand that the current acting CEO has been running the organisation for almost two years. This is at odds with modern management and is an abdication of the ministerial responsibility. No serious Government can allow top jobs to remain vacant for so long. Can such a vital sector grow, expand and inspire in a disorganised state?

Information upstream and downstream communication, close monitoring, data analysis, and regular publication are part and parcel of any modern management. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to equip the sector with the right tools and staff them with dedicated, competent persons. We cannot take chances. A little delay can cause considerable damage to the sector. Since January, this sector seems to be hitting the headlines for the wrong reason. A sector of this nature has to be extremely careful in avoiding conflict of interest in keeping a clean image and in constituting a strong bond with people of high integrity who can, through exchange of information and deliberation, forge a distinct role for an organisation free from adverse influence. Inability to observe ethical conduct has adverse implications in terms of

economic impact, international image and governance issues. It lost seven places in Wall Street Heritage Index and ranked 16th in Africa when only a few years it held the place of pride.

As regards the infrastructure projects, this betrays a total lack of seriousness and irresponsibility. The total dependence on India shows the failure of the Government. Without India, there is no capital budget. This is a grave situation. 35 major projects have been presented. I have strong reservations that the country has the capacity to implement the projects. I recall the first budget of the Government had announced the flyover bridge at Jumbo Phoenix junction. Government informs us two years later that work will start soon, very soon. Can we believe it? How much time the 35 projects, if ever they are implemented, will take? Do we need acquisition of land, preparation of site, mobilisation of equipment, bidding exercise, award of contract for design, not implementation? The injection in the economy will be a small amount of the project value, less than 10% of total project value in practice. Very few manual jobs will be created. At this stage, no wealth will be added to the stock of national wealth. The Government is bringing pipe dreams to the people. Government claims it obtained Rs12.7 billion and after two years not a single cent has been spent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another subject of interest is the social budget or dismantling of the Welfare State. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, looking at the figures, I am greatly perturbed. Since Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam gradually, over time, endowed this country with a sound Welfare State which became a good model, not only for Mauritius but also for the world, Sir Anerood Jugnauth worked hard, stood firm with the IMF, and not only preserved the Welfare State, but, more importantly, improved the efficiency while widening the base. Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel recipient for Economics and in visit to Mauritius, he wrote a number of articles in 'The Washington Post' and 'The Guardian', praising the Mauritian system and inviting the US to draw lessons from the Mauritian experience.

What do we see today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Examining the figures, we find the budget for health and education has been reduced as a share of GDP. In this budget, it falls to 3.7% from a range that varied between 4% and 4.5% and even exceeded 5% on occasions. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need skilled people to run this country, new skills to exploit new sectors like the ocean economy, the pharmaceutical industry and the graduation to light engineering and avionics and, in certain cases, even robotics because we will be short of labour. The current excess of labour stems from poor policies, lack of confidence in the

Government and the prevention of the market forces to work because of Government intervention, which stifles development.

We need to raise the standard of our universities and refrain from filling vacancies by political appointees who cannot maintain their neutrality. Universities around the world make headlines because their staff write books and pioneering articles, because they make new inventions or carry out revealing researches or because their students have secured jobs very quickly. Our universities make headlines for the wrong reasons and are laggards in international ranking. It is a shame for the country. The Manraj Report has been a mere concessional report that did not look at the fundamentals. The Minister of Education would be wise to sort out the issues, find solutions so that we have a good image and we produce the needed labour pool to stimulate the new growth pillars.

In the health sector, for the level of development we have reached, infant mortality and women who lose their lives while giving birth should have been significantly lower. All small countries and island economies like Mauritius have much lower death casualties, in some cases as low as 10% the Mauritian figure. Ethnicity is not an explanatory variable since both Trinidad and Tobago and Fiji do much better than Mauritius. While doctors remain idle because they have not secured a job and run the risk of becoming increasingly out of touch with medical knowledge and practice, we see more people dying.

The H1N1 and H1N3 viruses have caused an alarming number of casualties. However, some doctors feel otherwise. Probably, some 10 persons have died from these two diseases. I find this alarming. Our ratio of doctors to the population should have given better results. Let us take the example of Switzerland which has a ratio of 1.5 while that for Israel is 2.5 compared to 0.2 per 1,000 for Mauritius. Hong Kong with a ratio of 0.3 has one of the highest life expectancy. Something does not turn round in this Ministry.

The health system needs to be revamped to be more performing and more cost-effective perhaps with a dose of market forces, but without sacrificing poor people. We read regularly how doctors abuse of the system. So, the health budget too has been stressed down and represents only 2.6% of GDP. This cut stands for the fact that Government is refusing to eliminate the anomalies in the universal pension. It is illogical and inequitable that people who are still working till 65 start drawing their pension at 60. Government's approach is to give to those who have, and to leave unattended those who do not have. This approach permeates elsewhere too.

I note a good measure in the pharmaceutical industry. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while not denying its importance, this measure on its own will not trigger interest. We need a whole package that overlaps with other sectors like sugar, the ocean economy, education and the health sector. Piecemeal approach may have an adverse effect because when people hear *ad nauseam* of such project, good as it is, but failing at implementation level, they become disappointed. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we look at the proposal for pharmaceutical industry, the story may resemble the 3 pigs; for the industry to take off, we need to build-in on solid rock. If we build on our hut with patch or wood, as if the eldest pig brothers, the wolf would come and devour. And in the pharmaceutical industry, there are many wolves, we need to do it like the little pig and build the industry on solid concrete with a whole comprehensive package.

The Tourism Sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Tourism is doing moderately well, and it is a good sign. However, we should be on our guard. Many of our competitors have outperformed us and we remain an expensive destination. The Maldives and Sri Lanka are doing better. We need to ensure that we do not outprice ourselves, and we do not go for low-end tourism. Many such tourists travel by bus, eat McDonald's which do not have significant impact on earnings. The multiplier effect, as my friend, hon. Rutnah, likes to say, may be turning negative. The tourist sector may actually be causing harm by inducing a significantly higher import, straining the current account deficits, and exasperating our imports. We can see that between 2014 and 2017, the impact is 10% on imports, causing what economists call a 'leakage'. So, I suggest the Ministry commissions a comprehensive report that studies the sector and submits its recommendations. Such report is good to maintain our competitive edge.

M. le président, permettez-moi de faire quelques remarques quant aux mesures annoncées dans le secteur de l'immobilier, comme je l'ai fait pour les derniers exercices budgétaires. Il va sans dire que j'accueille favorablement l'exemption du *Registration Duty* et du *Land Transfer Tax* sur le transfert des bâtiments et des terrains qui seront servis pour des *Hi-Tech Manufacturing Activities*. Cela va dans le droit fil de la politique annoncée en matière de haute technologie et en matière de recherche et développement.

Autre mesure annoncée, l'exemption du *Registration Duty* lors de l'enregistrement des contrats de bail des terrains agricoles. Il est dommage de constater ici, encore une fois, qu'on n'a pas corrigé l'injustice qui a été causée en 2006. Je l'ai souligné la dernière fois,

mais, malheureusement, cela est resté lettre morte. Je souhaite que le ministre de l’Agriculture, qui est ici présent, porte une attention particulière à ma proposition. Avant 2006, lorsqu’on est venu amender le *Sugar Industry Efficiency Act* et le *Registration Duty Act* pour taxer le transfert des terrains agricoles au même titre que les terrains non-agricoles, c’est-à-dire, taxer 5% côté vendeur et 5% côté acheteur, afin d’encourager l’achat et le transfert des terrains agricoles sous culture de cannes, le vendeur était exempté de la taxe et l’acheteur ne payait que 2% de *Registration Duty*. Cela a porté un *boost* dans le transfert des terrains et l’acquisition des terrains agricoles. Le gouvernement consacre aujourd’hui R 50 millions pour amener 500 hectares sous culture de cannes pour l’année fiscale 2017-2018. Cette mesure sera sans effet, sans démesure quant aux exemptions ou de réductions de taxe lors des transferts des terrains agricoles.

Le budget vient aujourd’hui corriger une anomalie pour permettre l’exemption du *Registration Duty* et du *Land Transfer Tax* des droits au bail des terrains de l’État quand il n’y a pas *d’effective change of ownership*, par exemple, des actions dans une société ou compagnie. M. le président, je souhaite ici faire une remarque pour dire au ministre des Finances qu’il existe aujourd’hui une surtaxation ou même une double taxation lors de transfert des droits de *State land*, ce qu’on appelle *Transfer of Right of Lease in State land*. Je m’explique. Lors de l’acquisition d’un bien se trouvant sur un terrain de l’État, l’acheteur paye aujourd’hui 10% sur le droit au bail et 5% de taxe de vente, le *Land Transfer Tax*, sur la valeur totale du bien, qui inclut, encore une fois, le droit au bail et la valeur de l’immeuble se trouvant sur le terrain de l’État.

Cette double taxation est une anomalie, une injustice pour le consommateur. Il aurait été plus plausible et juste de taxer 10% sur le droit au bail, et seulement 5% de *Land Transfer Tax* sur la valeur de l’immeuble existant sur le terrain de l’État et non pas 5% sur la valeur totale du droit au bail et sur la valeur de l’immeuble existant sur le terrain de l’État. L’accès à la terre et à un logement a toujours été une préoccupation des gouvernements. Le principe des *First Time Buyers’ exemptions* permet l’exemption de la taxe jusqu’à un certain seuil pour les acquéreurs des terrains vagues et des immeubles bâtis. Le budget vient rétablir une injustice flagrante où l’acquéreur était privé du droit de *First Time Buyer exemption* lors de l’acquisition des appartements *NHDC* ou maisons *CHA*, lorsque ces immeubles se trouvaient sur le *State land*, ou encore ne faisaient pas partie des règlements de copropriété.

M. le président, nous savons tous la maxime : la taxe tue la taxe. Cela est d'autant plus vrai dans le secteur de l'immobilier où une taxation forte décourage le transfert de l'immobilier et, par la même, apporte une baisse des revenus de l'État du fait qu'il y a moins de transferts de terrains. Il est temps que le ministère des Finances vienne de l'avant avec une politique globale et approfondie en matière fiscale dans le secteur de l'immobilier. Il est un fait aujourd'hui que l'inflation, la hausse des prix est aujourd'hui causée en majeure partie par une fiscalité forte. Dans bon nombre de pays en Europe, on a aboli la taxe de vente, le *Land Transfer Tax*, et on applique uniquement le *stamp duty*, le droit d'enregistrement seulement du côté de l'acheteur. Cela est d'autant plus logique lorsqu'on sait que le vendeur, lors de l'achat de son bien, a déjà payé la taxe.

Cela est inconcevable que lors de la vente, on lui fasse payer la taxe sur un bien où il s'est déjà acquitté de la taxe vis-à-vis de l'État lors de l'achat de ce même bien. M. le président, l'acquisition des biens par les étrangers a un apport de 58% de *FDI*. Le *Non-citizens (Restriction Property) Act* a pour vocation de gérer l'accès à l'immobilier aux fonciers par des étrangers. Cela est dû au fait que la superficie du terrain accessible au privé dans le pays est limitée, et qu'il appartient à l'État de protéger les mauriciens dont le pouvoir d'achat est loin d'être égal aux étrangers ; qu'il appartient aussi à l'État de s'assurer que l'économie, la terre est le moins dépendant possible de l'étranger ; qu'il n'y ait pas de spéculation à outrance au niveau de l'immobilier.

J'ai eu l'occasion d'intervenir lors des débats sur le *Non-citizens (Restriction Property) Bill*. Je souhaite, ici, réitérer mes préoccupations quant à une non-réglementation de l'accès à la terre par les étrangers. M. le président, nous sommes passés de l'*IRS* au *ERS*, et maintenant au *PDS Scheme*. Bien que je ne sois pas contre l'idée de la possibilité d'achat par des étrangers dans des cas spécifiques, il nous appartient en tant que législateur de déterminer dans une politique d'aménagement du territoire dans le long terme des régions spécifiques du pays où le *PDS Scheme* ou même les *smart cities* peuvent être aménagés. Il est inconcevable que de tels projets puissent se faire n'importe où dans le pays. Il nous appartient de protéger la famille mauricienne et la culture mauricienne.

Nous avons un devoir vis-à-vis de la population locale, de protéger la spécificité culturelle de nos quartiers, de nos villes, de nos villages et de protéger la possibilité d'accès à la terre à un logement. Nous savons tous que l'accès à une portion de terre ou un logement décent représente pour bon nombre de mauriciens l'accomplissement d'une vie. Cette charge

émotionnelle symbolise aussi le devoir de ce père ou de cette mère de famille de protéger ses valeurs familiales. Il nous appartient, nous en tant que législateurs, d'être très prudents à ce propos, M. le président.

Les récents amendements au *Non-Citizens (Property Restriction) Act* permettent aux étrangers détenteurs ou pas d'un *occupational permit*, détenteurs ou pas d'un *professional licence*, détenteurs ou pas d'un *investor's licence* d'acquérir un bien immobilier. Aujourd'hui, M. le président, n'importe quel étranger sans le contrôle à priori du *Prime Minister's Office*, peut faire une application au *BOI* pour acquérir un appartement dans un complexe qui fait plus que *ground plus 2* avec un prix minimum de R 6 millions.

Autres amendements apportés, M. le président, concernent les *business and commercial premises*. Il convient de le rappeler que cela est grave pour le pays. Aujourd'hui, la porte est grande ouverte pour l'acquisition des *commercial premises* et ce, tenez-vous bien, sans aucune restriction de prix et sans aucune définition de c'est quoi les *commercial premises*. C'est quoi les *commercial premises*, M. le président ? Ce sont tout simplement ces locaux commerciaux qui ont eu une licence du *District Council* ou des municipalités. Cela peut tout aussi bien être des salons de coiffure, des vidéos clubs, des tabagies, des bars, des boutiques de quartier, des *filling stations*, des snacks, des boutiques des cordonniers ou des jardiniers. Aller voir ce qui se passe dans les régions côtières de Flic en Flac, de Rivière Noire, de Grand' Baie et de Pereybere où tous ces petits business qui faisaient la fierté des familles mauriciennes sont aujourd'hui accaparés par des étrangers. Parce qu'il n'existe aucune restriction en ce qui concerne l'acquisition des *commercial premises*. C'est une loi dangereuse, votée à la va-vite, qui met aujourd'hui en danger la famille mauricienne et le tissu social à Maurice.

Pour terminer sur ce volet, je souhaite faire une remarque quant aux exemptions de *First time Buyers*. Le ministre des Finances a corrigé une anomalie l'année dernière en ce qui concerne l'acquisition des terrains vagues. Aujourd'hui, on permet l'exemption de la taxe jusqu'à une somme de R 2 million pour l'acquisition des terrains vagues et la différence est taxable à 5%. L'anomalie persiste toujours et là je souhaite que le ministre porte une attention particulière à cela parce que cela constitue une anomalie. L'anomalie persiste toujours en ce qui concerne l'acquisition des maisons et des appartements. Si le prix de vente dépasse R 4 millions pour l'acquisition des maisons ou des appartements, l'acquéreur doit payer la taxe à 5% sur le prix total de la vente et non pas jusqu'à R 4 millions. Je considère que cela

constitue une anomalie de la loi et je demande au ministre de porter une attention particulière parce qu'il va venir de l'avant avec le *Finance Act* éventuellement. Alors qu'il aurait été plus logique comme c'est le cas pour les terrains vagues d'exempter les *First Time Buyers* des maisons jusqu'à une somme de R 4 millions et de les faire payer la différence à 5%, et je fais un appel au ministre.

Autre point à ce niveau, c'est de considérer que bon nombre d'acquisitions des appartements se font aujourd'hui à travers, ce qu'on appelle, les sociétés civiles immobilières d'attribution ou sous la vente à l'état futur d'achèvement. Bien que le *First Time Buyer* est permis pour la vente à l'état futur d'achèvement, tel n'est pas le cas en ce qui concerne les acquisitions à travers les sociétés civiles immobilières d'attribution et là je demanderai au ministre de porter une attention particulière à cela.

M. le président, je souhaite aborder un autre sujet qui me tient à cœur qu'est la situation dans ma ville de naissance, la ville où j'habite, la ville où j'ai fait ma scolarité, à Belle Rose, la Circonscription de Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes qui m'a élu pour être leur représentant à l'Assemblée Nationale. La Circonscription No. 18 est aujourd'hui un grand sujet d'actualité. Il faut le dire c'est aussi le lieu où le ministre Mentor a connu les grands jours de son enfance à Palma, où le *Leader* du MMM a fait son baptême de feu politique, la ville où bon nombre de députés habitent ou encore la Circonscription du *Leader* de l'Opposition. Cette ville me tient à cœur. Cette ville, M. le président, c'est ma vie.

M. le président, c'est aussi la circonscription de la Présidente de l'Assemblée Nationale, l'honorable Madame Maya Hanoomanjee. C'est parce que la circonscription numéro 14 chevauche la ville à travers les régions de Palma, Bassin et Résidence Kennedy.

Cette ville, tout comme bon nombre d'agglomérations, connaît une pression sans précédent en matière de politique d'urbanisme. La municipalité est redevable vis-à-vis du gouvernement central. La politique d'urbanisme fait partie des *terms of reference* du *Ministry of Housing and Lands*, mais aussi de la Mairie. Il faut le reconnaître aujourd'hui qu'il existe une cacophonie unacceptable en matière de politique d'urbanisme. Ce qui se passe dans la ville de Quatre Bornes est tout aussi valable dans la région de Grand' Baie, Pereybere et tout aussi valable dans les grandes villes, dans les grosses agglomérations. L'ABCD d'une politique d'urbanisme c'est de pouvoir délimiter les zones résidentielles, les zones commerciales, les zones industrielles ou encore les zones agricoles. Les habitants de Quatre Bornes sont aujourd'hui dans le flou total.

Il n'est aujourd'hui pas une surprise de se retrouver du jour au lendemain avec l'ouverture d'un bureau ou d'une quincaillerie à côté de sa maison. On nous dira tout simplement que l'*applicant* a respecté tous les critères nécessaires en termes de *Building Regulations* et donc il est éligible à obtenir sa licence. Il est temps une fois pour toutes que le *Ministry of Housing and Lands*, qui est aussi responsable de l'aménagement du territoire, vienne de l'avant avec une véritable politique d'urbanisme et des *Building Regulations* adaptés avec les développements en cours dans tous les recoins du pays.

Il est un fait aujourd'hui que 10 à 15 ans de cela sur une superficie de 300 m², y habitait une famille de cinq membres. Et sur cette même superficie aujourd'hui, M. le président, y habite au moins une vingtaine de familles en copropriété dans les complexes d'appartements, avec de telles pressions en matière de politique d'urbanisme; est-il normal aujourd'hui avec cette tendance d'habitation en vertical et en copropriété que les infrastructures routières soient restées les mêmes, que la distribution des utilités publiques que ce soit l'eau, l'électricité, le *sewerage* ou la communication soient restés figés ? Le ramassage d'ordures se fait au même rythme bien qu'il y ait un boom sans précédent en matière de peuplement et là je parle plus particulièrement de la ville de Quatre Bornes.

Je peux comprendre que les *day-to-day business* du *Ministry of Housing and Lands* soit la question des squatters, la construction des complexes de la NHDC, l'allocation des terres à quelques privilégiés ou encore l'organisation du Hajj ou encore, s'il vous plaît, caresser l'Arabie Saoudite dans le sens du poil ou encore la résiliation des relations avec le Qatar. M. le président, il est temps que le *Ministry of Housing and Lands* applique à la lettre le *terms of reference* de son ministère quand il y va de la suivie même des agglomérations urbaines.

M. le président, je suis fatigué, fatigué d'avoir attiré l'attention des autorités que ma ville croule sous l'immoralité. M. le président, lorsqu'on entre dans Quatre Bornes, on a tendance à dire que Quatre Bornes, c'est *mari nissa*. Lorsque vous entrez dans la ville, il existe des charmantes hôtesses qui vous accueillent tout le long de la route St Jean, devant le *Central Supermarket*, devant la *Hong Kong Bank*, on nous dit que cela fait partie du décor de Quatre Bornes.

Le *law and order* fout le camp. Ces proxénètes et ces prostituées travaillent au su et à la vue des autorités policières. Savez-vous, M. le président, que la station de police de Quatre Bornes est seulement à une centaine de mètres des bases d'opération de ces proxénètes. Les

proxénètes et les prostituées travaillent pendant les mêmes horaires que les policiers qui font leur *sentry* tout le long de la Route Royale de Quatre Bornes. Mais c'est l'omerta, M. le président!

M. le président, ne voyez pas dans ma démarche une stigmatisation envers les prostituées. On ne se prostitue pas par plaisir, mais surtout par obligation de survie, par obligation de nourrir ses enfants, par obligation de se procurer de sa dose d'héroïne pour le jour suivant.

Dans mon travail social dans le quartier de Quatre-Bornes, je travaille quotidiennement avec ces mêmes prostitués. Je connais leur quotidien, leur environnement, leur soif de vivre. C'est aujourd'hui un cri de cœur que je lance, je n'accepte pas qu'en 2017, un enfant grandisse dans un taudis avec une mère prostituée. Je pose une question toute bête M. le président. Savons-nous le nombre de femmes et d'hommes prostitués dans la ville de Quatre Bornes et ailleurs? Savons-nous le nombre d'enfants nés de père prostitué ou de mère prostituée? Cette question peut vous pousser à l'indifférence honorable membres de cette auguste Assemblée mais ces mêmes enfants habitent à quelques dizaines de mètres de vos chics demeures de vieux Quatre Bornes et demain seront vos concitoyens.

M. le président, j'ai soulevé à maintes reprises le problème de la congestion routière dans la ville de Quatre Bornes. Il nous prend aujourd'hui - je l'ai maintes fois souligné - plus de temps de rallier l'hôpital Victoria au rond-point de St Jean que de partir du rond-point de St Jean à Port Louis.

Bien que la bretelle reliant Solferino à Pierre Fonds ait été d'un certain soulagement, il est un fait que la congestion routière a pris une proportion alarmante du rond-point de La Louise vers Candos ou sur la route St Jean. Rien n'a été fait en matière de plan d'ensemble pour la ville de Quatre Bornes malgré les nombreuses interpellations parlementaires que j'ai moi-même faites ici dans cette auguste Assemblée ou même les interpellations du public. Là, c'est un peu le *joke* de la ville, M. le président. À chaque doléance des membres du public, on ajoute un *traffic light*. C'est le record on se retrouve avec pas moins de 14 *traffic lights* rien que sur la route royale de Quatre-Bornes. Il n'y a pas mieux pour aggraver le problème de la congestion routière. On élimine les espaces de parking sans se rendre à l'évidence que cette politique d'amateur pousse aujourd'hui les Quatre-Bornais à la révolte avec des risques d'accidents et une pollution étouffante. M. le président.

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aliphon, please!

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je suis de ceux qui pensent...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah! Please, Order!

Mr Ramano: M. le président, je suis de ceux qui pensent que, dans ce corridor de Curepipe à Port Louis, il est temps de venir de l'avant avec un *mass transit system*. Le projet Metro Express suscite aujourd'hui, malheureusement, plus d'interrogations que d'espoirs dans la population. Ces interrogations sont tout à fait justifiées tant sur le plan financier quant au coût réel du projet. Sur le plan du *running costs*, aucun chiffre n'est avancé jusqu'à présent; aucun chiffre, en ce qui concerne la rentabilité du projet, aucun chiffre en ce qui concerne le nombre de passagers effectifs prévus.

On nous annonce maintenant un *Environment Impact Assessment* alors que le projet est déjà annoncé et mis en exécution. De nombreuses interrogations ont été soulevées dans la Chambre. Les réponses précises se font attendre. Dans la ville de Quatre Bornes à l'état actuel du tracé, les habitants redoutent une mort certaine de la ville avec un tel projet, M. le président. Depuis que le projet est annoncé, rien n'est dit dans le concret. Comment manier le tracé du Metro Express avec les routes adjacentes maintenant qu'il est dit que le projet Metro Express passera au niveau du sol et non pas sur pilotis.

Je me pose la question, M. le président. Même si le tracé - je répète, M. le président, même si le tracé - devait se faire sur pilotis sur la route royale de Quatre Bornes, de quelle largeur devrait être le soubassement des pilotis? Il est évident que vu la largeur de la route St Jean, la route Royale de Quatre Bornes, ces constructions sont impraticables.

Autre interrogation, M. le président, est-ce que le ministre est en mesure de nous dire quelle est la distance requise en termes de *buffer zone* entre le tracé et les commerces, entre le tracé et les habitations immédiates. Cette question que je me pose pour la ville de Quatre Bornes est tout aussi valable pour la ville de Port Louis, pour la ville de Beau Bassin/Rose Hill. Pour la région de Belle Rose, quel est le *buffer zone* requis ? Quelle est la norme internationale requise en ce qui concerne le *buffer zone* entre le tracé du métro léger et le commerce avoisinant et les habitations avoisinantes ?

Les commerces sur la route royale de Quatre Bornes seraient, tenez-vous bien, à trois mètres seulement du passage du Metro Express. Tout le long de la Promenade Gerard Bruneau, il existe des habitations. Quelques maisons seulement ont fait l'objet des *compulsory acquisitions*. Pour les autres habitations, M. le président, qui longent cette Promenade Gerard Bruneau, elles seront seulement à moins de trois mètres du tracé du Metro Express. Est-ce que cela est viable? Est-ce que c'est vivable dans la ville de Quatre Bornes avec l'entrée d'un tel projet?

Il n'y a pas lieu d'être un consultant, il n'y a pas lieu d'être un expert pour savoir ce que cela représente comme violation à l'environnement, comme danger en matière de sécurité ou encore un appauvrissement de la qualité de vie avec une pollution sonore qui frise la révolte, M. le président. À l'état actuel du projet, le Metro Express est non seulement non viable mais inacceptable pour les habitants de la ville de Quatre Bornes.

Je ne suis pas contre le développement, il faut qu'un développement de cette envergure avec un investissement aussi massif que ça puisse se faire d'une façon plus scientifique, plus planifiée pour le bien-être de tout un chacun. Il y va de l'argent des contribuables. Il y va aussi du bien-être des habitants de la ville.

M. le président, le ministre des collectivités locales a annoncé en grande pompe suite à une interpellation de ma part de la délocalisation du marché de Belle Rose suivant le projet de Metro Express.

Il faut se rendre à la cruelle vérité, M. le président. Aujourd'hui, aucune somme, je dis bien, aucune somme n'est prévue à cet effet dans le présent budget. On parle de délocalisation du marché de Belle Rose mais aucune somme n'est prévue en ce qui concerne la construction d'un nouveau marché pour la région de Belle Rose. On parle de l'élimination pure et simple du marché de Belle Rose sans aucune mesure alternative.

M. le président, je souhaite terminer sur une note qui m'est chère que sont les valeurs qui me guident dans mon action politique. Il nous appartient, il est de notre devoir de défendre et de pratiquer ces valeurs mais qu'on le veuille ou pas, il y a des dizaines de milliers de personnes en dehors de ce Parlement qui nous considèrent comme des rôles modèles. À tort ou à raison, c'est une autre question. Ils s'attendent à ce qu'on défende leurs intérêts et ce quelque soit leur appartenance sociale ou leur appartenance religieuse. Il nous

appartient d'identifier ces valeurs qui rassemblent les Mauriciens et qui donne une identité, une raison de fierté, la force de s'affirmer comme une nation au niveau international.

Si nous sommes dans cette auguste assemblée, M. le président, il nous appartient avant tout d'assumer nos responsabilités en tant que Mauriciens. Cessons avec ces réflexes primaires de toujours trouver un prétexte à relent communal pour sortir des sujets controversables. Il était un temps lorsqu'il y avait des allégations de malversations contre un ancien commissaire de police, on nous disait : '*pas tousse nous commissaire.*' Il existe des faits indéniables que la présidente de la république a outrepassé ses pouvoirs, on nous dit : '*pas tousse madame là.*'

J'ai demandé à ce que le MoU signé avec l'Inde en 2015 à propos d'Agaléga soit rendu public au nom de la transparence et au nom de la souveraineté de la nation mauricienne, des « pense-petits » m'accuseront sûrement d'être anti-Inde. M. le président, j'ai la conviction de mes idées et je l'affirme, et cela parce que j'ai été élu par les habitants de Quatre Bornes et j'en suis fier et honoré.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

(7.35 p.m.)

The Minister of Public Infrastructure & Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, usually I address a number of political issues but this time I think there are a number of questions which have been asked in this Assembly, the more so about the Metro Express. So, I will take a lot of time to answer these queries which I consider as being legitimate.

First of all, let me say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this country is 50 years old, next year. Is it the end of a cycle? Is it the beginning of a new cycle? Is it the beginning of a new chapter in the making of modern Mauritius? It could be so, but the most important thing - and I appreciate what hon. Ramano has said about the way he does about politics - I believe that you should have conviction. Second, you should have sincerity of purpose. Third, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you should be loyal to the nation. We have had extraordinary debates here in the last 50 years. We are sitting at the seats of stalwarts who made amazing speeches, brilliant

speeches; some full of sound and fury; some which were pertinent. But today, I think the time has come to make fundamental choices and the Metro Express is one of those choices.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnahn!

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in New York, in a few days, Sir Anerood Jugnauth is going to stand up to present his motion which has been requested to the Secretary-General for an advisory opinion at the International Court of Justice as regards the separation of the Chagos from Mauritius in 1965 before Independence was granted. In 1967 and 1968, this country was divided on the issue of Independence and when Sir Anerood Jugnauth will stand up in New York, he will ask for an advisory opinion with regard to one of the last remnants of decolonisation on the continent of Africa, the Chagos. And today, Sir Anerood Jugnauth is standing. Olivier Bancoult representing the Chagossian community will be standing by his side. The people of Chagos and the Republic of Mauritius and in spite of the formidable propaganda machine of the United States and the United Kingdom, in spite of the threats, in spite of the arm twisting, we hope that we will have this advisory opinion and we are working for a majority to be able to win this advisory opinion, and you know who is co-sponsoring this proposal of Mauritius? It is the Republic of India.

(Interruptions)

One of the co-sponsors!

(Interruptions)

And Sir Anerood Jugnauth is going to have bilateral meetings, I have been told, with so many countries, with the non-aligned movement, with the Africa Union to be able to put up a strong case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This is where Mauritius has reached. This is where we have reached after 50 years and there were formidable choices to make in this country. One was Independence. Half of the people of Mauritius voted almost against Independence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Those who fought for Independence today can rest in peace. But even those who fought Independence can rest in peace because this nation today, 50 years later, is reconciled to the idea of freedom and Independence. So, may they rest in peace! They were fighting here. We are fighting today.

I understand the passion of hon. Ramano when it comes to Quatre Bornes. I am a town planner. I can understand him. I can understand the apprehensions of the people, but I hope that today after the explanation that I am going to give; we have to make a choice, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

India has supported us, will support us and I was very interested when I went to China. Do you know what is happening in the world today? Because this budget has to be put in perspective! What is happening in the world today? The United States is recoiling upon itself. The European Union is looking for its own cohesion. There are only two continents rising up; the two superpowers of India and China in Asia and the new continent with all the opportunities in Africa. Where are we? We are in the middle. And who are standing by our side? Countries like India. Countries like China. This is the geopolitics of this modern world today. And this is where we have to think what to do; what are the opportunities; what are the challenges to raise to be able to provide a better future for our new generation. This is the challenge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. China has come with an extraordinary infrastructure project called the One Belt and One Road linking China to Europe and to the Middle East and to Africa.

Japan and India have come with the Japan-India initiative. We have massive billions with the China-Africa Fund. We have massive billions with the Japan-Africa Fund, with the India-Africa Fund. And last week, there was a representative of the Ministry of Infrastructure and Tourism who came from Japan with 12 of the biggest companies in the world because they want to set a regional office in Mauritius to provide for the market in Africa. This is where we are. And tiny Mauritius has to play its role.

We have to become the star and key of the Indian Ocean again. History has changed 50 years later, but geography has not changed. We have 2.4 million kilometres of ocean. And this is the ambition that we have, to be able to provide, to be the stepping stone to Africa because Africa infrastructure, investment, job creation is going, in Africa, to be massive and there are the two superpowers standing up, India and China, to be able to see how to explore the possibilities in that market. And we can be the regional hub. We can be the platform. We can be the stepping stone just like we are with the office of the World Bank, the office of the International Monetary Fund. We can have big companies from China coming to Mauritius, twining with Mauritius to go into Africa. And this budget has to be placed in its right perspective, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The development of Agalega has to be seen in that

perspective. It has to be seen in that perspective because it places Mauritius with all the latest technology in the middle of the Indian Ocean with an airport, with a jetty.

My friend, the hon. Minister of Local Government, explained. I have been to Agalega. We all know how dangerous it is to be able to get onshore. We know how beautiful this island is. Why can't it become a cruise terminal? Why cannot Agalega become a cruise terminal with the cruise ships from the Indian Ocean berthing at Agalega? So, this is how we have to see it; not see it as a tiny dot, but to see it in the whole ocean or between the emerging giants of Asia and the continent of tomorrow, Africa.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the future of the ocean economy has to be seen in that perspective as well. And we are doing everything to be able to explore all the possibilities that we have; an island of 60 kms by 40 kms. But where is our future? This is what we have to decide now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a question saying that: why does India help countries like Mauritius when India needs the rupees for its own people in India? But this is the foreign policy of a giant which helped in the decolonisation of Africa and the colonised world. This is the legacy of the Nehrus, of the Gandhis to help, to stand up like a big brother when you have small countries, small, little Mauritius. And I was very happy to hear the Speaker of the National Lok Sabha on a dinner and she summed it up in one sentence, and she said: "we have a relation of blood and history, and each time Mauritius will fight for its development, India will stand by its side." It is in this perspective that you have to place the grant of Rs12.7 billion, the loan of 500 m. dollars. We have to see where we are. Mauritius is not small. We are not a small country. We have to place ourselves *dans le concert des nations*. We have a role to play because we have a special relationship with India, because the Prime Minister has a special relationship with the Prime Minister Modi, because, in the past, we had a special relationship with South Africa. We have to rise up; we have to stand up like a little great country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now continue because, in the 70s, India gave us the MGI. True, those millions could have helped to make some housing units in India, but you see the symbolism of it. It hosted the ACP Summit here at the MGI. It gave to Mauritius, something, a shop window, in the same manner India gave us the possibility of having the CyberCity where we had sugarcane fields on the Illovo deal.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the same manner, the Swami Vivekananda Convention Centre today is a venue for international conferences. How did we get it; why did we get it? I remember a PNQ in 2005 because there was a problem. That Centre was to be provided for by December for the Summit, and myself and hon. Bhagwan, we went to New York to say - he was with me - that we could not provide the Centre...

(Interruptions)

He is a Master in politics, I said. He was with me and we met the Secretary General to explain to him that this Convention Centre is not going to be ready and that it is going to be ready only in March for the SIDS Conference. There was a PNQ of the Labour Party about duty-free cars. I remember this. That is what I am saying, we are a great little country, and we should think of things which are big. This is our destiny to be a shop window for Africa, to be a destiny for the world because our *vivre ensemble* is a model in the world today. That is why we are here. I listened to the debates. It's a very good thing. Debates have to be done, but decisions have to be taken.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is so much that we will achieve with India in the years to come. We have a Prime Minister who has a long career, we have Mr Modi. All Prime Ministers from India have come to this country. They have graced this land. All Presidents of India have graced this land. This is a unique and special relationship.

Let me now come to December 2014. In December 2014 - I am answering to those who said that we are leading the country to bankrupt, that we are going to be indebted - the Government then had already almost allocated a contract of Rs24.5 billion to Ascon for the light rail. It was on this programme that the MMM/Labour Party had gone to the elections. Over and above this, the Government had committed withfor a decongestion programme of Rs25 billion, with a Dream Bridge of Rs10 billion with toll, and a tunnel of Rs5 billion with toll.

Over and above that, the country had committed itself with Air Mauritius to buy aircrafts for Rs75 billion. So, what would have happened, if the MMM and the Labour Party had been in the Government? What would have happened? What would have hon. Ramano said then? Now, if Air Mauritius with Rs75 billion goes bust - the hon. Leader of the Opposition said: what happens if this goes bust - and if the Metro goes bust in two years? What would have happened if Air Mauritius goes bust with Rs75 billion. Who would have paid it? So, again, it's a question of responsibility. What we have done, we have reduced this

decongestion to Rs10 billion, we have reduced this Metro Express to around half - we are getting it from India – of about Rs10 billion. This sum of Rs75 billion of aircrafts has been re-engineered and the two aircrafts coming for A350 in November and December are going to be leased.

Isn't this responsibility? They are saying that we are leading this country to bankruptcy. We are taking important decisions which have to be taken, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, let us come to growth.

I am convinced that we are going to break the glass ceiling of 4% this year. We are going to get out of the middle-income traps slowly. I think everybody wishes so. Why am I saying this? Let me now tell you what happens in the infrastructure and construction industry.

In 2014, we had a negative 7% recession. In 2015, we had a negative 3% recession. In 2016, we have now a growth and this year we are getting at least 5% to 7%. I am going to explain to you what are the projects which are coming, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, with all the resilience of some sectors, with tourism, for example, doing well; financial services doing well, I am convinced that we will break the ceiling of 4% next year and we will continue with a cycle of sustained growth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now say a few things which have happened in my sector. I will come to a few other issues later. The Omnicane project of Rs600 m. in the south will be delivered next month. The Terre Rouge-Verdun repairs will be completed in nine months. I would like to explain here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because there was a criticism from the MMM saying that we are taking so much time to repair the Terre Rouge-Verdun. We have to understand, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this is a very complex area. You had five landslides, the tests were not done, and we could not do some quick fix. We could not do that. So, we have to understand what is happening. To understand this, we had a report from the Japan International Corporation Agency. We had a second report from the ARQ Co. in South Africa. We had a third report from the Korea Express Corporation from Korea. The reports showed that it was a massive failure which could have been prevented if the proper tests had been done. Do you know, what is happening there - those who have gone past? We are removing 140,000 metre squares of aggregates and soil. This is in total no less than 3,000 lorry loads. We were told that we could do two solutions, what were the stone columns, vertical, or the horizontal solution, that is, we remove scrap everything. We go to the rock

structure and then we do the filling to be able to have the road repaired, and this is going to take eight months.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are not responsible for the failure. There was a question put by hon. Bhagwan. I explained that. Let me tell you one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In Cabinet, the Prime Minister then, Sir Anerood Jugnauth asked me: 'what is the guarantee that the road will not fail somewhere else?' In fact, there was a landslide with 3,000 tons of mud which covered the six lanes which we have repaired. So, we have to do what has to be done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, the repairs are going to be done.

Now, we are extending the Terre Rouge-Verdun to Arsenal. This is going to be completed in a month. The repairs to the Ring Road which collapsed, which was also of a very complex nature, this has been done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We have been mentioning the decongestion, that is, the Jumbo/Phoenix and the A1M1. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to do what has to be done, the soil test and all that has to be done and then we have to go by the procurement laws. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just to prequalify 6 out of 14 of the biggest companies in the world, for the first time the biggest companies in the world have been requested to give a bid for the construction of the Jumbo/Phoenix flyover and the A1M1 bridge which is 140 metres. You have –

- Deawoo;
- Larsen & Toubro ;
- Bolloré, and
- the Chinese companies.

At the Public Procurement Office, it took me three months and there was a challenge. Now that all the documents have been sent to the six bidders, they will come with an offer in two months and that is why we have said that the works are going to start in three months, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now continue with the south-west connection which will start in La Vigie; it will go to La Marie, Henrietta, Beaux Songes and Flic en Flac. This road is costing Rs1.3 billion and it will help the traffic from the south to reach the west. A tourist coming from the airport will go directly to Flic en Flac without hitting Curepipe, Vacoas, La Louise, Quatre Bornes. It will go directly there and this is going to be one of the solutions for Quatre Bornes. I am going to mention others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Port to Jinfei third lane will start this year. Tenders have been floated and works are starting in 3 months. This is costing us Rs 300 m. Re-engineering of the roundabouts and flyovers of St Jean – what is happening in St Jean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Everybody leaving Quatre Bornes goes to St Jean; they go to St Jean, to Rose Hill; they go to St Jean to Port Louis and they go to St Jean to Curepipe. So, everybody sees St Jean as a tunnel.

What are we going to do now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We are going to re-engineer that roundabout going to Jumbo, coming to St Jean and what we are doing is we are doing a link road from Terre Rouge/Verdun connecting to Sodnac directly over the M1 highway. It will pass just in front of these huge three buildings which are the towers...

(Interruptions)

Émérite! So, we are connecting Terre Rouge/Verdun directly to Sodnac, which would mean that when you come from Terre Rouge/Verdun, you don't have to go to St Jean and you go directly to Sodnac. From Sodnac now you can come in and join the Motorway towards Rose Hill because we have just finished the roundabout.

Coming from Port Louis now, when you reach Ébène, you turn left and you have a roundabout and then you go inside Ébène; we are correcting that as well. And when you come from Port Louis, you won't have to go to St Jean to enter Quatre Bornes. You will take that roundabout and cross the M1 and go to Sodnac. So, the idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to reduce the fluidity and the number of traffic on the main road from St Jean to La Louise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for Quatre Bornes, they can go to the south via Beaux Songes, La Marie, La Vigie and to the south. We are going to re-engineer the whole of Quatre Bornes. This is how we are going to consider. I will come back to the Metro Express a bit later, M. Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Thank you. We are constructing a third lane from Bois Chéri to Grand Bassin. This is going to be finished in a few months. We are also doing the stabilisation work from Deux Frères to Bel Air and this is ongoing. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this year we resurfaced 49 km in two months...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: Rose Hill is in there. The hon. Member knows this as I told him, so, Rose Hill...

(Interruptions)

No, Rose Hill is in there; 14 km in two months, finishing in July.

Mr Deputy Speaker, we built –

- 13 km of footpath;
- 15 km of handrail;
- 11 km of guardrail;
- 108 km of road marking;
- 800 metre square of traffic signs, and
- 30 km of hard shoulder.

And we have all the other projects. I am not going to mention those projects because we are going to have the Committee of Supply and, most probably, my colleagues will ask a number of questions and we will be there to answer.

Now, let me come to the Metro. Why the Metro? Why have we been talking of the Metro since 1995 or even before? Why? The MSM has been consistent on one thing about the Metro throughout. Since I have been here, since 1995; before I was here, the Metro has been a top priority, a consistent project of the MSM. What do you have today? You have Rs 6 billion of congestion that cost us Rs4 billion of accidents and Rs2 billion of subsidy which is not accountable because we don't know how we spent those Rs2 billion. But how do we correct this? We take the two options: bus lane and Metro. Let us take the bus lane now. If we ought to have a bus lane from Curepipe to Port Louis, we will have to build a lane from Curepipe to St Jean and to Port Louis. We have to build another lane from Vacoas to St Jean and to Port Louis. We have to build another lane from Quatre Bornes to St Jean and to Port Louis and we have to connect Rose Hill to Réduit on the bus lane.

First, how can we heap on that bus lane all these buses? Secondly, what is the reliability of such a system? And thirdly, what is the reliability that we are going to be on time? So, the bus lane is not an option for another reason. I see very few people leaving their cars to take a bus to come to Port Louis for a number of other reasons. I am going to give you another reason now. We have two thousand buses in Mauritius. Out of 550,000 vehicles, that is, 0.6% of the fleet, do you know what is the percentage of accidents involving buses? It is 6%!

So, you have ten times more accidents with the buses in Mauritius than with a car or any other vehicle. Now, with the bus lane heaping on, where are we going to have the other lanes for the other traffic?

Let me now come to the Metro that we are building. A lot of people think that it is just a railway line connecting the different cities in Mauritius. That is not at all the case, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to say that the Metro line, the alignment that we have today is exactly the same that we had in the past with the railway system, except for two segments.

In Jumbo, we had to cross Sodnac and come to reach the Centre of Quatre Bornes, which is today impossible. Because of the density of population, we cannot do that. That is why it has been chosen to go through the St. Jean.

Now, the other segment where there is a difference in alignment is from Pailles to Victoria. In the past, it went along the motorway, now it is going to the foot of Signal Mountain, and then it crosses Moka Street and reaches Caudan. Apart from these two small segments, nothing has been changed from the alignment that we had in the past. Now, when it comes to Quatre Bornes, the question was asked: could we build it on structures? It would have been awful! Terrible! So, we have asked the Singaporeans to do a thorough exercise to consider all the aspects of the Metro entering into Quatre Bornes. And the measures I have mentioned are -

- (i) re-engineering of the roundabout of St. Jean;
- (ii) connecting the M1 to Sodnac;
- (iii) connecting Terre-Rouge/Verdun to Sodnac;
- (iv) re-engineering the traffic within Quatre Bornes, and
- (v) the access of Quatre Bornes to the south via Beaux Songes.

These are the measures we have decided and we want to implement those measures within two years to be able to free the main corridor because that is the corridor, as I said, in the minds of all people living in Quatre Bornes. You have to go to St. Jean, to Rose Hill, to Port Louis and to Vacoas.

When it comes now as regards to the number of lanes, the Metro, as has been proposed by the technical team, is going to be in the middle and you will have two lanes of traffic: one going to La Louise and one going to St. Jean, and shoulders on the sides.

Once the contract will be signed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will come to the House, we will come everywhere to explain to people why those technical choices have been made. There is one thing; I could not come in the House because I am going to explain the figures. Give a figure today and tomorrow come back to the House to say: "Listen, we were not so sure about it." I cannot come with a solution today and say: "Listen, we contemplated that solution and we are not able today to implement that solution." I have given the reasons why Quatre Bornes, that's the way it is. And the reasons, what are the mitigating measures that we have provided in the next two years, and what we are going to implement in the months to come.

Let me come now to the figures! The figure is 17.7. This figure was mentioned by myself in the House here, and this is the figure which the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise gave us with a number of adjustments from the project of Rs24.5 billion which was advocated by the former Government. And I would like to say that in the Rs24.5 billion, there was one item called 'Preliminaries' and that was Rs4 billion. And we asked the Singaporeans what it is all about, and they said it is a percentage of the project. The figure of Rs17.7 billion was given to us, and I came here in the House to give this figure.

Now, there is a project value of Rs20.9 billion which has been mentioned in the Budget. So, there were a lot of questions saying that: "you mentioned Rs17.7 billion, now you are coming to Rs20.9 billion. How come?"

This difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, relates to site works, consultancy costs, for example, Rights from India is going to supervise it, project planning, compensation and some other miscellaneous costs.

As regards to the project itself, the two bidders have already made their offers, the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise has considered the two offers, they have made a number of

queries to the two companies, Larsen & Toubro and Afcons. They went to Singapore and they have arrived this morning to have working sessions with the Metro Express Ltd. And they are going to query, have a face-to-face negotiation and discussion with Afcons and with Larsen & Toubro tomorrow and the day after. And they are going back to Singapore and they are going to come back. In three weeks, we will be able to be in a position, where we can award the contract mid-July.

What I can say as regards the Rs17.7 billion is that this is a reference figure and we are working very hard to have a contract around that sum, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

There was also the issue of the 13km and the 30km. The 13km is linked to one thing; it is that we have two options. Either we start in Port Louis and in Curepipe at the same time and four years later, we meet up in Rose Hill or we do Port Louis/Rose Hill and it becomes operational, and we have a second segment from Rose Hill to Curepipe.

The 13km, in fact, is from Port Louis to Rose Hill if this option is adopted and the Budget provides for this. It was told 30km in 2030; what does that mean? 30 km because we were considering the possibility of having an extension between Réduit, Ébène and Rose Hill. Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was another question saying that we are asking the people from the rural areas to pay for the urban population. But the Metro is a national network! The London underground was not built in a day. It has to have a backbone. And the backbone is from Curepipe to Port Louis. We want to have a north, south, east, west network, and, hopefully, we will have it.

Yes, this is the backbone. So, 17.7, we are working on it to be able to be around that figure. 20.9, I have explained, it is linked with a number of other costs which has nothing to do with the project cost. And third, I explained why we have put 30km, it is an extension. And in the end, we want to have a Metro from Mahebourg to Grand' Baie and from east to west. That is why I said, we have to make a choice. Do we want to be with 2,000 buses, half of them are 12/10 years old, with all our stations remaining the same for the last 40 years, with old buses and the parking for buses? This is the Mauritius that we want to give to our next generation? No, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! We are doing something else. That is why I said: "It is not a railway line; it is a remodelling of urban Mauritius."

Let me explain to you now! Curepipe, Vacoas, Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill and Port Louis, Victoria and Immigration are going to be urban terminals. And urban terminals are

like airports where the train will come. You are going to have food courts, you are going to have a stall for the hawkers, you are going to have offices, you are going to have services, you are going to have shops, you are going to have malls *et une place de vie*. This is what we are doing. And, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of these projects in Victoria, we launched a request for proposal for Victoria and a consortium of six local companies have made an offer of Rs1.5 billion of investment. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is with the Government of Mauritius just leasing the land for 60 years.

This project is going to be presented to Cabinet on 30 of this month. We are working on Immigration Square. We are working on Place Margeot with my colleague, the Deputy Prime Minister. We are working on Curepipe. We are working on Vacoas. We are working on Quatre Bornes. This is going to be a golden opportunity for Quatre Bornes to have an urban terminal which would be like an airport. Let me tell you one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from that terminal in 10 minutes, you are in Rose Hill. In 10 minutes, you are in Vacoas. In 20 minutes, you are in Port Louis. In 20 minutes, you are in Curepipe. You are going on time on the minute.

Now, my friend is saying - I can understand him, but we need to have change. This is the decision! This is the decision that we have to take. Just imagine Mauritius with a regeneration of all our Cities. All our bus parkings today, what are they? *Ce sont des cimetières de bus! Est-ce qu'on veut léguer ça à l'île Maurice de demain et à nos générations ? Mais non, M. le président!*

We want a remodelling, a regeneration. So, these six terminals will generate private investment to the tune of about Rs6 to Rs7 billion with jobs, with facilities, with modernisation. You know what is going to happen at Victoria? We are going to have an *esplanade* - 80 metres, crossing the motorway to link the old City and Caudan where people don't want to go because of the underpasses. This is the urban regeneration with the Metro Express, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I would like to say today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you have a Metro line in 200 cities. It is considered to be the safest of modes of transport. A light rail travels 20 to 25 kilometres in the city and can drive up to 80 kilometres between segments where you do not have residential houses, for example, between Riche Lieu and Pailles. So, it can go up to 80 kilometres, but in the city, it goes to 20 to 25 kilometres, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me continue! The two producers now Bombardier and Caffe have produced 25,000 light rail trains. This is what we are bringing to Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As I have said, the light rail is built for cities. It has an interface with the city with all the traffics. It has a system of sensors and an electronic system to be able to drive safely for the Metro, for the people and for the other users of the road. LRTs are seen to be extremely safe. We believe that we will reduce the number of accidents because we believe that we are going to have about 10% to 15% of people driving cars, who will park their cars, and will take the Metro.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, the consultants have worked thoroughly all the options regarding Quatre Bornes. I would like also to say...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Callichurn, please!

Mr Bodha: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in all the scenarios, before 2014, now and before, the Metro was always agreed between St Jean and Quatre Bornes. This is a fallacy to say that it was alleviated and we have brought it. No! On the contrary, the solution, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, is to reduce traffic on this Quatre Bornes, St Jean Road and to do all that I have proposed to do within two years. We are budgeting this. This has to be done within two years to show to the people of Quatre Bornes that this can be done. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, in 20 minutes from Quatre Bornes, you are in Port Louis and on the minute because the train arrives on the minute and reaches Port Louis on the minute.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the capital expenditure, the former Government was supposed to spend Rs24.5 billion. You know why we said we shelved this project because the Prime Minister was Minister of Finance, he was sitting here in the Labour/MSM/PMSD Government, we had thought for the Metro to be in the programme of the 2011/2015 mandate. When he did a first meeting, the Metro was about Rs11 billion and then it reached Rs12 billion, and then we heard in 2014 that it has jumped to Rs24.5 billion. That is why we said we cannot afford this, there is something wrong. Every project of the Labour Government spirals with overrun. We all know what happened to Terre Rouge/Verdun, what happened to the airport. So, when we said Rs24.5 billion, I think, we could say Rs30 billion. So, we said we cannot have this project; that is why we shelved the project.

Now, this project was supposed to cost Rs24.5 billion and what did the Prime Minister then achieve? He got Rs200 m. line of credit from India. What was going to happen to the rest? It was going to be another line of credit, another loan. So, that Metro was supposed to cost Rs24.5 billion funded by loans and that was considered then to be feasible. It was considered then to be sustainable. Our friend, hon. Ramano, went to campaign on this in Quatre Bornes...

(Interruptions)

That was in your manifesto.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: He went to campaign on a Metro of Rs24.5 billion on loans; now he is asking whether it is feasible.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Now, the hon. Member is asking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether this is feasible. What is feasible? A Metro which is costing less with half of the money given by grant! So, a Metro which was costing Rs24.5 billion on loan by the former Government, on the manifesto of the MMM and the Labour Party was feasible, but a Metro costing the people of Mauritius around Rs8.9 billion, paid by half the grant of Mauritius, this is not feasible. This is not commercially viable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we should know what we are talking about. We have to compare what is to be compared. Now, this Metro, the one that we are doing, is going to cost half of the money being a grant from India. Half of it is going to be a line of credit of 1.8% with four years moratorium on interest and seven years moratorium on capital. But let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are working as soon as we have the figure of the contract. We have requested the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise (SCE) to make a business plan for 15 years to show and I am going to bring this to the House. We have to show it to people that we are not bankrupting this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There have been a lot of criticisms that we are opaque. There is no transparency. We do not know anything about it.

Let me tell you one thing, the Leader of the Opposition wrote one line about a Dream Bridge of Rs10 billion in his Budget of 2011. I am asking him now - he is not here - was it transparent then? Was there any feasibility study? They wrote about a tunnel for Rs5.2 billion with tolls. Was it seen whether it was feasible, whether the Mauritian people would have paid a toll to take that bridge or to take the tunnel?

The only problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we have our hands tied. I did not want to come to this House with a figure and then come to say that this cannot be done. But as soon as we have the figure, we can factor in all the capital expenditure, all the operational costs, all the feasibility and we will give it to the public to show that we are building modern Mauritius and we are not leading the country to bankruptcy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some have said that the Metro Express is going to cost Rs100 billion, Rs50 billion, Rs40 billion, but we are going to come with the figures. What I want, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to have the company which will be awarded the contract to do a Press conference to say: "this contract is mine and these are the terms of the contract, this is the budget allocated to me and I am going to work within that budget." This is what we want to do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding subsidy ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, very good! Today, we are spending Rs2 billion. What do we do with it? Whom are we subsidising? We have made a figure: 60% of students free travel, 40% of elderly. Who did this figure? Who checked this figure for the last 10 years? It was done in 2005 and the hon. Leader of the Opposition was the Minister of Finance for so many years.

We have done a PricewaterhouseCoopers survey to say whether it was done properly, how to do it next. And we have been told how to do it. We need to have a smart card which will be used for parking, for bus travel and for the Metro. And I am launching the first smart card next week with Rose Hill Transport, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so that you can travel with the smart card. But now, let me tell you one thing. I have seen the Metro in a number of places and I must say to you, the success of the Metro is to be able to carry every potential person in the catchment area.

We need to, as we say in Bhojpuri, *chaan maro*, that is, we have to take all, the potential passengers should be able to take the Metro. How do we do this? This is called the last mile from the station to home. If you come from a Metro every 4 to 5 minutes and then you wait there and you don't know how to go home.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please!

Mr Bodha: You'll be tempted; you will stay on the station. So, we are coming with a system of feeder buses, which are going to be shuttled in the catchment area regularly so that they can just take the person from their home to the train. And we will include the fare in the general fare, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, we have to work. That is why I am saying that the bus companies need not to worry.

The workers need not worry because we will be needing them as feeders in the catchment area. I take, for example, Vacoas, it will go up to Henrietta and to Hermitage. In Quatre Bornes, it will go to La Source, it will go to Palma and we are working on this. This is our priority, to be able to address the needs of all the potential commuters from their home to the Metro, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I ask you one thing?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Rutnah!

Mr Bodha: Sitting here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened carefully to everyone and I have never disturbed anybody. They can bear testimony to that, so they should give way to me because this is a very important national issue and I want to put forward our argument. Debate is a debate, as I said, but the choice has to be made in the name of history.

This is what we are doing today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I always say that this is a place where history is written every minute, anything can happen. Hon. Collendavelloo knows this very well. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he decided to resign on the spur of the moment, in 1989.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so, there is no need to...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bodha: ... instil fear in people that we are going to harass them; that we are going to change the way they live. On the contrary, we are providing a sophisticated, attractive, reliable and affordable mass transit system to this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And this is what we have to do, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am convinced that after I have given all these arguments, that we have shown our conviction, our sincerity of purpose and our loyalty to the nation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is why I mentioned that we stand up here, we speak, we make debates, but we have to see what we are doing. We are committed, we sincerely believe that this will transform Mauritius and it is Rs5 billion of injection in the economy every year for four years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with all the jobs it will create, with all the opportunities it will create. *Et on aura le chantier national qu'on a toujours voulu avoir et qui est en train de se mettre en place, M. le président.*

Before concluding - because I don't want to address many other issues - I would like to say a few things, first of all, on challenges. The MSM Government, with other parties in the 80s, in the 2000 and in the 2015 has had cycles. In the 80s, we built up the country with the industrial revolution and made modern Mauritius. Everybody knows this.

In 2000, with the MMM, we laid the foundation of another modern Mauritius and we had a cyber city where you had sugar cane fields. The debt in 1995 was Rs37 billion, it was doubled by two in 2000 and it came to Rs74 billion with the Labour Party and the PMSD. Nothing was done. We moved in 2000 - 2005 from Rs74 billion to Rs110 billion/Rs115 billion and we built about 50 schools, we built the cyber city. Of course, the debt increases, but we used the money not to *fer jalsa*, we used the money to build the country.

You have to build your country, infrastructure equals development, developments call jobs and prosperity. We have to do that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, I will come, now, to a few issues - because I heard some comments - on the Betamax saga, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We went to the people during the campaign to say that *c'était un contrat abusif, en béton*. So, when we came back to power with the hon. leader of the Opposition, it was our duty to see to

it whether this contract be rescinded. We did, but you can't negotiate with somebody who doesn't want to negotiate and stay put.

Now, let me tell you one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In spite of all that have been said, I am not going to add. I would like to add one thing. Do you know that the Red Eagle is the only ship of its kind in the world? Do you know this? Do you know why? Because it carries all the different types of oil, which is never done! This is never done. Why? Like jet fuel for the airplane has to be carried out at a certain temperature so that it doesn't evaporate, otherwise it is going to be dangerous. Black oil, if you don't carry it at a higher temperature, it will stiffen to become hard. So, usually, you have a ship carrying black oil and diesel or you will have a ship carrying white oil, jet fuel and it's never done in a same boat. This is a boat which is not in fact - it was made to measure for 15 years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, this is something I wanted to add to the debate. The boat itself, the technicality of it, it is the only boat in the world which can do that. *C'est très dangereux!*

Let me tell you now one word on the drug issue. We were here, my colleagues were here, we were in the Opposition, we were shouting, *on était en train de supplier - le leader de l'Opposition a choisi ce mot - le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam pour qu'il mette une commission d'enquête. 10 ans!*

For 10 years, we did that! You can see the number of questions of all my colleagues, but he never did that! We always had the courage to do it. We did it in 1986. We are doing it now. I see the results. The seizure! I see the way it is done.

Now, let me tell you one thing. The hon. Leader of the Opposition, in fact, mentioned something which is very interesting. It is about the drug issue in the world today. You know that synthetic drug, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Phentamil? Phentamil is particularly attractive to criminals because it is so potent that with only one/two mg of the stuff, it is enough to cause an overdose. It is easy to hide in letters and small packages that are sent by post. The rewards are enormous. 1 kg of Ferantil costs \$4,000 to buy from China and yields profits of \$1.6 billion on the streets. By contrast, 1 kg of heroin costs around \$6,000, but it is worth a few hundred thousand dollars.

Another figure which is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, we have 800 different types of synthetic drugs. 800! The synthetic drugs are made in massive quantities in China. They are made in China and flooded in the market, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is

what I wanted to say how horrendous is this challenge and to be able to win this challenge, we need the commitment of one and all and to see to it that politics does not prevent us from winning this battle because with the Commission of Enquiry, with what is being done as regards to law enforcement, I am convinced, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we will win this war. But then, the whole important thing, again, is the role of the parents, the role of the responsible parties. Iceland has won the battle against cigarette, alcohol and drugs. It is very interesting to see how they have done it. Do you know how they have done it? Somebody who is vulnerable, the young, should never be left alone with his peers.

It should be the parents or the teachers or the responsible party or somebody to be always with him to prevent him from falling prey to these drugs. They did a survey about at what age the first cigarette is smoked; at what age the first glass of alcohol is taken. Let's say it is 13. So, they say why don't we push it? We will work on it so that we push it to 15. It will be two years. And then, they have, at 10 o'clock, a curfew. Young people cannot buy alcohol. This is where we are! If we want to win this battle, we have to find a solution for Mauritius, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

There are many issues. I would like also to congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Education. This extraordinary reform of Nine-Year Schooling, *c'est comme une lettre à la poste!* But can you imagine a reform in schools? How many years it would have taken, how many debates? We have achieved this. Nobody talks about it! We have reduced the price of flour by Rs1 and they are mentioning 10 cents for bread.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me ask you and the House: what would have happened if we have had increased it by Rs1? If we had increased it by Rs1, there would have been a PNQ of the effects of this.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Then, you would have *un débat misérabiliste pour dire pourquoi* this Rs1 is going to spiral, a lot of people are not going to have a loaf of bread, but because we have reduced it by Rs1; well, it is 10 cents. I have done a PNQ on an increase of Rs1 as Leader of the Opposition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is politics. I can understand them.

(Interruptions)

I can understand them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If we had increased it by Rs1, it would have been the talk of the town. But this is politics, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think before resuming my seat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Before ending on the Metro, hon. Rutnah read ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah, please!

Mr Bodha: ...what hon. Roshi Bhadain said about the Metro last year. So, I am going to read it –

(Interruptions)

“The hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development has left no stone unturned to introduce measures to stimulate economic growth, to kick-start major capital projects, to bring reforms whilst at the same time committing unprecedented resources to alleviate poverty.”

This year, we have the Negative Income Tax which is a formidable measure.

“This type of Budget, Madam Speaker, is, indeed, very rare!”

(Interruptions)

“It enhances credibility - credibility in terms of our motives, credibility in terms of the strength of Government’s economic management policies.”

“Madam Speaker, the decision of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to invest the grant of Rs12.7 billion, which I negotiated with the Republic of India, in development priorities, shows his wisdom and foresight to bring the highest returns both in terms of economic and social benefits. As he stated in his Budget Speech –

“(...) the money should be invested so that our children and their children as well can benefit.”

“Revamping our towns and villages requires a durable solution to traffic jams and better town and country planning. The previous Labour Government would have spent Rs24.5 billion on what they called a “*Métro Léger*” project, which seemed more like a “*Métro Lourd*” project, Madam Speaker (...).”

(Interruptions)

“(...) not only because of the excessive and abusive costs, but also the time wasted to conceptualise their project, with excessive elevations and stations which were not priorities and therefore, like the Labour Government, not required.”

(Interruptions)

“Madam Speaker, our “Metro Express” will be implemented at a much lower expenditure level than what the Labour regime had envisaged. The grant obtained from India will provide Rs7.2 billion to the “Metro Express” which will include a network of modern integrated urban terminals with appropriate provisions made for parking facilities, food courts, commercial spaces, dedicated hawker areas and green spaces.”

Madam Speaker, my question is: what does the population at large want? The Opposition will say they want elections and they want the Opposition in. Do you really think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

Do you really think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the people of Mauritius want the Opposition today to be in Government?

(Interruptions)

I am finishing here. Hon. Baloomoody, do we really think that the population in this country want to have the Opposition of today in Government now? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the answer is definitely no. What this population wants is this Government to succeed and we will succeed. This is what this population wants: to see us succeed because we have a mandate, and we want to succeed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are born to build. *Nous sommes les bâtisseurs*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the commitment. The Prime Minister is a man of conviction

and achievement. We have the conviction, we have the sincerity of purpose and we love this country and we are loyal and consistent in the way we relate to other country. We should be consistent. I am saying so for the hon. Leader of the Opposition. You need to be consistent. We have to build *carré-carré* according to procedures because we have to go by procedures and I, here, pay tribute to the Deputy Prime Minister and all our partners of the alliance.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am convinced...

(Interruptions)

...that the promise of clean energy will be met. I am convinced that the promise, the challenge of water on a 24/7 basis will be achieved by the time we will finish our mandate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are blessed because as soon as the Bagatelle Dam was built, we had the rain to swell it and I am convinced that we will accomplish our mission.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget is one more step in our new endeavour. It shows the way to us, builders. We have always built in the 80s, in the beginning of this millennium. Now, we are builders together with the nation and the Prime Minister must be congratulated for this. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am convinced that the population outside wants this Government to succeed and we have to work hard to succeed and when we stand up next year in Parliament, we would have walked a long way towards our future.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

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

At 8.48 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.56 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr V. Baloomoody (Third Member for GRNW & Port Louis West): Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, on Thursday 08 June 2017, the hon. Minister of Finance presented the Budget for the financial year 2017-2018. This was, in fact, the second Budget of this Finance Minister since the last general election in December 2014. But it is the third one of

this Government because, in 2014, the people voted for an alliance, then known as *Alliance Lepen*, which was composed at that time of the MSM, PMSD and ML.

Madam Speaker, I said this is the third Budget of this Government and it is surprising to note, and it is revealing that none of the orators on the other side made reference to the first Budget of this Government. It is as if hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo is ‘dead’ for them politically. He is a liability! Even the Mentor Minister started his speech by saying, I quote -

“The Budget espouses the philosophy and targets set out in my Economic Mission Statement: Vision 2030. It puts the people and the country first. It is a continuation of the 2016-2017 Budget which was meant to usher a new cycle of growth and shape a new, modern and sophisticated Mauritius (...).”

No mention of the first Budget of hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. Two and a half years after, they have already forgotten, ‘buried’, politically speaking, hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo. And today what do we have? Hon. Bodha - I will come to that later - spoke about ‘we have to be sincere to our electorate, to be consistent with ourselves’. What do we have in front of us today? What Government? Is that the *Alliance Lepen* which people voted for in 2014? As rightly pointed out by my senior friend, hon. Bhagwan, we have today a Government made up of the MSM, Muvman Liberater, and *transfuges*. And *transfuges*, Madam Speaker! I will come to *transfuges* later and about what was said of *transfuges*.

And what is worse, what did the *Alliance Lepen* market in 2014? SAJ, five-year Prime Minister! Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, five-year Minister of Finance! This was the product that was presented to the people and they were supposed to bring the second *miracle économique*.

Today, what do we have in this Government of MSM, ML and *transfuges*? A Prime Minister who has not been chosen by the people, but chosen by his father! And the same person who was not chosen by the people to be Prime Minister, who was never presented to be Minister of Finance, is himself the Minister of Finance! He could not trust anybody in his troop to give that Ministry, so he has to keep the Ministry of Finance to himself! He could not trust anybody following the episode of *bal couler*, following the episode of Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, who used a loan from a public bank to gamble in gold. A bank that he was the Minister responsible for! The State Bank! And, today, we have a Prime Minister nominated by his father, and himself Minister of Finance. Madam Speaker, this goes against the basic principle of a democratic Government, where the wish of the people is of paramount

importance. This amounts to an act of principality, where the king hands over the kingdom to his son.

Madam Speaker, a national budget is a central political process. It is not only a process which lays down the expenditure and income of the Government, but provides a platform for a long-term vision for our country, political credibility and confidence for the future.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, this Budget lacks clarity in direction and depth. There does not seem to be a coherent link between vision and action, between strategy and objectives. There is confusion and inconsistency between the economic policies and some ill-advised policies. Above all, it is a Budget which is unrealistic and unsustainable. The nation out there, Madam Speaker, was expecting a Budget which was going to give this country a vigorous impetus to turn back the negativism that we have seen in the past three years. But we are left with a Budget qui *manque de souffle* - it's not me who is saying so - as rightly pointed out by a respectable economist, Mr Pierre Dinan, in the paper after the Budget was presented.

Madam Speaker, as far as people out there are concerned, we are debating this year's Budget and it is good that this is broadcast on television now. But for the people out there, this Budget was *un fait divers*, an annual repetitive show of intention. People have no trust in the words of this Government anymore. This Government has promised so much when in reality it has done nothing. And what is worse, it has done exactly the contrary of what they were supposed to do.

This Government has failed the country for the last two and a half years. And can we blame the people out there for not having any trust in the *discours*, in the *oral* of the Minister of Finance?

Let's see for the last two years what have been promised! Fabrication locale de bicyclettes et de motocyclettes, zero! Création d'un village pharmaceutique à Rose Belle, zéro ! Installation d'une raffinerie d'or et de production de lingots, zéro ! Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo was probably tempted by that, he looks after his own interest. Création de technopole dotée d'imprimerie 3D à Rivière du Rempart et à Rose Belle, zéro ! Création d'un aquarium de niveau international, zéro ! Développement du port pour faire un *hub* régional pour le bunkering, le *sea food*, le transbordement et les croisières, zéro ! Introduction d'un ferry entre Pointe-aux-Sables/Port Louis et Baie du Tombeau, zéro. Création d'une Chambre

des métiers pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, zéro ! Création d'une compagnie maritime régionale, zéro ! Convertir La Citadelle en une espace artistique, *my goodness*, zéro ! *A bank* pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, zéro !

And the list is long. Unfortunately, it is late and there are many orators who will be speaking after me, otherwise I would have carried on.

Madam Speaker, I stated earlier, people have no trust in this Government. They are angry, they are disgusted when they see what Government they have today, and what was promised in December 2014.

Let us come to the *transfuges*. This Government now has in its troop five *transfuges*; one Minister *transfuge*, one PPS *transfuge*. What did they say in their Programme? At Paragraph 256 of the Government Programme of 2015-2019 - their programme – the following was written, I quote -

“An ‘anti defection’ legislation will be introduced to make it more difficult for MPs to cross the floor.”

More difficult, in fact!

Today, they are making it easier by thanking them for a post of either PPS or Minister and God knows what they have received behind the scene! And you want the people out there to trust you?

(*Interruptions*)

And hon. Bodha tells us we have to be consistent? We, politicians, have to give example of consistency? I will come, there is a lot more than that!

Let us now come to corruption! That was one of their main issues during the campaign, corruption. Chapter 4 of the Presidential Address which relates to good governance and paragraph 246 mentions, and I quote –

“Government has a mandate for change and will relentlessly fight fraud, corruption and financial crime. To that effect, a Financial Crime Commission will be set up to act as an apex body to oversee the ICAC, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Enforcement Department of the Financial Services Commission.”

Two and a half years have gone now!

(Interruptions)

Your Government I am talking about! You should take collective responsibility, don't say Bhadain! Think what you have done!

(Interruptions)

What the Prime Minister has done. He was the Prime Minister! Two and a half years after where is your fight for corruption? Where is the Financial Crime Commission? In fact, ICAC today, it is unfortunate to say, it is not the ICAC that the MSM/MMM Government created in 2002 or 2003. Hon. Collendavelloo chaired a commission; I was in that commission...

Madam Speaker: Don't address another hon. Member. You can't talk to him.

Mr Baloomoody: Hon. Gayan was there. We prepared a report. We prepared a Bill to create the ICAC and today what is the ICAC that we have? Both the Labour Party and this Government have destroyed the ICAC we set up in 2002-2003.

And, what is worse, Madam Speaker, and I will go a bit lengthily on that because I was thrown out last Tuesday I think when I mentioned Boskalis. When I was thrown out everybody out there asked: "*hey ki ete sa Boskalis la?*" Some thought that it is a sweet, a cake, an insult and you were expelled because you mentioned Boskalis..

Madam Speaker: Oh no! You were not expelled because you mentioned...

Mr Baloomoody: ...because I was referring to...

Madam Speaker: You were expelled because you ignored the Chair!

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, but I don't want to go back to that issue...

(Interruptions)

I was not the only one ignoring the Chair. There was a brouhaha I got that you heard only my voice. Never mind! I was expelled. Let me come to Boskalis in detail for people out there, for our nation to know who is advising, who is the Senior Adviser of the Prime Minister and we will know why is it that there is that perception that there is allegation of fraud and corruption everywhere at the top level of Government!

(Interruptions)

No, there is not. Boskalis is finished. I am not talking about the case against Mr Maunthrooa, I am talking about the case of Boskalis on which judgement has been ordered and sentence has passed and I know that case and hon. Collendavelloo knows that case very well. Boskalis is a German company which deals with the drainage of port...

(Interruptions)

It is a Dutch company, sorry. Dutch company, drainage of port - at that time there was a tender...

(Interruptions)

The Directors of Boskalis were charged under 8 counts...

(Interruptions)

8 counts...

(Interruptions)

They had pleaded guilty. What do you mean by judgement? The judgement is here! 8 counts! And among the 8 counts, 4 were against one gentleman and 4 counts were against – I will read the charge, count 7 –

“In or about the year 2006 one Boskalis International represented by Mr Ian Cornelis Hack in the present case having the registered office address as (...).”

In Germany –

“(...) did wilfully and unlawfully agree with one Ramprakash Maunthrooa, 57 years old, Consultant residing at Avenue Prudent, Floreal (...).”

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, on a point of

Mr Baloomoody: “(...) to do an act which is unlawful (...).”

(Interruptions)

“(...) and Boskalis pleaded guilty.”

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, please!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Baloomoody! Please give way! Yes!

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, the hon. Member is talking about a case which is still pending. I know that this is a different case. But it has a bearing on the case that is still pending.

(*Interruptions*)

So, I will...

(*Interruptions*)

I think it is a cursus in the Parliament that we should not talk about matters which are still *sub judice*. So, I will urge the Member to refrain from talking about it.

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Baloomoody: It is in the Court record, the judgement is on the website.

Madam Speaker: Has a judgement been given in this case?

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, of course.

Madam Speaker: And if this...

Mr Baloomoody: I will come to the judgement and table the judgement!

Madam Speaker: Hold on! Why are you getting excited?

(*Interruptions*)

Please sit down!

(*Interruptions*)

I am asking you a question!

(*Interruptions*)

Will this Boskalis case have a bearing on the case which is in Court right now and which is being shaped?

(Interruptions)

This is the question I have because if that Boskalis case has a bearing on that case which is in Court, then the matter is *sub judice* and it cannot be discussed over here!

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: As a matter of procedure and evidence, a judgement in one case is not admissible in another case. So, I am going to file the judgement which I will lay on the Table. Judgement 2013, Intermediate Court 288 and the particulars of the charge is more interesting -

“25,000 dollars were given to Mr Ramprakash Maunthrooa.”

This is count 7. Now, we have count 8...

(Interruptions)

“(...) same did wilfully and unlawfully agree with one Ramprakash Maunthrooa, this time 60,000 US dollars and the company was represented by Counsel (...).”

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Baloomoody, I am sorry, please can you table your document and I will take few minutes, I will study this and then I will come back for a ruling!

(Interruptions)

Table your document!

(Interruptions)

Table your document!

(Interruptions)

Table your document! I suspend the sitting for 15 minutes!

At 10.14 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 10.33 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair!

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I have examined the judgement in the case of Police v Boskalis International bv and anor. In this judgement conviction has been secured against Boskalis International bv and anor. To all intents and purposes, in this case, Mr Ramprakash Maunthrooa has not been convicted.

The case of Police v Ramprakash Maunthrooa and anor is still pending before Court. Any accused party is presumed to be innocent until proved guilty. So, if you are referring to this case then the matter is *sub judice*. The hon. Member cannot therefore infer from the case of Police v Boskalis that Mr Ramprakash Maunthrooa is guilty.

Please continue!

Mr Baloomoody: Thank you for the ruling. I am not inferring anything. I was just reading the judgement in the case of Boskalis which has already been tried and where the accused company which was accused of giving bribe to X, Y and Z, including the Senior Adviser of Prime Minister and he has pleaded guilty. That is all I was doing!

Now, to complete the series, I will file a ruling, this time in the case of the Senior Adviser, Mr Ramprakash which is cause number 2012 PL3 81 where that gentleman is provisionally charged with the offence of money laundering, aiding and abetting the author of a crime and in breach of the Financial Intelligence and Anti-Money Laundering Act. This is the case where the Adviser is involved. I am not inferring anything! Let him defend himself, he is an adult and I am sure he will be able.

But, of course, Madam Speaker, when you have this type of people advising the Prime Minister, it is a matter of concern, and you can't blame the people out there if they are not convinced that this Government has the credibility, has the authority be it moral to fight corruption. You cannot blame the people out there. In fact, when it comes to corruption Madam Speaker, the credibility of this Government is negative.

Now, I will quote from Hansard before I go to another chapter where when I first addressed the House on the first Budget which nobody wants to talk about now, Budget of hon. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo, I was allowed to make reference to the case of Boskalis. It is in Hansard, and today I have been denied to make reference to the case of Boskalis.

Madam Speaker: My ruling is final, hon. Member.

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, but I am saying that I was allowed to say that when I addressed the House on the first occasion on the Budget of hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo. I am just repeating what I did 2 years ago, but now I am being informed that I cannot speak about Boskalis. Okay I obey your ruling...

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, no! No! I did not tell you that you cannot speak about Boskalis. I told you that if you take from the case of Police vs Boskalis, and you infer that Mr Prakash Maunthrooa is guilty, then I told you that you cannot do this.

Mr Baloomoody: He is not guilty, but it is a fact, he is on bail for corruption offences and money laundering offences. Let's leave it here. Let's go to other issues.

Now, let me turn to the issue of wastage ad abuse in the use of public funds. Let me refer, Madam Speaker, to paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Government Programme. Paragraph 8 of the Government Programme reads as follows –

“Government is committed to conducting business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance.”

And paragraph 9 reads as follows -

This implies:

‘Responsible and judicious use of public funds and a crusade to weed out wastage.’

And there is a list, I am not going to read the whole list. Let me read this one. Listen to this one. This is interesting. That will interest probably hon. Gayan -

‘Freeing our society from the shackles of widespread corruption, favoritism, nepotism, mafias and political interference.’

This is the Government Programme. This is what this Government was elected to do. What has happened since December 2014, Madam Speaker? One thing is certain, 2 things are certain, 3 things are certain; mafia has inflated most of our public institutions, I did not say that, hon. Pravind Jugnauth says it; two and a half after this Government mafia has infiltrated most of our institutions. Favouritism has been the practice of the day. Fortunately, hon. Fowdar was not here. I am sure he would have *tape la table* when I am saying so. Nepotism!

When it comes to drugs, when you say the mafia, when you are talking about mafia, what a coincidence, Madam Speaker! What a coincidence! When I read the papers today at what is happening before the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs, it reminds me of *Commission Rault*. I was Counsel together with my friend Collendavelloo, not for a *trafiquant*, but for a senior politician at that time, before *Commission Rault*. The MSM was in power at that time, coincidence wants it that again today, the MSM is in power. Mafia at that time had infiltrated the Police, the prisons, the Customs and even Parliament. We should not forget about the four MPs from MSM who were arrested in Amsterdam with a VIP passport, a diplomatic passport, with drugs.

(Interruptions)

Sorry? They were MSM, Government of MSM, I do not know. There were some *transfuges* who had joined the MSM; you want it that way?

(Interruptions)

Pelladoah was not MSM?

Madam Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Non! Hon.Baloomoody! Do not let yourself be interrupted by what they are saying!

(Interruptions)

But then do not let yourself be interrupted by them, please proceed with your speech but I would ask on the other side not to interrupt him.

Mr Baloomoody: Anyway, they were Members of the Government? I do not know what they were because this Government as well we do not know who they are; *transfuges* or what? They had diplomatic passports issued to them by the Prime Minister. They went through the VIP authorised by the then Prime Minister, and they were arrested. When you look at the paper today, it is as if history repeating itself: *Mafia la drogue* was climbing the stairs of power in that day, and today we have Mr D. D, I won't mention his name, *ene zenfant lakaz Sun Trust, zenfant la cuisine*, arrested for drugs. What a coincidence!

Madam Speaker, when we come with regard to appointment of close relatives, nepotism, *copain-copines*, urging huge sums of money. They decided by themselves – we will make an allowance of Rs100,000 for the next months. I am not going through the list, it is too long: the 19 million barrister-lawyer fees; the Trust Fund for the heart - scandal; ICTA; IBA; so many advisers, etc., etc.

This is a Government which was elected to free our country from corruption, favouritism, nepotism, mafia and political interference. Let us not talk about political interference when we know.

Today, Madam Speaker, what is funny? If you make a declaration against a Member of the Government, you become the victim. Somebody says he has bribed one Minister, the Minister goes and makes a declaration, they arrest the one who has made that declaration. If you make a declaration today against a Member of the Government, your declaration is not investigated upon; you are being investigated upon. *Interférences politiques!*

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training is not here, but I shall speak with regard to industrial relations in the public sector. You know there was big tamtam here when we voted the Union for Police Bill. Now, the Police will have their union. Now, the Police will fight their case. Now, you see we have done that. I remember I told the House this won't work in practice. In fact, Police will be victimised, there will be more problems. Let's see in the public sector. I do not know whether it is with benediction of the Government or not. The Post Office, Madam Speaker! I won't talk much about the Post Office because I am Counsel in this case. The President of the Union is suspended and is being called before a disciplinary committee. A case is before the Supreme Court now. I will not talk about that.

With regard to the prison, again, the Secretary General of the Union of the prisons is being suspended because he has said things in the course of negotiations at the Commission for Conciliation and Mediation and he is supposed to appear before the disciplinary committee very soon. The Police officer who is the President of one of the biggest unions, because he made a statement for the welfare of the Police Officers, within 12 hours, he has been transferred. Knowing that in Port Louis he will do his activities as a trade unionist, they transferred him to Mahebourg. There is not even 12 hours he has been transferred. Knowing that in Port Louis he will have to do his activities as a trade unionist, they transferred him to Mahebourg. Being a Prosecutor of the Intermediate Court, he was

degraded and transferred to the Mahebourg District Court just because he is the President of a trade union and nothing from that Minister of Labour who was supposed to safeguard the interest of our trade unionist. No mention was made whatsoever in his speech with regard to the way certain public services are treating union leaders, intimidating them, discrimination against them, taking disciplinary action against them just because they are fighting the interests of their members. What is worst, Madam Speaker?

On 27 March, the Police Officers Solidarity Union held a Press conference at Marie Reine de la Paix. I do not know who took the decision, whether it was the Commissioner of Police or the one responsible for the Central CID, but members of the Central CID were sent there to intimidate people not to attend that meeting and the matter was reported. They came in a Government car, 134 GM 10. Members of the Central CID were sent there to intimidate them so that they could not hold their Press conference. This is with the blessing, I do not know whether with or without, but I hope the Minister for Industrial Relations will intervene to ensure that trade unions, be it in the private sector or in the public sector, wherever they exist, be allowed to carry on their business as trade unionists.

(Interruptions)

When the representative of the trade union of the prison speaks to the Commissioner of prison, do you know what he has to say? ‘You know, the Standing Orders still mention about Prison Council. There is no mention in the prison of a trade union.’ This has been here since the Employment Rights Act for more than 10 years. They have not even bothered to amend the Standing Orders and today the union of the prisons is not being recognised because they still have in their Standing Orders, Prison Council.

Even in the Police Force, the Employment Rights Act stipulates that –

“Any person who appears before the Disciplinary Committee is allowed to be accompanied by a representative of the Labour office or a Counsel of his choice.”

Although we have a union, now, in the Police, Counsels are still barred from assisting their clients in case of a Disciplinary Committee. Nothing is being done to change that Standing Order. Nothing is being done by the Minister of Labour to ensure that those who appear in a Disciplinary Committee are allowed to have Counsel of their choice to assist them at the level of the Disciplinary Committee. Not at the level of the enquiry when a Magistrate chairs the

Disciplinary Committee, but at the level of the enquiry, like we have an Internal Disciplinary Committee. But in an Internal Disciplinary Committee, they are not allowed.

Now, let me come to the Police Force. When the hon. Minister of Finance addressed the issue of the Police, he said loudly, I am now -

“Tackling law and order

Let me now turn to law and order.

I am providing Rs8.4 billion to the Police Department as follows: (...).”

And he gives the details. Do you know how much it was last year for the Police Force? Rs8.7 billion last year! This year, with Rs8.5 billion, they want us to believe they are going to tackle the problem of law and order when the funds are not even being provided. What a joke! There are many other issues in the Police Force. The morale is very low. For those who practise at the Bar and who meet the Police Officers nearly every day, we know about it. My friend, hon. Teeluckdharry, knows it very well.

Several recommendations of the PRB have not been implemented yet such as bank of Police Officers for overtime. They were supposed to have an enquiry allowance when they do enquiry. This has not been paid yet. Extra duty allowance has not been paid yet. Cash in lieu when working on public holidays, payment are made 6 to 8 months after. Do you know, Madam Speaker, those poor Police Officers who have been working on 01 and 02 January, when the nation is celebrating, they are working; up to today they have not been paid their allowance for working on public holidays.

We have the Police Academy in all the budgets for the last five or six years that I have been here. In most of the budgets, the Police Academy keeps repeating. Lack of training! Lack of equipment! Now, we are in winter and, up to now, their cardigans and their socks have not been provided. There is a shortage. They were told to wear the last two years' cardigans. Is this the Police Force we want? Those who were recruited in 2014 have not been confirmed up to now. Nearly 3 years after! Do you want these people to be motivated? This is in breach of the DFSC Regulation, which stipulates that -

“Appointment has to be confirmed within a period of not more than 12 months.”

Hon. Boissézon probably has to look into that matter. Two and a half years later, they are not confirmed and we want them to have the courage and the morale to fight law and order.

I better not talk about most of the Police stations. But there is one which still has to be mentioned. It has been mentioned nearly every year; it is the one at Moka. My Goodness! I was there a few weeks ago; when you enter, there are no books on the table, *ena lamoc. Quatre lamocs lor la table* because it is leaking. Not even the Occurrence Book.

(Interruptions)

In fact, I met, you know, whom! The officers there were all complaining. We had to go in a small room behind where it is not leaking to give the statement of my client. This is our modern Police Force. *Singapour nu pu vini!* The Police is celebrating the 250 years this year. If you go in front of these Police stations, you have to laugh. What is written on: 'Service with care, pride and honour'. How can you service with care, pride and honour in such Police stations where *lamoc* is on the table when you enter that Police station?

Now, the prison, this is another disaster. You will be surprised to learn that some people prefer to stay in the prison, especially drug addicts. *Gagn zaffaire la plis facil là-bas, missier, ki dehor. Laisse mwa endans meme.* Their parents come and see me to make an application for bail. When you go and visit them, they say: '*Non, non, ...*'

(Interruptions)

You agree with me!

They say: '*Non, non, korek la. Ici mo gagn mo ration, mo gagne mo dose.*'

The union is being victimised. What about access to prison? I raised an issue once with regard to religious persons who are allowed to enter prisons.

Up to now, I have not received an answer. Religious persons were allowed to enter prisons without the consent of the Prime Minister's Office.

(Interruptions)

No, not this one! There are cameras which are not working. I had visited the prison when I was a Member of the PAC; lots of cameras are not working. They are here just for the sake. If one day, they decide to have all of them functioning, only two people will have to watch 80

cameras, 4 lizier pou get 80 cameras. Again, I put a question to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor; I am still waiting for the answer.

The Budget made provision for the installation of two scan machines when you enter. Interesting! But what is the point of having the scan machines if they do not use them? Are you aware, Madam Speaker, that there is a team which they call '24/7'. These people are allowed to enter the prison any time they want and leave the prison any time they want without being searched. I asked a question to the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor and this is my information.

They come, now you are searched when you enter, we were searched when we entered as Members of Parliament. But this search stops at 4.00 p.m. *L'équipe 24/7* comes after 4.00 p.m.

(Interruptions)

Yes, in the prison there is a team called 24/7. They are supposed to be the top guys who at any time can enter a Police cell, search without the permission of anyone who is on duty. They have that authority which has been given to them by the Commissioner of Prisons, 24/7 team.

Again, I raised that issue, but it is becoming worse, the relationship between the prison and the Human Rights Commission, especially the National Preventive Mechanism Division (NPMD). Since the Chairperson of that Division has made a report with regard to the death, alleged to suicide of Arvind Hurrychurn in the Moka Detention Centre on 31 October 2016, this Division is supposed to go and visit prisoners, is supposed to go and see cases of brutality reported against them by members of the Prison. Since that report has been out on 01 November 2016, there is no collaboration between that Unit of the Human Rights Commission with the Prison Officers. And, according to my information, it is not to be verified, it is confirmed information, the number of brutality in the prison is on the increase and if things go as it is, we are flirting with revolution in the prison, wittily if action is not taken.

Now, I wanted to raise these issues under the heading of the Minister Mentor and also of the Ministry of Labour because they concern industrial relations and the safeguards, the interest of Prison Officers and Police Officers.

In the Budget itself, the Minister of Labour was very excited to say: "Yes, we managed to put job placement, 4,787 people." Excellent placement! But how many were placed in a job for the year 2016/2017? These are the official figures. 4,787 put on job placement, only 906 managed to secure a job. Manipulating the figures, just to come and tell us that employment is low or is getting down.

There is also the issue which has been raised many times in this House regarding the ladies who are working at the Ministry of Education, earning only Rs1,500 per month. No mention! Two months ago, I think it was in April, I raised the matter at Adjournment Time. I was informed by the Minister of Labour that an enquiry is being carried out at the level of the Ministry of Education and, very soon, we will know about the outcome; 2 months outcome now.

I am happy the Minister of Education will speak after me, and I am sure she will enlighten us about the fate of these ladies who are still earning Rs1,500, cleaning primary schools. Cleaning the toilets, the yard - Rs 1,500! Nothing on portable severance allowance! Minister of Labour, no mention!

There is some concern with regard to the question of having a National Investment Authority. The unions are very concerned and I do not blame them because Government intends to use the money of the National Pension Fund, which has its own Internal Investment Committee and the National Savings Fund to be in Mauritius National Investment Authority.

And, here, we are talking about the salaries of workers, their sweat, some even give their blood to have their money in that institution to secure a pension. And when we know the way this Government appoints *ti copain, ti copine*, favouritism to head authorities, when we know political interference, we know what happened; hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, when he stood up that evening or the day after when there was a PNQ with regard to the BAI and Bramer Bank, candidly, he said: "No problem, State Bank will take Bramer Bank; SICOM will take National Insurance Company - BAI, the insurance part." As if this belongs to Government! *Zouer avec l'argent la sueur travayer*, and this, we are against and we are happy that the Trade Unions - and we will support the Trade Unions to make sure that their money, their sweat, their contribution is not misused, abused, dilapidated by Government Authorities.

Then, there is that issue of Duty Free Car for *Confédération des Syndicats*. There are not many confederations. According to my information, there are, apparently, 9 confederations and 27 federations. They have not asked for mini bus. Now, what has been proposed in the Budget? They are nearly asking for a 4x4 duty free. What we are talking about 27 4x4 duty free for 24 *fédérations*. They have to go on the site to see the conditions under which the workers are working. They don't sit in the office like some of our colleagues on the other side do. They go around, *alle lor terrain*.

There is also a matter of concern regarding the amendment to the National Identity Card Act. When we know all the problems we have had, we had to postpone because of cases in Courts; Privy Council cases. My friend on the other side, hon. Teeluckdharry knows very much about it. And we managed to get at least one thing, that this data belongs to the owner of the card and will not be used for any other purpose whatsoever without his consent. And this was said by the Privy Council in the judgment of Madhewoo v The State of Mauritius. A Privy Council's judgement! Because what we have in that card is a private right, it is the right that belongs to that person. His personal rights! This has not been followed by only the Privy Council, it reflects in that judgement. This is the sentiment across Europe with regard to the European Convention of Human Rights. Now, we want to amend this Identity Card Act to let private people have access to information, to let third parties have access. Page 41 reads as follows -

“C.7 National Identity Card Act

The National Identity Card Act will be amended to allow reading card data by both public and private agencies as may be determined by the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation according to set criteria.”

So, now we are going completely away in breach of International Regulation and International Human Rights issues. We are giving a third party access to data which is found on our identity card and this will create...

(Interruptions)

You have already spoken; unfortunately, you have not explained. You should have done it before!

(Interruptions)

You should read the papers, read the concerns of the people out there. Read the papers! All the unions and everybody are concerned. All human rights people are concerned. You should have come with a statement on that issue. We are talking about National Identity Card.

(Interruptions)

Now, there is also the amendment to the Banking Act. In the annex to the Budget at section A.8 Tax Administration, under paragraph (b), it reads -

“In line with the international move towards automatic information exchange – look what pretext - and in order to enable the proper tracking through the movements of substantial funds linked with drug dealing and money laundering schemes, the Income Tax Act will be amended to empower MRA to request from banks, insurance companies and non-bank deposit taking institutions, an Annual Statement of Financial Transactions in cases where a transaction by any person (individual, company, *société*, trust or succession) exceeds Rs500,000 or if the aggregate amount of deposit in an income year exceeds Rs4 million.”

For this, we have no problem if there is suspicion of drug trafficking, money laundering or even terrorism. But look at paragraph (b)(ii) - Obligation to furnish information -

“Necessary amendments will be made to ensure that the obligation on a person to furnish data and information at the request of MRA for purposes of enforcement of tax laws (...).”

So, now it is for purpose of enforcement tax laws! Paragraph (b) (ii) does not talk about drugs or money laundering.

“(...) will not be constrained by the confidentiality provisions of the Data Protection Act, Information and Communication Technologies Act and the Companies Act.”

So, now for enforcement tax laws, if you do a transaction of Rs500,000 and your turnover is over Rs4 m., like any supermarket, the MRA just ask for all. Now, the MRA is allowed only to ask for interest paid on your deposits without a Judge’s Order, but now they would be allowed to ask for all details of transactions.

Pretexting compliance with the international norms and particularly in strategy to combat drug dealing and money laundering, Government is empowering the MRA to

encroach brutally on two fundamental elements of individual privacy. First - and this is important - on the right to the confidentiality of his bank account, and, secondly, on his right to the protection of his personal data. So, today the MRA under the pretext that you are doing a transaction of Rs500,000, and your turnover is Rs4 m., it can go to that bank and say that it wants all the accounts of this company or the bank has to do it without a Judge's Order. So, we are creating a 'Big Brother'. And when we know of the misuse and the abuse there have been by certain institutions recently for political vendetta, we have to be careful.

This is not necessary because, as I have said, the reasons spelt out in an annex to the Budget, namely drug dealing and money laundering are, themselves, enough. A robust arsenal of power is already vested in the Financial Intelligence Unit and to the ICAC under the FIAMLA and the PoCA respectively. Care and caution have been used to strike a right balance between the necessity to protect the right to bank confidentiality and the need of information for public authorities to carry out their function. The MRA is, by far, not the primary institution having responsibility to investigate into drug dealing and money laundering. MRA's statutory purpose is to administer and collect taxes. It is only marginally and incidentally involved in the investigation of drug trafficking or money laundering.

It is good to note that in the Peer Review Supplementary Report of the OECD under paragraph 112, banking information dealing with availability of banking information on all account holders. The Phase II findings published on 24 April 2014 show that Mauritius was fully compliant. So, if we are fully compliant, why do we have to give the MRA that power? Is it, again, to punish people?

As regards to the derogation to the Data Protection Act to allow access to personal data by the MRA, it is wondered how this measure can be linked up with the collection of taxes. The Act is itself the safeguard for the protection of information and amendments sought to relax this protection is today the least dubious while the reason for this derogation remains nebulous. So, this is, Madam Speaker, another dangerous amendment the Government intends to come with.

Let me say a few words on art and culture because I have been approached by certain artists in my constituency, Constituency No. 1. There is a request that the IBA Act be revised to make it a must on our radios for public broadcasters to have a minimum of local songs produced because nowadays they are only around 8% and 82% of the Copyright money, the cash money goes to foreigners. Apparently, Michael Jackson is still the first one, whilst our

local artist is earning peanuts. So, the Minister of Arts and Culture will have to look into amending probably the IBA Act and impose upon them that they should at least pay ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, why not! You can! You impose upon them whenever you want to broadcast!

Madam Speaker: No, the hon. Member cannot engage in any conversation with somebody who has the floor.

Mr Baloomoody: If you do not want to do it, tell them you do not want to do it. Stand up and say you do not want to do it. Finish!

(Interruptions)

There is also the question that we congratulate Government for giving our sportsmen - although it is the beginning, but I am sure it will increase to come to the sum which my learned friend has exposed - our athletes, but we have to think about artists as well. When they get all these people, they are not invited to sing in hotels. This is what I have been told. They are not invited to sing in hotels or in shows at night. So, we should at least look for a formula for them at their old age to earn a honest living.

As we have given loan facilities for SMEs by the banks, some loans have also been written off. There is a request from the artists to see to it that when they buy their equipment, and they want to renew them, that they have these facilities of low interest, non-guaranteed loan. And those who are indebted be given the opportunity to have all or part of their loans written off as we have done in other cases. So, these are issues that probably the Minister of Arts and Culture can have a look at.

Hon. Gayan is listening to me. Probably, there are artists playing in hotels. It would seem that most of the hotels now have their own in-house group of artists and there are our international artists whom you take with you when you go abroad for international forum. Unfortunately, now they are getting less and less access to hotels. So, probably here again, it's like taxis in the hotels. They have their own organisation, so many taxis, so probably for the artists also an effort could be made towards the hotels so that there is a limit to a quota, how much in five nights. At least two nights, we have national singers and in-house one; anyway, this is a formula which you can work out with these gentlemen. I am just saying about their request.

Now, my last point will be on education. Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Too late my friend!

We all agree that education is a fundamental issue. It is of paramount importance to us, to our children. It is only through education that we can climb the social ladder. But then when we come with reform, one will expect to have consensus and consultation. Education has to be reformed, it cannot remain static. But, unfortunately, this Minister of Education - nothing personal - has a habit of making a practice that she applies something first, takes action, starts to implement, then there is consultation. We have had this with regard to the nine-year schooling. There was no debate in the House. Its consultations started in December, when it was supposed to be in operation in January.

(Interruptions)

The Minister will reply. Please keep quiet! You are not the Minister of Education.

(Interruptions)

Now, concerning Skill development, Rs310 m. announced for training centers, funding for the reimbursement of the UTM, the Université des Mascareignes, etc. Again, what guarantee of cost-effective spending now? Has there been a due diligence with regard to these universities. We were informed that there will very soon be a Higher Education Bill. There is no mention in the Budget. But before we go, putting money here and there, we must do a *constat*. You must have a look as to what are the needs of these universities. We know what has happened with regard to the buildings for the polytechniques. How the Director of Audit was harsh for wasting money and now, when the Director of Audit has intervened to see that we are wasting money, Rs750 m. in infrastructure, equipment and facilities in order to bypass the Director of Audit, and to get parliamentary control out of the polytechnic, a company is formed, Knowledge Park Ltd.

So, when we ask questions about Knowledge Park Ltd., no this is a private company governed by the Statute, etc! This is the reply we will have when we start to be operational. Now, the Minister has answered, because there is not much to say, they are not operational. So, when it becomes operational, we start to hear about things.

Same for the nine-year schooling, it has been implemented, but I hear there are still problems at primary level. But at secondary level, there is much concern. I had the opportunity during the weekend to speak to teachers, managers, students, especially teachers of the prevocational schools. They don't know exactly what will happen to the prevocational schools. And now with the five credits, are we going to close some of the private colleges because they won't be able to do HSC. They don't know what to do with prevocational schools, what will happen to these staff.

(Interruptions)

I am happy you are speaking after me. So, what will happen? There is still much confusion with regard to secondary schools. So, it is important to know where we are going.

But there is one fundamental issue which has not been addressed. Goal 4 - UN Sustainable Development Goal which reads as follows, which was adopted in 2015 –

“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

Number one: ‘inclusive and equitable education’, there is no provision in this Budget to address inequalities in education. For example, no comprehensive plan for Early Childhood Education. ZEP is still being reformed every year with no assessment of the effectiveness. Whilst I am talking of ZEP, what about the hot limb which these people were supposed to have? There is one ZEP in my constituency, Richelieu Government School. Do you know, Madam Speaker, that *manze gate pe donne zot*?

Children of four years old are being given *dipain avec achard*, not even *achard, soya* in the early morning. Soya in their bread, which smells - I have been there personally. At one o'clock, I received a phone call and I went there to smell that bread. Impossible to eat, Madam Speaker!

These children of four years old are probably not aware, they will eat it.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but you have to choose these contractors as rightly pointed out by my friend. *Contracter fane*, but they were not chosen with the consultation of the PTA. The PTA was not aware.

(Interruptions)

Oui, kan to pas ti gagne, pas bizin done dimoune manze manzer puri mo kamarad.

(Interruptions)

Quality education: clear downward trend in CPE pass rates and SC success rates over the last five years with no remedial measures.

(Interruptions)

Okay, you carry on, when you finish...

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member can carry on. He has more than half an hour.

Mr Baloomoody: Yes, I am talking. Half an hour! I have got more than that.

Lifelong learning, again, adult education is totally absent. Communication policy of the Ministry, I have already spoken, it is a total failure. But I can't conclude before referring to the holistic students - that's a really sad story - who were asked to follow courses at the YEP. I think they were a hundred of them and when they were recruited, the hon. Minister went to SARO, she made a speech there, and I quote -

“You encourage us to stay in the programme for YEP on induction day by saying we would have a priority in getting the job. However...”.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: On a point of order, the hon. Member is mentioning something that I have never uttered and I will not accept it.

(Interruptions)

No, on a point of personal clarification, I will not admit that certain words be put in my mouth when they were never uttered!

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: I won't put words in your mouth,...

(Interruptions)

...I will get words out of my mouth!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some order in the House, please!

(Interruptions)

Everybody is tired. It is getting late, so, can we have some order! I have asked the hon. Member he can go on for another one hour also!

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: Now, these people were given the impression when they were recruited by YEP that they will be employed subsequently, and that they will be qualified to be employed in the service. Unfortunately, they don't reach the criteria of the PSC. Only one, not some, in a reply you said 'some'. The hon. Minister, in my Parliamentary Question No. B/276, said –

"As far as part (b) of the question (...) is carried out by the PSC as per approved. I have been given to understand (...)."

They have misled the hon. Minister –

"(...) that some of the YEP trainees (...)."

Not some but only one. So, these people have gone through training and only one has been recruited by the PSC. What a waste of money!

(Interruptions)

For two years, we have spent a lot of money but, unfortunately,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some order, please!

Mr Baloomoody: So, may I ask the hon. Minister to see to it that these youngsters, they have spent their money and their time to study for a specific purpose. I don't know if the hon. Minister has to amend the regulations or what to do, but can she see to it that those who have followed...

(Interruptions)

So, let me conclude, Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

We are here in this House...

(*Interruptions*)

Mo pas presser mwa!

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Take your time!

Mr Baloomoody: We are here in this Parliament, Madam Speaker, for the Mauritian people who chose both of us to bring them to the blooming of the country in every possible meaning of the term. Unfortunately, we have today a Government led by a nominated Prime Minister,...

(*Interruptions*)

...somebody who has not been chosen by the people, who has failed the expectation of our nation and our youth. When we see what is happening in this Government, we can't blame the youth if today they are turning their back on politics, but let me address the youth of this nation telling them that not all politicians are the same. There are still good, honest politicians on this side of the House...

(*Interruptions*)

... who don't believe in *transfuge*, who don't believe in *favoritism*, who don't believe in *petits copains*, who don't believe in wastage of public funds.

Madam Speaker, every time we challenge the nomination of the Prime Minister as Prime Minister of this country, his only reply is: 'what, we have the Westminster system', and he will always refer us to the British Prime Minister, Mrs Theresa May. May I ask him now if truly he believes in the Westminster system, if truly he believes in people of this country...

(*Interruptions*)

who they chose for their Prime Minister...

(*Interruptions*)

...follow the step of Mrs Theresa May...

(Interruptions)

Follow the step...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order or I will suspend the session! If there is no order, I will suspend then for another half an hour!

(Interruptions)

Mr Baloomoody: So, if he believes in the Westminster system, he always refers to Mrs Theresa May, but have the guts, follow what Mrs Theresa May has done in England, dissolve Parliament, go for election and let the people of this country choose the Prime Minister, not the father!

(Interruptions)

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

(Interruptions)

You can take two hours!

(Interruptions)

(11.30 p.m.)

Mrs A. Perraud (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):
Madame la présidente, je dois dire que ce n'est pas évident de parler à cette heure tardive de la nuit devant cette audience mais c'est un exercice sérieux et très important pour le pays.

Madame la présidente, chaque année le ministre des Finances présente son budget. C'est un exercice qui, autrefois, était très attendu et qui suscitait un grand intérêt. Si l'année dernière le grand argentier avait présenté un budget avec de grandes, de très grandes ambitions peut-être parce que c'était son premier budget en tant que ministre des Finances de l'Alliance Lepep ou peut-être parce qu'il était un Premier ministre *in waiting*.

Cette année, nous pouvons constater un contraste dans la forme et dans le fond. Alors qu'il est le Premier ministre, on ne va pas aujourd'hui, du moins pas pour l'instant, discuter comment il a accédé à ce poste suprême à la tête du pays, n'est-ce pas? L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth présente un budget populiste, fade, sans grande ambition, comme dirait l'économiste Pierre Dinan un budget au ras de sol.

Le Premier ministre, ministre des Finances a raté une belle occasion afin de redorer son blason en tant que Premier ministre. C'est un départ raté. Madame la présidente, c'est un budget décevant - peu de mesures pour créer ce *feel good factor*, peu de mesures pour alléger le fardeau des ménages à Maurice, peu de mesures pour faire face aux problèmes sociaux, peu de mesures pour donner l'espoir aux mauriciens. En analysant, en décortiquant ce budget 2017-2018, nous pouvons constater beaucoup de manquements, de répétitions aussi avec le budget de l'année dernière.

Donc, Madame la présidente, ce soir, le temps me fait défaut. Merci de m'avoir donné deux heures de temps mais le temps me fait défaut.

(Interruptions)

Le temps me fait défaut pour présenter mon analyse tant sur le plan économique, social et politique. Oui, Madame la présidente, le Budget 2017-2018 est plus un exercice politique qu'un exercice économique mais un exercice économique raté.

Madame la présidente, on ne peut pas berner la population, on ne peut pas tromper la population. On ne crache pas sur la confiance de la population. Puisque le temps me fait défaut, ce soir je vais axer mon discours sur l'éducation mais là aussi rien qu'une partie du secteur éducatif. Je vais aussi parler de ma circonscription et bien sûr je ne raterai pas de rétablir les faits en ce qui concerne tous les *mentis-mentis* qui ont été dits dans cette auguste Assemblée.

Madam Speaker, let us have a look at what is happening in the education sector. To be able to better understand the situation in this sector, we will have to start with the first budget of this Government, the Budget 2015-2016. Madam Speaker, in the Budget 2015-2016, we read at paragraph 162, I quote –

“I will now come to the issue of education. Madam Speaker, I am providing an amount of Rs14.7 billion to the Ministry of Education to improve the quality of

education from pre-primary to tertiary level, implement the nine year schooling, reform the tertiary sector as well as revamp and adapt vocational training to the new needs of our society.”

However, Madam Speaker, as per Statistics Mauritius, the total Government expenditure for the financial years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 are estimated as follows: For financial year 2015-2016, an amount of Rs124,000,745 of which only Rs15,000,807 which represents 12.7%, has been allocated to education and training.

And, Madam Speaker, for the following financial year 2016-2017, a sum of Rs141,000,739 was spent, of which Rs17,000,468 has been allocated to education and training. We can say, Madam Speaker, that right at the beginning, I mean right from the first budget of this Government, there has been an over exaggeration of figures.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, it is interesting to analyse in detail how the total budget on education and training has been allocated. So, for financial year 2015-2016, 53% to secondary education, 24% to primary education, 8% to tertiary education, 3% to technical and vocational education, a mere 2% to pre-primary education and the remaining 10% to other expenses.

For the financial year 2016-2017, we can see almost the same trend, 50% to secondary education, 27% to primary education, 7% to tertiary education, and the percentage remains the same for technical and vocational education, and pre-primary education, that is, only 3% to technical and vocational education, and 2% to pre-primary education, and the remaining 11% to other expenses.

Madam Speaker, this is where I think things go wrong. *Les chiffres parlent d'eux-mêmes.* The way money has been spent for different sectors, we can see where the Government sets its priorities. Madam Speaker, for 2 consecutive financial years, only 3% has been spent on technical and vocational education, yes a mere 3%. There is a gap, a very big gap between what the Budget 2015-2016 announced and what follows.

Madam Speaker, much emphasis has been laid on the need and importance to, *avec raison*, develop the technical and vocational sector. This good intention has not been translated in reality. *Effets d'annonce!* In the Budget 2015-2016, many paragraphs dealt with technical and vocational education; paragraphs 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 60, 61, where we can read at paragraph 60, I quote -

“Third, the role and functions of the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development (MITD) will be reviewed to put a much greater emphasis on training plumbers, electricians, welders, masons, carpenters, and other technicians for which there will be increasing demand as the ‘*vaste chantier de développement*’ unfolds.”

But, Madam Speaker, only a small, very small budget for this sector, 3%! When we have a look at the Budget of the following year 2016-2017, this determination, this will to review the sector of the technical and vocational education faded away, even though the budgetary measures of the previous year were not implemented. *Effets d'annonce!* In this financial year’s Budget, *on revient à la charge*, a sum of Rs310 m. is budgeted for the upgrading of educational hardware and infrastructure in some training institutions, namely the MITD Training Centres, the École Hôtelière Sir Gaëtan Duval, the Sir Rampersad Neerunjun Training Centre, and Le Chou Training Centre in Rodrigues. And also a sum of Rs130 m. is budgeted to finance the operating costs of polytechnics.

Madam Speaker, let us hope that these measures will really be implemented *et qu'on ne va pas être mené en bateau, comme ce fut le cas pour les 2 années écoulées. Mais on dit souvent: jamais 2 sans 3. Attendons voir!* To remain in this sector, Madam Speaker, another figure which speaks volume, which reflects the situation prevailing in this sector, is the following: We can see that in general in the pre-vocational sector, there is a decrease in enrolment. In 2015, there were 124,197 students enrolled, whereas for the year 2016, there is a decrease. Only 120,944 students were registered in the prevocation sector.

Madam Speaker, this shows clearly that there is a loss of confidence in our pre-vocational system. It is in contradiction with the measures announced in the previous Budget to boost this sector. It shows undoubtedly that Government fails in this sector. In Government Programme 2015-2019, at paragraph 72, we can read, and I quote –

“The MITD will be called upon to position itself as a Regional Training of Trainers Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Southern and Eastern African, COMESA and SADC countries.”

But, Madam Speaker, we are not seeing this happening at all. Madam Speaker, concerning the tertiary education, the tone was set since the first Budget of this Government. The Minister of Finance announced that the objective of the Government for education was to build the knowledge hub of the future. However, there was an allocation of only about Rs1.3

m. and Rs1.2 m. in 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 Budget. This sum was allocated to tertiary education which is in contradiction with Government's vision.

Furthermore, Madam Speaker, in 2015-2016 Budget, the Minister of Finance, at paragraph 58, announced that -

“Government will use the three campuses presently under construction at Réduit, Montagne Blanche and Pamplemousses as follows -

- The Réduit campus will be used to house a Polytechnic which will offer courses in Middle Management, ICT and other ICT-related fields.
- The Montagne Blanche campus will be reserved for a Polytechnic offering courses, mainly in Tourism, and Hotel Management, including cruise tourism.
- The Pamplemousses campus will offer courses mainly in health care for nurses, technicians and trained personnel in the medical field.”

Madam Speaker, these measures were announced in 2015, now we are in 2017. Two years and nothing has been done. *Effets d'annonce!*

In Budget 2017/2018, mention is made again about Réduit Polytechnic at paragraph 134. However, I wonder who will work there as there is no mention pertaining to recruitment of new staff. Again, big announcements regarding those campuses, especially the Réduit campus! On 29 March 2016, in a communiqué from Government website, it was reported that the Government has taken note of developments in the setting up of polytechnics, but this was not implemented. *Effets d'annonce!*

Madam Speaker, figures in the tertiary sector show some alarming trend. In 2015, 50,608 students were enrolled in the tertiary sector, including part-time, full-time and distance learning. 23% of these numbers are enrolled in overseas institutions. This number has decreased to 48,970 in 2016, the lowest since 2012. Madam Speaker, are these figures showing a loss in confidence in our tertiary system?

Madam Speaker, I was very surprised to hear my *colistier* - unfortunately, he is not there - hon. Oree, during his speech, saying that he went on some campuses, he met some foreign students from Africa and India studying here in our local universities. So, he concluded that our Universities are among the best universities in the world. It is surprising how hon. Members in Government have a very special way to judge things and persons. We will all recall how another Member looked into the eyes of a VVIP and deduced that this

person is of good faith and good reputation. Madam Speaker, everybody can have access to figures from Statistics Mauritius. We did not look into the eyes or talked to the students to get the ranking of our Universities.

Moreover, Madam Speaker, the enrolment of students at Open University is on the increasing side. In 2011/2012, 809 students were enrolled at the Open University whereas in 2016/2017, the number increased to 4,750 while other institutions have remained almost stagnant. When the trend is clear that people preferred distance education, so why do we need three new campuses that offer face-to-face education? Clearly, it is against the market needs.

Madam Speaker, regarding the private training and vocational sector, it must be highlighted that there exists close to 600 private training centres approved by MQA, yet the Government has not appointed any Director at the said institution. The MQA has 800 registered trainers and another 2,000 people are employed to work in these private centres, yet the MQA has only four Programme Officers to support and monitor those 600 centres. Does that look close to any kind of international quality standards? Certainly not!

Madam Speaker, in 2015/2016 Budget, it was identified that there were 3,000 *gradués chômeurs* whose training does not match market requirements. The Government promised to retrain them so that they are more employable and it is disappointing to know that out of 3,000, hardly 300 have been trained after two years so far. Madam Speaker, we have noticed some repetition of measures in 2016/2017 and 2017/2018 Budget, for example, at paragraph 270 in this year's Budget, we can read, and I quote –

“Moreover, a new Strategy Paper for the Special Education Needs will be developed and an authority will be set up to harmonise and promote policies for that sector.”

In 2016/2017, the last year's Budget, at paragraph 330, the Minister of Finance announced the same measure. I quote –

“Moreover, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research will come up with a strategic paper to review the Special Education Needs sector in the wake of the 9-year schooling.”

Another repetition, Madam Speaker, is at paragraph 247 in 2017/2018 regarding the Police Training Academy. This Police Training Academy was one of the measures in 2016/2017 Budget at paragraph 202.

Madam Speaker, the Higher Education Bill was announced in the Budget 2015/2016 at paragraph 164. The last time we heard about this Bill was in February 2016 where the Minister, herself, said in ‘*Le Défi*’ that -

“This Bill *est pour bientôt.* »

We do not know when is ‘*bientôt.*’ I hope the Minister will tell the House in her speech when will the Higher Education Bill be ready.

Madam Speaker, at paragraph 129, in the Budget 2017/2018, the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said –

“(...) last year I spoke about our strategy to move towards a fully-fledged digital society. This year we will make further strides to realise this ambition.”

Yet, Madam Speaker, only 47% of our pre-primary schools were equipped with computers. Only 13% in pre-primary and 38% in primary has Internet access. Of course, Madam Speaker, the pupils of Grade I and II are still awaiting for their digital tablets, which was one of the measures in 2016/2017.

Madame la présidente, un autre parent pauvre du secteur éducatif à part la filière technique et vocationnelle est le secteur préscolaire. Je tiens à rappeler à la Chambre que pour les deux dernières années, le budget alloué à ce secteur n'est que 2%. Rien que 2%, Madame la présidente! Ce secteur pourtant un secteur clé reçoit que des miettes. Madame la présidente, la lutte contre les inégalités démarre dès les premières années de la vie. La Banque Mondiale abonde dans le même sens. Je cite –

« Les investissements en faveur des jeunes enfants consentis à travers des programmes de développement de la petite enfance qui garantisse un éveil, une éducation et une alimentation adéquate sont l'une des dépenses les plus judicieuses qu'un pays peut faire pour lutter contre les inégalités, rompre le cercle vicieux de la pauvreté et améliorer les performances d'un individu tout au long de sa vie. Les données recueillies dans différents pays développés et en développement montrent qu'un dollar supplémentaire investi dans des programmes préscolaires de qualité procure un rendement allant de 6 à 17 dollars. »

Madame la présidente, malheureusement, nous constatons qu'il n'y a aucune volonté politique pour aider le secteur préscolaire. Seulement 2% du budget de l'éducation est dédié à ce secteur.

Madame la présidente, si nous voulons améliorer les résultats de l'enseignement de base, surtout pour les enfants pauvres, il faut investir massivement, pas que 2%.

Il faut investir dans des programmes de développement de la petite enfance de qualité, favorisant le développement physique et global de l'enfant, cognitif, linguistique et socio-affectif dès le plus jeune âge. Madame la présidente, les recherches ont démontré que les retards accumulés très tôt sur le plan de compétences cognitives, linguistiques et socio-affectives compromettent la capacité de l'enfant à apprendre lorsqu'il intègre une école primaire et aussi diminue sa motivation. Les recherches ont aussi révélé que les enfants qui accumulent du retard dans les premières années de leur scolarité obtiendront probablement de moins bons résultats, redoubleront ou abandonneront l'école avant d'avoir achevé le cycle primaire.

Madame la présidente, alors que le monde se mobilise, les pays s'engagent à investir davantage dans la petite enfance pour stimuler la croissance à long terme, à Maurice on néglige ce secteur.

L'année dernière, le 06 octobre 2016, lors d'un sommet organisé à l'occasion des assemblées annuelles du groupe de la Banque Mondiale et du Fonds Monétaire International (FMI), le président du groupe de la Banque Mondiale, Monsieur Jim Yong Kim a souligné que, je cite –

« L'engagement de chef de Gouvernement et de Ministre des Finances à combattre les retards de développement en renforçant les capacités cognitives des enfants donnera aux individus comme aux économies les moyens d'exprimer tout le potentiel et, ce faisant, d'éviter de nouvelles crises »

Alors Le directeur général du Fonds des Nations Unies pour l'enfance, Anthony Lake, quant à lui, a déclaré que, je cite –

« Ce que nous sommes en train d'apprendre sur l'ensemble des éléments qui affectent le développement du cerveau des enfants – si leur corps est bien alimenté, si leur esprit est stimulé, s'ils sont protégés contre la violence – est

déjà en train de changer la façon dont nous pensons le développement de la petite enfance. Aujourd'hui, nous devons changer la façon dont nous agissons.»

Madame la présidente, la question qui reste posée est la suivante : pourquoi l'île Maurice ne suit pas les bonnes pratiques internationales en ce qui concerne le secteur de la petite enfance ? Pourquoi le Ministère de l'Éducation traîne loin derrière ?

Madame la présidente, je viens de démontrer à quel point le secteur de la petite enfance est un secteur clé non seulement pour les enfants, pour les familles mais aussi pour le pays, économiquement et socialement.

Alors comment expliquer que depuis de longues années le *Early Childhood Care and Education Authority* n'a pas de directeur. Je disais plus tôt que dans le secteur technique et vocationnel il n'y avait pas de directeur. C'est un *Officer-in-Charge* qui est à la tête de cet organisme si important. Pourtant, nous avons si souvent entendu parler de directeurs de corps para-étatiques avec des salaires faramineux, exorbitants.

Le *Early Childhood Care* ça veut beaucoup dire. *For the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority* on n'a pas jugé bon de chercher the *right person*.

Madame la présidente, comment se fait-il qu'il n'y a pas un département de *Quality Assurance*, de *HR Unit or Early Childhood Care and Education Authority* ? Pourquoi le *Pre-School Regulation* de 1998 n'a pas été revu pour répondre aux besoins de nos enfants de la société d'aujourd'hui. On attend le *Higher Education Bill* depuis deux ans. Et pas un mot sur des possibles amendements au *Pre-School Regulation* de 1998 ! Pourquoi le *National Curriculum Framework Pre-Primary* qui date de 2010 n'a pas été réajusté par rapport au *Nine-Year Schooling* ? Madame la présidente, dans ce secteur on se plaint que certains des superviseurs sont moins qualifiés que les puéricultrices, qu'elles ne sont pas assez formées pour ce travail, alors que les superviseurs sont supposés veiller à ce que les normes soient respectées.

Madame la présidente, au risque de déplaire à certains qui nous accusent du contraire au PMSD, nous préparons nos dossiers, comme l'a si bien dit mon ami, l'honorable Guy Lepoigneur. D'ailleurs, l'honorable Oree lui-même a reconnu que le *Leader* de l'Opposition soutient ses arguments avec preuves à l'appui, et il a raison. Effectivement, Madame la présidente, au PMSD, nous sommes à la bonne école. Le *Leader*, l'honorable Xavier-Luc

Duval nous donne l'exemple du travail bien fait, toujours aller à l'affût d'information, faire des recherches, soutenir nos arguments à l'aide de statistiques, de documents, et, si besoin est, d'aller sur place.

Madame la présidente, j'y suis allée. J'ai rencontré beaucoup de personnes dans le secteur de la petite enfance, les parents, les puéricultrices, les responsables d'école et les psychologues. Ils sont tous unanimes à dire qu'il n'y a pas un plan stratégique pour le secteur de la petite enfance, que de 2014 à 2017 les choses sont restées les mêmes malgré l'introduction du *Nine-Year Schooling*. Il n'y a aucune mesure pour repenser ce secteur. Lorsque j'ai posé la question aux *stakeholders* : est-ce qu'il y a eu consultation, dialogue, atelier de travail en ce qui concerne le *Nine-Year Schooling*. La réponse était qu'il n'y avait rien de sérieux, de façon très marginale, tellement marginale que je ne me rappelle pas. Je cite ce que les gens m'ont dit dans ce secteur.

Madame la présidente, il y a d'autres lacunes à déplorer, telle que le manque de services de psychologues dans le secteur pré-primaire. Le département de la psychologie du ministère dessert aussi le secteur pré-primaire, mais c'est un département squelettique. Il y a trop peu de psychologues pour travailler dans le pré-primaire et secondaire. Donc, il n'y a pas d'intervention systématique. Madame la présidente, les personnes qui interviennent dans les écoles pré-primaires font plus du *Counselling* que de la psychologie, alors que ce qu'il faudrait, ce sont des personnes avec une approche psycho-dynamique.

Madame la présidente, pour résumer, nous dénonçons ce manque d'intérêt du gouvernement, ce manque de volonté politique, de méconnaissance de l'importance de la petite enfance à Maurice. Le secteur est un secteur négligé, abandonné, Madame la présidente. Si nous ne jetons pas les bases, si nous ne construisons pas une bonne fondation, on ne pourra pas régler les problèmes dans le secteur de l'éducation. Donc, nous faisons un appel au gouvernement pour revoir ses priorités. Le secteur de la petite enfance et le secteur technique et vocationnel doivent occuper une plus grande place. Madame la présidente, le loup ne deviendra jamais mouton, tout comme le vautour ne sera jamais colombe. Le MSM n'a pas changé. Au PMSD, nous avions pensé qu'avec le temps, le vin s'était bonifié, que le MSM s'était assagi.

Erreur mes camarades! Chassez le naturel, il revient au galop! Le loup est resté loup et le vautour est resté vautour. Le MSM est resté ce qu'il a toujours été; un masque, une

duperie, une simulation, de belles paroles, des promesses mielleuses, l'art d'embobiner tout le monde. Une fois le pouvoir conquis, grâce au PMSD, bien sûr, ...

(Interruptions)

....le masque tombe et apparaît alors la face hideuse de la vérité. Un MSM arrogant, avide, vengeur, dictatorial, impitoyable et cruel. Le PMSD avait accepté de former partie d'une alliance dirigée par Sir Anerood Jugnauth parce qu'il croyait, tout comme le pays croyait, qu'avec le temps le MSM avait changé. Une fois au gouvernement, nous avons été désillusionnés tout comme la population. Nous avons tous été trahis par ceux qui ont fait du pouvoir une jouissance presque charnelle. Une des nombreuses raisons pourquoi le PMSD a décidé de quitter le pouvoir parce que ce gouvernement - disons pour ne pas utiliser un langage épicé - crache, urine sur beaucoup de promesses faites à l'électorat...

(Interruptions)

....parce que le MSM, ML et transfuges ont dévié du code de moralité que nous avons établi parce que ce gouvernement provoque chez la population déception; parce que ce gouvernement n'a plus le droit moral de diriger le pays. Je vous ai dit, au PMSD quand on parle, on parle avec preuve à l'appui. Je crois que ce soir tout le monde reconnaît ce fameux document. C'est le manifeste électoral : «Gouverner pour le peuple, avec le peuple, l'Alliance Lepep'. Je sais ce que vous allez me dire. Avant que vous ne me le dites, je vous le dis : 'Oui, le PMSD faisait partie de cette alliance'. C'est important des fois de s'arrêter et de voir le chemin parcouru. J'espère que chacun d'entre vous de ce côté de la Chambre, vous avez pris la peine de lire ce que vous avez écrit dans ce document.

(Interruptions)

Ce que nous avons écrit. Je l'ai déjà dit avant que vous le dites l'honorable Roopun. Donc, à la toute première page après le message des *Leaders*, nous avons comme titre «notre contrat de confiance avec la population en 12 commandements». Des mots très forts qui sont utilisés : contrat, confiance. Et la toute première clause nous pouvons lire : 'nous gouvernerons pour le peuple, avec le peuple et dans l'intérêt de toute la nation.' Pas pour nous, ni pour un petit groupe d'amis, d'agents politiques, de copains ou de copines. Qu'avez-vous fait de ce contrat ? Qu'avez-vous fait de cette clause...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No crosstalking, please!

(Interruptions)

No crosstalking!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Thierry Henry!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Thierry Henry!

(Interruptions)

I have called you twice!

(Interruptions)

I am seeing who is provoking! Okay! I can see who is provoking!

Mrs Perraud : Merci, Madame la présidente. Donc, je vous disais qu'avez-vous fait de cette première clause où c'est écrit clairement que vous n'allez pas gouverner ni pour vous, ni pour un petit groupe d'amis, d'agents politiques, de copains et de copines ?

(Interruptions)

C'est tout ce que vous avez à dire. J'ai envie de dire que c'est pathétique. Clause numéro 2, je continue – Nous ferons la politique autrement...

(Interruptions)

....la discipline...

(Interruptions)

Est-ce que l'honorable Gayan veut soulever un point de droit ?

(Interruptions)

Non. C'est bon !

Madam Speaker : No, it is not for you to ask whether he has to raise a point of order.

(*Interruptions*)

If he has to raise a point of order, it is up to him!

(*Interruptions*)

Now, don't confront me ! Please, proceed !

Mrs Perraud : Alors je vais répéter parce qu'il y avait beaucoup de bruit. Mes amis n'ont pas entendu. Je vais répéter parce qu'il y avait beaucoup de bruit. Mes amis n'ont pas entendu. Redire ! Nous ferons la politique autrement. Clause numéro 2 : Nous ferons la politique autrement, la discipline, la transparence, la redevabilité et la gouvernance exemplaire constitueront la règle pour le Premier ministre, les ministres, les députés, que dis-je, les conseillers mais aussi à tous les niveaux dans chaque ministère, organismes parastatiques et départements de la fonction publique. Nous allons mettre en place un comité spécial pour mettre fin aux nominations inadaptées aux postes importants. Nous éliminerons les gaspillages.

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker : Who is provoking now !

(*Interruptions*)

No, you are not provoking !

Mrs Perraud : Je ne vais pas prendre le temps de la Chambre....

Madam Speaker : I know it is late. I know you want to go home.

Mrs Perraud : Je sais que chacun d'entre vous, vous avez une copie de ce document. Je vous assure cela mérite d'être étudié. Je l'ai déjà dit. Je crois que l'honorable Madame Boygah n'était pas là. Et la clause 10, je crois que tout le monde mérite d'écouter, nous légiférerons pour combattre....

(*Interruptions*)

Nous allons donc légiférer pour combattre le transfugisme....

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker : Hon. Gayan, please !

(*Interruptions*)

Mrs Perraud : Clause 10, nous allons légiférer pour combattre le transfugisme à l'Assemblée Nationale et clairement établir le nombre de séances parlementaires obligatoires chaque année. Lors des débats la semaine dernière, à chaque fois vous avez fait des remarques quand les membres de l'opposition – les membres confondus de l'opposition - ont abordé ce sujet sensible. Qu'est-ce que vous nous avez dit ? Que non, nous sommes des transfuges parce que nous sommes venus dans l'opposition. Je me suis dit que ce serait bien que je donne la définition de ce que c'est qu'un transfuge. Alors, un extrait d'un papier du politologue, Catherine Boudet où elle cite Feu Raj Mathur pour définir le transfuge -

“Est transfuge celui qui est élu sous la bannière d'un parti politique et qui subséquemment, change de parti. On se réfère normalement à celui qui quitte l'opposition pour aller au gouvernement, car l'élément déterminant est l'attrait du pouvoir, avec la perspective d'avantages matériels tels qu'un poste ministériel, des emplois pour les neveux et nièces et la famille (...).”

Vous cherchez toujours des transfuges? Quelle honte!

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, if you keep on interrupting, then they will also keep on interrupting! I have said it is already late. I am sure, everybody is tired. We want to finish with these debates. But if you go on like this, do you think we will have time to finish this debate?

(*Interruptions*)

Mrs Perraud: Alors donc, Madame la présidente, j'ai expliqué que ce gouvernement a violé le contrat de confiance, le contrat moral avec le peuple, et que c'est un gouvernement illégitime. Vous avez dit que vous allez combattre le transfugisme et qu'avez-vous fait? Vous avez accueilli en vos seins, combien?

(*Interruptions*)

Cinq transfuges.

(Interruptions)

C'est pour ça que j'ai pris la peine d'expliquer honorable Roopun. Il fallait écouter.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Perraud!

Mrs Perraud: Mais il ne peut pas...

Madam Speaker: I have said several times, I don't think that when I say something...

(Interruptions)

Now, order, please! Order! And allow me to intervene. When I am on my feet, nobody speaks.

I have said that when you intervene and when you are on the floor, nobody can engage in any conversation with any hon. Member. I have said that several times.

Mrs Perraud: Madame la présidente, pendant toute la semaine dernière, lors des débats budgétaires, tous les membres du gouvernement ont exécuté l'ordre de dépeindre le PMSD comme étant un parti communal.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: And the hon. Member starts again!

Mrs Perraud: Mais, Madame la présidente, les mauriciens n'ont pas la mémoire courte. Tous les mauriciens se rappellent encore comme furent traités nos sœurs et nos frères de la communauté musulmane revenant du Akhbari Hajj en 1983. Ils furent accueillis à l'aéroport par des soldats armés ; ils furent fouillés et même déshabillés dans la plus grande humiliation. Leurs bijoux furent saisis. Quelle mortification!

Madame la présidente, c'est ce que vos amis ont fait pendant toute la semaine dernière et on n'a rien dit...

(Interruptions)

Elle me parle...

(Interruptions)

Vous voyez, elle me parle ?

(Interruptions)

On se rappelle encore comment...

(Interruptions)

Il fallait dire ça à l'honorable Seeruttun.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty, did you understand what I said? You did not understand? If you do understand, then you don't have to interrupt her.

Mrs Perraud: Merci, Madame la présidente, on se rappelle encore comment, avec véhémence et haine, le MSM insulta le Coran, que ce livre sacré contient des versets sataniques.

Madame la president,...

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: On a point of order! On a point of order, Madam Speaker! On a point of order!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order! Yes.

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: I think it is totally improper and unethical, and incorrect to impute such motives on a political party and I would ask the hon. Member to withdraw her points.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Thierry Henry! I think you have to go out.

I order you out!

(Interruptions)

I order you out!

(Interruptions)

I order you out!

(*Interruptions*)

Yes please, the hon. Minister had a point of order and hon. Member, let me tell you that I had said and I drew the attention of hon. Gayan to this. I don't want and I will not allow in this House any motive which can be of any communal nature.

Mrs Perraud: Merci beaucoup pour votre *ruling*, Madame la présidente, mais je suis assez surprise quand même parce que j'étais là et j'ai écouté attentivement tout ce que l'honorable Seeruttun a dit. J'étais là et j'ai écouté quand les autres ont critiqué le PMSD en tenant des propos vraiment communaux à l'égard du PMSD, et on n'avait rien dit. Donc, je suis très contente que l'île Maurice va juger.

Donc, un autre exemple. L'histoire, on ne peut pas effacer l'histoire. Un autre exemple, cette condescendance et cette cruauté ne datent pas d'aujourd'hui. Il n'y a pas que BAI et Betamax, Rawat et Bhunjun qui ont souffert. Souvenez-vous de la fermeture brutale de la *Habib Bank*? Après les élections générales de 1983, une communauté, en particulier, fut délibérément ciblée.

Madame la présidente, qui a oublié un certain décembre 1995 lorsque Sir Anerood Jugnauth osa traiter une communauté de démons...

(*Interruptions*)

Madam Speaker: The hon. Member starts over again. I will not allow this!

(*Interruptions*)

Hon. Mrs Perraud...

(*Interruptions*)

Order, please! Silence! I am on my feet! Hon. Mrs Perraud, I have just drawn your attention to this and you seem to, once again, come on this communal motive. I am really sorry, I have told you, I won't allow this!

Mrs Perraud: Merci beaucoup, Madame la présidente, pour votre *ruling*. Mais je tiens à dire, au contraire, je ne suis pas en train de lire ce que j'ai écrit, dépendant du *ruling* que vous avez fait la première fois. Mais si j'ai écrit ces pages comme le font tous les membres de cette auguste Chambre, c'est pour répondre à ce que les autres, les membres du

gouvernement; les attaques des membres du gouvernement la semaine dernière. Oui, madame...

Madam Speaker: No, I will not allow you. I have said and I repeat it again. I will not allow and I will say once more what I have just said, that I had drawn the attention of hon. Gayan to this and now I am drawing your attention for the second time.

Mr A. Duval: Well, Madam Speaker, on a point of order, is it on record that hon. Mahen Seeruttun and hon. Roopun...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, please sit down! Please sit down! Please sit down!

(Interruptions)

Please sit down! Hon. Member, you have been a Deputy Speaker in this House. Don't talk at the same time that I am talking. I wish to draw your attention to Standing Order 41(4) which provides that the Ruling of the Speaker is final and is not subject to any comments and remarks. So, you are not allowed to make any comments or remarks.

(Interruptions)

Mrs Perraud: Donc, malheureusement, Madame la présidente, c'est très dommage qu'il y ait deux poids deux mesures.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, no. Hon. Mrs Perraud, if you continue, you will have to stop your speech. I am really sorry. You will have to withdraw what you just said because what you just said, you are confronting the Chair, you are challenging the authority of the Chair. I am here to apply the Standing Orders, and it is my responsibility to see to it that the Standing Orders, the Rules are maintained in this august Assembly. So, you will have to withdraw what you just said.

Mrs Perraud: Alors comme j'ai un discours à prononcer...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, no. You have to withdraw!

Either you are challenging my authority or you withdraw what you just said, otherwise, I will not allow you to continue your speech!

Mrs Perraud: Donc, je redis, comme j'ai un discours à prononcer et je veux faire mon discours, je vais *withdraw*. Madame la présidente, c'est très, très bien ce qui se passe aujourd'hui.

Madame la présidente, pour répondre au porte-parole, si je peux répondre au porte-parole du gouvernement, l'honorable Etienne Sinatambou, qui accuse à tort le pays et l'opposition de présenter le syndrome de '*narien pas bon*'. Le peuple observe avec beaucoup d'inquiétude une pathologie chez les membres du gouvernement qui nécessiterait une prise en charge urgente. Madame la présidente, la pathologie se présente sous la forme d'un sentiment que tout va pour le mieux, dans le meilleur des mondes, zéro problème.

Semaine après semaine scandale, tout va bien, Madame La Marquise ! Les conseillers, les copains et les copines qui sont favorisés, tout va bien, Madame La Marquise ! C'est ce qui décrit ce gouvernement, tout va bien, Madame La Marquise !

(*Interruptions*)

Si vous êtes l'empereur, je peux être la marquise.

(*Interruptions*)

Madame la présidente, je souhaiterais consacrer cette partie de mon discours à ma circonscription, la circonscription numéro 4 - Port Louis Nord/Montagne Longue. Madame la présidente, lorsque j'étais encore dans le gouvernement, je faisais un suivi sur les dossiers des projets d'infrastructures et de développement dans ma circonscription. En préparant mon discours, j'étais en train de revoir les dossiers et beaucoup de réunions entre moi et mon bureau, moi et mes conseillers, avec la PPS de la circonscription, l'honorable Madame Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus, beaucoup de lettres envoyées, de visites sur les lieux.

Pendant ces deux années écoulées, j'ai veillé à ce que les travaux dans la circonscription bougent. Je suis contente de voir que certains de ces projets ont abouti, ont été réalisés. Toutefois, je déplore que des projets très importants peinent à venir malgré le fait que je milite pour ces projets depuis des années. Un exemple, Madame la présidente, est le *bus terminal* à Crève-Cœur.

Madame la présidente, ce projet est très important et doit nécessiter toute l'attention du gouvernement. C'est inconcevable que ce projet n'ait toujours pas vu le jour. Pourtant un gros travail a déjà été fait. Lorsque j'étais PPS de la circonscription, une lettre en date du 2 avril 2014 de la NDU, et on peut y lire « *site visit carried out under the aegis of NDU in connection with the project. The project will be executed in two phases due to shortage of funds.* »

En tant que ministre de la circonscription en 2014-2016, j'ai continué à suivre ce dossier. Suite à des réunions avec les *stakeholders*, la NDU, la NTA, le TMRSU, le District Council de Pamplemousses que j'obtiens une lettre datant du 9 octobre 2015 du TMRSU et qui se lit comme suit -

“Further to the meeting held on 30 September 2015 under the Chair of hon. Mrs Aurore Perraud, Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, kindly find enclosed the following (...).”

Et c'est là qu'on me donne le plan de cette gare. C'était en 2015. Il y a même une lettre, Madame la présidente, de la NTA datant août 2015 qui parle de l'urgence de ce projet -

“You will note that need for the early implementation of the project is deeply felt as Route 19, Port Louis/Crève-Cœur has been identified as one of the routes to be operated as smart route.”

Aujourd'hui, nous sommes en 2017 et ce projet dort toujours dans les tiroirs. Pendant ce temps, Madame la présidente, les femmes receveurs d'autobus n'ont aucun endroit pour aller se soulager parce qu'il n'y a pas de toilettes et que les habitants sont pénalisés.

Madame la présidente, je fais un appel pour que Crève-Cœur ne soit pas négligé par ce gouvernement. Je vois que ce budget prévoit la construction des centres communautaires. Je suis contente pour les habitants d'ailleurs, mais il y a une nécessité pour un centre à Crève-Cœur. Crève-Cœur est le grand oublié ! Madame la présidente, je lance un autre appel au gouvernement pour qu'on trouve une solution au gros problème d'eau à Crève-Cœur surtout dans la région de Rivalland.

Les habitants de Montagne Longue aussi attendent toujours leur *bus terminal* à Vallée du Paradis. Il est bon de rappeler à la Chambre, Madame la présidente, que ce projet remonte depuis des années et jusqu'à maintenant rien n'a été fait. J'ai des lettres, des *notes of*

meetings, des réunions que j'ai présidées lorsque j'étais PPS, des documents qui attestent qu'un travail avait déjà commencé. Par exemple, Madame la présidente, cette lettre de la NDU datant du 12 août 2014 –

"I am directed to inform you that due to difficulties encountered by the passengers at bus terminal Vallée des Paradis, this Ministry has approved the following (...)."

Et il y a toute une série de mesures qui devaient être prises à la Vallée des Paradis. Madame la présidente, il y a beaucoup de projets qui nécessitent une attention urgente, le *cremation ground* de Les Mariannes, les terrains de foot et vestiaires de Terre Rouge, Morcellement Raffray, Vallée des Prêtres.

Madame la présidente, à chaque grosse pluie, chaque inondation, la circonscription numéro 4 est bien affectée. Beaucoup de maisons sont inondées. C'est pour cela que la construction de drains est très importante. Madame la présidente, la réalisation de la construction du *mini soccer*, du terrain de foot synthétique à l'arrière du centre municipal, Sir Gaëtan Duval, à la Cité Briqueterie est une grande fierté pour moi personnellement. C'est un projet qui me tient à cœur. J'ai fait beaucoup de lobbying pour que ce projet aille de l'avant. Aujourd'hui, c'est dommage que les conseillers du gouvernement *pe declare piti pa pu zotte !*

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker : Hon. Jhugroo !

Mrs Perraud : Concernant les squatters, Madame la présidente, j'aimerais dire haut et fort que c'est Aurore Perraud, que c'est le PMSD qui a œuvré pour que les squatters de la circonscription numéro 4 soient relogés aujourd'hui...

(Interruptions)

Ena so boute ladan la, atane pe vini la ! Li pe vini la !

(Interruptions)

L'honorable Raj Dayal, il n'est pas là, qui était sur le terrain...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, last time! Next time you are out!

(Interruptions)

Mrs Perraud: L'honorable Raj Dayal qui était sur le terrain toute la nuit jusqu'aux petites heures du matin pendant l'inondation du 24 décembre 2014. L'honorable Showkutally Soodhun qui s'était fait inviter à une réunion présidée par le ministre et avait défendu les squatters avec force.

Ceci dit, Madame la présidente, je ne peux passer sous silence ce qui a été dit ici dans cette Chambre par l'honorable Lesjongard et l'honorable Oree. Ils ont accusé à tort le PMSD de ne pas se préoccuper du sort des rodriguais vivant à Maurice. C'est dommage qu'ils font eux aussi parti du club '*menti, menti*'. Madame la présidente, laissez-moi rétablir les faits. Le *Leader* de l'opposition n'a jamais critiqué et pointé du doigt les rodriguais qui vivent comme des squatteurs à Maurice. A aucun moment, il ne l'a fait. Par contre, ce qui doit être dit c'est que Xavier-Luc Duval, le PMSD défend les rodriguais vivant dans des conditions d'extrême pauvreté à Maurice. C'est un fait que personne ne peut nier, démentir que parmi les squatteurs à Maurice, beaucoup sont des rodriguais.

Madame la présidente, lorsque le premier groupe de squatteurs vivaient à Marjolain à La Cité La Cure sans eau, sans électricité, c'est Xavier-Luc Duval qui avait fait installer des réservoirs d'eau potable pour eux. C'est grâce à Xavier-Luc Duval que la région de Robert Scott à La Cité La Cure a été alimentée en électricité. Beaucoup de nos sœurs et frères rodriguais y vivaient sans électricité depuis plus de 10 ans. C'est grâce à Xavier-Luc Duval, au PMSD, la lutte que nous avons menée que les habitants de Marjolain seront tous relogés bientôt.

Et c'est dommage que mon colistier a osé critiquer la présence de ces squatteurs, la plupart des rodriguais présents au Parlement, lors de la PNQ du *Leader* de l'opposition, la semaine dernière. Et c'est grâce au PMSD que les squatteurs de *Behind NHDC*, après des années, plus de 10 ans, ont été relogés à Karo Kaliptis. Et c'est dommage que l'honorable Georges Lesjongard ne se trouve pas dans cette Chambre ce soir, parce que l'honorable Georges Lesjongard nous avait relaté, raconté la mort de cette petite fille, la fille d'Henry. Et il avait fait croire à cette Chambre que moi, en tant que député, que le PMSD n'a rien fait pour ces squatteurs de *Behind NHDC*. Donc, je tiens à rétablir les faits que ces squatteurs avaient été relogés par le ministère, mais beaucoup d'entre eux ont refusé de partir de *Behind NHDC*, là où ils sont.

Je crois que c'est important de dire toute la vérité, et que Georges Lesjongard, quand il a dit que dans la Circonscription No. 4, il y a beaucoup de problèmes, je tiens à lui dire qu'en tant que député, moi-même, j'en ai parlé au PPS de Rodrigues ; aussi à Madame Gaspard Pierre Louis, Commissaire de la Femme ; au Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues, Serge Clair ; d'ailleurs nous sommes allés, ensemble à La Cité La Cure, visiter les familles d'origine rodriguaise, l'honorable Léopold, l'honorable François, le Chef Commissaire et moi-même.

J'ai aussi attiré l'attention de l'ancien ministre de l'Intégration sociale, l'honorable Roopun. Nous sommes partis voir les squatteurs qui sont sur la montagne Paul et Virginie, mais je dois dire que rien n'a été fait, que le problème de ces squatteurs qui se trouvent sur la montagne de Paul et Virginie, est toujours...

(Interruptions)

Justement, je suis contente que l'honorable Roopun me le dit. Et je le dis à cette Chambre - c'est ce que l'honorable Roopun dit ; c'est ce que l'honorable Showkutally Soodhun dit - je ne crois pas qu'il faut dire que parce que ces squatteurs se trouvent sur un terrain privé, point final, point barre, on ne peut rien faire et on ne va rien faire.

Je crois qu'il faut s'asseoir, tout le monde, et trouver une solution pour, majoritairement, les rodriguais qui y vivent. Je crois que c'est important, si vous voulez, si le gouvernement veut montrer à quel point on a à cœur l'île Rodrigues, on a à cœur le peuple rodriguais, je crois qu'il faudrait commencer par les squatteurs de Paul et Virginie de La Cité La Cure.

Alors, j'aimerai dire à l'honorable Georges Lesjongard, quand il a posé ses valises à la Circonscription No. 14, il a laissé les problèmes au No. 4, c'est moi qui ait fait tout pour résoudre les problèmes des squatteurs de la *Behind NHDC* à La Cité La Cure.

Madame la présidente, à l'aube des 50 ans de notre indépendance, l'île Maurice ouvre un nouveau chapitre de son histoire, et entre dans une nouvelle phase de développement à tous les niveaux. Propulsé par de nouvelles aspirations, ayant construit une base solide après l'indépendance, le peuple mauricien, guidé par de nouvelles ambitions, demande aujourd'hui un *leadership* plus à son écoute, un *leadership* de proximité avec qui il peut communiquer sans peur de représailles et de vengeance, qui affronte le défi de demain tout en prenant compte les réalités d'aujourd'hui.

Madame la présidente, nous sommes ici unanimes à constater qu'après 50 ans, notre société a évolué de manière spectaculaire. Maurice de demain avancera grâce à des générations de femmes et d'hommes de plus en plus épanouis, de plus en plus éduqués, de plus en plus émancipés, brisant ainsi les complexes d'hier pour forger une nouvelle société moderne taillée sur mesure, partie prenante de la mondialisation tout en gardant son code génétique, propre à lui-même, une vraie mosaïque mauricienne.

Maurice a besoin d'un vrai mauricien, un *leader* qui inspire confiance en marchant ensemble avec le peuple dans son évolution. Aujourd'hui, comme demain, notre peuple demande à nos décideurs politiques d'évoluer, comme lui-même a évolué. Dans cette optique, seul Xavier-Luc Duval a embrassé ce processus d'évolution avec conviction.

Madame la présidente, évoluer pour enfin faire comprendre à tous les mauriciens *irrespective* de leur communauté, religion et classe sociale, faisant partie intégrante du développement économique de notre nation et tout en rendant les plus démunis leur dignité. Evoluer pour unifier tous les acteurs sociaux et économiques autour d'une table pour construire une société plus juste et toujours écouter pour mieux comprendre les enjeux. Evoluer avec Xavier-Luc Duval et arrêter nos jeunes gradués de s'envoler tous les jours, en prenant leur savoir-faire, vers d'autres horizons au lieu de rester au chômage ou être casés dans des petits *jobs* mal-payés, sans avenir.

Evoluer avec Xavier-Luc Duval, c'est de dire à un jeune, issu d'un quartier défavorisé, qu'un jour il sera un *top boss* grâce à sa passion et sortira sa famille de la pauvreté. Evoluer avec Xavier-Luc Duval, c'est donner espoir qu'une jeune mère entrepreneuse peut se faufiler un chemin dans notre espace économique impitoyable à travers une égalité des chances et encadrement favorisant la discrimination positive, c'est réassurer un père de famille que son emploi est en sécurité en retournant à la maison le soir, et que demain ses enfants vivront mieux que lui...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please!

Mrs Perraud: Evaluer avec Xavier-Luc Duval, c'est embarquer chaque mauricienne et mauricien, sans oublier nos amis de Rodrigues et outre-mer dans une aventure qui ferait naître un sens d'espoir dans l'avenir de demain. Construire une république mauricienne forte,

reconnue à la fois sur le plan régional comme international, car, Madame la présidente, combien de temps Maurice croit échapper aux défis du monde global. Pour réussir ce pari, il faut donc un vrai citoyen du monde. Évoluer avec l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, c'est enfin faire comprendre aux mauriciens qu'ils sont avant tout des enfants sous le même toit de la république: rouge, bleu, jaune, vert.

Madame la présidente, dans cette optique, à travers son passage comme ministre, comme Premier ministre par intérim dans le passé, comme Premier ministre adjoint servant son pays avec respect, dignité et humilité, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, aujourd'hui en poste comme *Leader* de l'opposition, nous montre qu'il est un vrai patriote qui a évolué avec le temps, prêt pour affronter la plus grande responsabilité que tout citoyen peut être appelé à endosser demain. L'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, je vous rappelle encore, est le *Leader* le plus populaire du pays d'après les sondages. Il incarne le modernisme et sera le prochain Premier ministre de cette nation à partir de ce processus dévalué.

Madame la présidente, le peuple évolue avec son temps. A partir d'aujourd'hui, le changement est inévitable et nul ne peut le barrer ou le résister, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval sera le prochain Premier ministre.

Merci, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker : I will now ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun!

(00.47)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by answering to some of the queries of the two hon. Members who intervened before me.

I will start with hon. Baloomoody who seems to be very worried about the YEP trainees. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me reassure the hon. Member that the YEP trainees are not recruited to be on the establishment. They are, as the name implies, trainees who come for some experience. In fact, the intention of the YEP project is to give them the experience so that eventually they may be recruited by the private sector or public sector. As he mentioned himself, only one of them could get recruited through the PSC. Now, the PSC

Regulation is not a thing that is linked to my Ministry. It is something that is overall and we have to abide by same.

However, it is important to note - and I raised a point earlier - that never ever were they given to understand that they would be given a special or a priority treatment. However, I must say that many of the private primary schools will be recruiting holistic teachers and the fact that they have been trained, they will automatically have the privilege of being recruited by these private institutions. The hon. Member also mentioned the Polytechnics. I will come to that in the body of my intervention. I will give explanations to whatever he had queried.

Hon. Mrs Perraud made a long speech on the Education Sector. She started by saying that the amount that we are spending on the preschool sector is extremely low, that the amount that we are spending in the TVET sector is inadequate and she came up with percentages; 2% for the pre-primary sector and 3% of the budget is for the TVET sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we just draw the attention of the hon. Member that when we talk about the budget of the Education Sector, we are talking about Rs16.6 billion and when we talk about 2% of Rs16.6 billion, it comes to around Rs250 m. When we talk about 3% of this amount, it comes to around Rs500 m. It is totally wrong to say that we do not pay attention to these two sectors. I will, during my speech, come on these specific points again.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member stated that nothing was going on well in the Education Sector, that teachers were unhappy, students were unhappy, the preschool *puéricultrices* were not happy, no one in the sector felt that it was going in the right direction. The Tertiary Education Sector, she mentioned, has been given only Rs1.3 m. This is totally wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! She should go back to the figures and check the sum attributed to the Tertiary Education Sector. The University of Mauritius only received around Rs650 m. So, coming to say that the amount allotted to the tertiary sector is Rs1.3 m., it is totally wrong. So, I will not talk about this any further. But as I go through my speech, I will come back to each and every sector that she has mentioned and I will show where she has gone wrong.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, much has been heard in this august Assembly on the 2017-2018 Budget, depending, obviously, upon the party perspective from which it is used. It is true what we say depends on where we stand. The same Members sitting on this side a few months back, now sitting on the other side, had totally different things to say.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is something that many may not have really grasped, although it is at the core of this Budget. I am referring here to the overall overarching title of the Budget, which is 'Rising to the challenge of our ambitions.' This title is apt in more ways than one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For one thing, it reflects a characteristics hallmark of the Mauritius entity, a capacity to be ambitious on one side and for another our readiness to give ourselves the means to realise these ambitions. Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is where our strength lies, the ability to rise to the occasion and to prove wrong the prophets of doom. Who does not recall the pessimism that was highlighted by a Nobel Prize Winner, Margaret Mead? Who can forget the overcrowded barracoon tag latch on Mauritius? But the resilience demonstrated by our population proved them all wrong.

Similarly, we can and we will rise to the challenges of our ambition to make this country a lone star for the region. This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, gives us the means to do precisely that. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget highlights five challenges facing the country as it sets itself firmly on the high-income economy transformation path. These five challenges relate to –

- (i) fostering higher growth for more and better jobs;
- (ii) investing massively in the infrastructure of the future;
- (iii) further improving the quality of life of our people;
- (iv) ushering in a New Social Paradigm (*inspirer une nouvelle vision d'une société juste et compatissante*), and
- (v) consolidating macro-economic fundamentals, that is, *consolider les piliers fondamentaux afin de s'assurer une base économique solide, M. le président*.

Who can deny that education and training are one of the central pillars that will help face and overcome these challenges? Hence, the sustained emphasis this Government is placing on the implementation of the reform agenda embarked upon since 2015. This reform programme is articulated around a set of strategic planks. One of these planks is the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education Programme. Another strategic plank is the reform of the TVET sector and the third is the transformation of a higher education sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last year when the budget was presented, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development laid necessary provisions for the Nine-Year Schooling

programme both for the recurrent and capital budget. As implementation is being effected on a phased basis, the House will note that provision has been made for successive financial years. Indeed, the funding has been spread over five years. *Donc, M. le président, pour ceux qui s'inquiétaient à propos du financement du Nine-Year Schooling, soyez rassuré les fonds sont bel et bien là.*

This year is a watershed year; it is a turning point for our education reforms both for the primary as well as the secondary subsectors. This year, we have done away with the Certificate of Primary Education; we are introducing the Primary School Achievement Certificate, the PSAC as a new assessment at the end of Grade 6. We are now fully poised for the transition of all Grade 6 learners to Grade 7 in January 2018, which is yet another landmark.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will briefly highlight some major transformations that have been articulated and that are to be sustained in the context of the implementation of the education reform.

First, the pre-school subsector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Today, no one can deny the importance of the early years of education and no one denies it. Early childhood development is, in fact, a starting point which will lead to the nine years of continuous basic education reform. My Ministry is already investing in qualitative improvement of education in both the private and public pre-primary schools in Mauritius so that children get to be ready for primary school education.

Let me now give an answer to the hon. Member, Mrs Perraud. She has been saying that we have not been giving sufficient attention to the pre-primary sector. In this very Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance has made it a point to come up with a fund to go to 125 preprimary schools in the deprived areas.

If this is not a critic, what is then, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

(Interruptions)

Now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have just mentioned that a budget of Rs350 m. goes to the preprimary sector.

Secondly, let me tell the hon. Member that from the moment we came into power, we have tried to bring up capacity building in the preprimary sector. The Authority has worked and is still working on a Capacity Building Programme. We have ensured that children profiling is done at the preprimary sector so that when the child leaves the preprimary sector to enter the primary schools, the child comes with his learner profile so that the teacher in Grade 1 knows what type of student is in front of him/her. We have also come up with a School Readiness Programme, where the teacher, using a particular tool, determines whether the child has attained the standard for her to start the curriculum in the primary school.

It is important for people to know that a lot is being done for this sector and when we talk about the preprimary sector, we are doing a lot. And let me tell the hon. Member, she has been saying that we are lagging behind. In Mauritius, from 2015 onwards, we have been chosen as the ICQN Lead (Inter-Country Quality Node) for Africa by the ADEA and Mauritius is leading. We have just had a workshop two weeks back, where many African countries have turned to us to learn how we have improved the preprimary sector and how we are heading in this particular sector.

So, coming to say and to make gratuitous statements that the preprimary sector is not being taken care of is totally wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

And I would like to come back to this, and let me say that the Budget provides funds to give means to reduce the disparity between the preprimary schools and this specially holds good for 125 preprimary schools operating in deprived regions. The provision was served to build the capacity of the staff and to enhance the quality of teaching/learning environment. And this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is demonstrably equity in action and it is only proper that this starts right from the early stages of learning.

We all know that for every dollar spent in the preprimary sector, you will save up to 10 to 15 dollars later because you would not have to go for remediation, you will not have to provide psychological support and many other such services. The trend today is to provide a strong foundation at the level of the preprimary schools to ensure future learning by investing more in the preschool years and this is what we are doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Now, the second plank of the reform, the Early Support Programme. One of the most significant and far-reaching reforms is the introduction of the Early Support Programme for Grades 1 and 2 pupils. A key element for in-time remediation since the very start, this is the means of preventing the accumulation of learning deficits and ensuring retention while also cutting down on drop-outs in the long term.

M. le président, c'est un moyen puissant de diminuer le déficit d'apprentissage et de récupérer les enfants très tôt. On a si longtemps décrié le taux de décrochage scolaire très élevé à Maurice. Et cela, nous le savons tous, c'est dû à l'accumulation des déficits d'apprentissage et finalement menant au décrochage.

Let me share with the House that this Early Support Programme has already started and is already yielding rich dividends.

Cette année, le budget permet le recrutement additionnel de 257 *Support Teachers*. On ne lésine pas sur les moyens, le ministre des Finances, je dois lui dire un grand merci pour cela. Si cette réforme réussit, c'est parce que le Cabinet est en faveur de cette réforme. Si cette réforme réussit, c'est parce que le gouvernement donne les moyens au ministère de l'Éducation pour réaliser cette réforme.

Et je crois là qu'il nous faut...

(Interruptions)

...remercier le Premier ministre et le gouvernement général pour le soutien qu'on a donné au ministère de l'Éducation pour que cela se réalise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk about the Early Support, we need to realise that it is useless to cry after the Grade 6 examinations come. We need to make sure that as many as possible children are kept on the rails and, this, from the very beginning. And I would like, here, to put on record the good work being done by the Support Teachers who were recruited last year. These young teachers have been trained and are working with our students using new techniques, *des pédagogies novatrices* to make sure that these students learn and feel happy being at school and this is being done. This is extremely important to catch them early, to make sure that they do not accumulate learning deficits. This is how we will allow them to succeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Third plank, holistic education, what makes the difference with the introduction of the NYCBE, the Nine Years Continuous Basic Education, is the attention being paid not only to the cognitive development of learners but also the whole person, their integral development. The goal is to have children emerging from the system not only as competent but also responsible citizens.

M. le président, l'éducation concerne tout le monde. Quel genre de personne nous allons rencontrer dans notre lieu de travail, la personne que nous côtoierons sur la route, notre voisin, quel genre de personne nous allons travailler avec. Tout cela dépend de l'éducation et c'est normal que tout le monde, toute la population s'intéresse à l'éducation.

The goal, I have told you, is to make of our children responsible citizens. The Budget gives us the human resources to just do that. I must thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having given us the means, thus the number of trainee primary teachers now moves to 660 as from this year's Budget. The number of holistic education will be boosted to 430 and the present cohort of support teachers now at 53 will move on to 257. If this is not translating intent into action, I wonder what it is!

Education holistique comprend l'éducation physique. With regard to the promotion of physical education, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the adage: '*Mens sana in corpore sano*': 'A healthy mind in a healthy body' certainly holds good here. Thus, to promote the practice of sports activities, we have introduced the *natation scolaire* in 30 primary schools since January 2017 in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Mauritius Sports Council.

Now that the Budget has made provision for four additional *bassins d'apprentissage*, one in each zone, the facilities would be extended to more students in the primary schools so as to make the teaching of swimming skills and water safety more accessible to learners. I must add, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that it is sad that whilst we live on an island *entourée d'eau, entourée de l'océan, chaque année nous voyons beaucoup de jeunes perdre la vie bêtement tout simplement parce qu'ils ne savent pas nager. Et je pense que la natation scolaire c'est quelque chose de formidable qui permettrait à nos jeunes d'apprendre à nager mais qui les protégera aussi.*

Let me inform the House that my Ministry is equally implementing the After-School Sports and Fitness Programme, a well-structured programme launched on a pilot basis as

from May this year and in collaboration, once again, with the Mauritius Sports Council and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. This programme covers some 1,850 Grade 4 pupils in 56 primary schools and 8 in Rodrigues. Obviously enough, the programme is immensely popular. It is accordingly being rolled out in more schools this year.

M. le président, cela devient encore plus important quand nous constatons, comme je l'ai dit, le nombre de jeunes qui perdent bêtement leur vie au bord de la mer, en temps d'inondations et autres.

Again, with regard to holistic education, the development of eco-friendly mindset and behaviour is fundamental. It is precisely for this reason that sustainable development initiatives are being implemented. The campaign 'Clean-Up Mauritius' is a major preoccupation of the Prime Minister himself and, rightly so, there is a necessity to sensitise our children and youth such that concern for sound environment is strongly embedded. As I have said earlier in this Assembly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 181 primary schools and 63 secondary schools have already embarked on the 'Clean-Up Mauritius', and embellishment programme launched in March this year under the aegis of the PMO.

My Ministry has now given the means to extend this programme to all schools. As for the Eco-Schools Indian Ocean Programme, 28 primary and 47 secondary schools in Mauritius and all the schools in Rodrigues are involved.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, la réforme enclenchée touche le cycle secondaire également et ce à partir de janvier 2018. Dans cette optique, mon ministère travaille pleinement à une mise en œuvre efficace de celle-ci. Et là pour répondre à l'honorable Baloomoody, je voudrai dire que les consultations ont déjà commencé. Nous passons à la phase de l'implémentation. La formation des professeurs débute le mois prochain. Tout le travail se fait d'une façon systématique. L'honorable Baloomoody disait tout à l'heure que les consultations avaient débuté en décembre dernier mais ce n'est pas vrai. L'honorable Baloomoody a la mémoire courte. La première des consultations avait été faite en 2015 avec les membres de l'Assemblée et l'honorable membre était présent. Il y avait plusieurs autres consultations.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a number of changes regarding the secondary sector is in the offing. Let us take them one by one. All the learners of Grade 6 will move to Grade 7 in regional secondary schools after the PSAC evaluation. All of them! After three years, they will sit for the National Certificate in Education and at the end of Grade 9, they will have three options. Some would go to the academies; others will remain in their regional secondary schools to pursue their studies and some may even choose to go to vocational training centres.

Now, when we talk about vocational training centres, it is under the MITD. They will get trained. The MITD is doing a wonderful job. I will later come to the figures because I was told that they were not popular. This is totally wrong. I will give the figures to the National Assembly after some time. Now, it is true some pupils would not attain the required standard at the PSAC level. These pupils would enter into a four-year extended stream. This stream will offer an adapted and flexible curriculum that best responds to their new learning needs and their learning pace. Every regional school will have an extended stream class that will not have more than 20 students. Why? So that we can give them more attention! So that we can follow them; provide them with the support required! So that they manage to pass their NCE!

Appropriate approaches have been devised to provide the students with a maximum chance of success including a foundation programme in the first year. During that period, the students will be given appropriate help to regain self-confidence, to build up their self-esteem, to learn, to relate with others and increase their trust and belief in schooling and studies.

Rectors have already been asked to identify those teachers they consider more apt to work with these young adults. This is obviously where the prevocational teachers with their stocks of hands-on experience are better placed for a dedicated approach vis-à-vis these students. So, once again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me reassure hon. Members of the House, as I have done a number of times before, all prevocational teachers would be on board and will be working with their students in schools.

Let me stress, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Extended Stream Programme is different from the prevocational education in two ways. Firstly, it preaches inclusion and secondly, students will all be engaged in a programme that will ultimately lead to the National Certificate in Education which will be properly graded National Assessment. *Le*

NCE sera conçu de la sorte à ce que tous les élèves ayant fait l'effort voulu auront la possibilité de passer et de réussir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another innovation we are introducing as from next year is the Students Support Programme. This programme aims at giving students the opportunity to have free access to the best learning materials that will be online and easily retrievable on digital devices. Students will have the facility to learn at their own pace and place throughout the year after school hours. *M. le président, c'est une façon qu'on leur donnera afin qu'ils puissent consolider les acquis de la journée.* We must not forget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the youths today are digital natives and they will easily pick up and learn through technology.

In a broad manner of speaking, this programme will bring tuition to the home of all the students. Allow me to inform the House that the MIE and the Open University are collaborating and tapping the expertise of the National Council of Educational Research and Training of India for this venture.

Let me now come to the private providers of the secondary education. Again, to allay the apprehensions of hon. Baloomoody, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on several occasions, I have made it a point both inside the House and outside it to allay the apprehensions of the management and staff of grant-aided Private Secondary Schools. No staff will lose his or her job. No school will close down as a result of educational reform.

On the contrary, the right conditions are being created to support teaching and learning in the private secondary schools. Let me clarify, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! The existing practice for pedagogical inspection and quality assurance to be carried out in State and private secondary schools are done by officers of my Ministry.

The PSEA will now be called upon to look into pedagogical inspection and quality assurance in teaching and learning being carried out in the private secondary schools. 16 new posts of Quality Assurance Officers have been created on the establishment of the Private Secondary Education Authority. They will be operating under the national quality assurance framework of my Ministry. These posts will be filled within the next few months.

On the other hand, the PSEA will also be equipped with its own educational psychologists and educational social workers. Let me inform hon. Mrs Perraud that we presently have 23 psychologists and one head of the department at the Ministry. This is

definitely not enough, but we have to do with our resources and these psychologists offer their services throughout the educational sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will go a long way towards addressing the problem of indiscipline in schools, absenteeism and dropouts. All the reforms that I have been talking about so far are directly in line with the SDG 4. They stress the need to ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning.

Two key words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, quality and inclusiveness, and practically all strategic actions in the reform agenda are moving in that direction. In fact, the inclusion of learners with special education needs remains a priority for this Government.

Education is a matter of rights and rights for all. To that effect and as stressed in the Budget, we are working on the strategy document for SEN. In fact, the paper is almost ready. We have a Consultant who is presently working with us at the Ministry; the draft paper has been prepared and it will soon go to Cabinet.

Now, this strategy views inclusion education for every learner across the entire spectrum of abilities as a right and not a privilege. Equally, the infrastructure is being adapted for a barrier free, disability free, friendly environment in secondary schools for physically challenged learners as well as personnel and other stakeholders. We are also making sure the schools are retrofitted with ramps, handrails and have links between building blocks as well as provided with adapted toilets.

I have to thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having increased the budget for the grant-in-aid to Rs115.2 m. and this will go to the 42 NGOs running 54 SEN schools and this is over and above the integrated units that we have in our schools.

I must also thank the hon. Prime Minister for having given this year five scholarships for students with disability to go for higher education, to go for the tertiary sector.

M. le président, j'aimerais bien, à ce stade, dire tout le bien que je pense de ces ONG qui travaillent d'arrache-pied afin de promouvoir l'environnement digne pour ces enfants qui leurs sont confiés. Afin de mieux les encadrer, promouvoir leur savoir-faire, nous venons de l'avant avec une autorité pour ce secteur.

The overarching aim of the authority will be to enhance learners' life chances and opportunities for active participation in society and to build the inclusive society in which

Mauritius ethically aligns itself. The authority will also be responsible for the formulation of norms, standards, regulations and monitoring of all SEN institutions. They will also take care of the training requirements.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reforms in education alone are a huge undertaking. For the sake of brevity, I will just take up some other high points of the *vaste chantier* we are engaged in. Rs590 m. will go for the upgrading of school infrastructure. The digital transformation that was mentioned by the hon. Member, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has already become a reality in our schools.

I believe that right from the primary school level, the appropriate technological tools need to be provided so that our pupils do not end up being just passive consumers of technology. We must not forget that we are dealing with digital natives. Accordingly, a huge procurement exercise is on for the provision of some 1,700 PCs for our primary and secondary schools.

The early digital learning project is a major breakthrough project to expose Grades I and II pupils to ICT. I would like, here, to thank the Indian Government for the grant provided for the purchase of these tablets. We are currently at the tendering stage, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. As for the digital content, it has already been prepared by the MIE and is ready for upload. We are accordingly welcoming the provision of some Rs350 m. in the next budget for the extension of the project to Grade III students.

One of the objectives is to connect our schools and the school community on a single platform. In this context, Microsoft has provided us with the Office 365 platform to enable unlimited online collaboration among teachers, between students and teachers, between schools and between schools and the Ministry.

Another high point is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the collaboration that we have with the Ministry of ICT. We are going to have an e-platform for collaboration again between schools and between teachers.

Another high point in this budget is the increased allowances to laureates. Our education system has always acknowledged and recognised those who invest a lot of efforts and shine on the national and often international scene.

It is a fact that the quantum of allowances provided to our laureates at both graduate and post-graduate levels has not been revised for more than a decade. The last revision, in

fact, took place in 2004. I would like, here again, to thank the Minister of Finance for having taken on board the suggestion of the Ministry to increase the allowances for those scholarship awardees both at national and international level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budget presented by the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance goes a long way to its highlighting the transformation of Mauritius into a high-income country by 2023.

The knowledge economy is the foundation on which every nation seeks to build its progress in the 21st century. My Ministry is, in fact, fully engaged in strengthening the foundation for the future economy by investing in both skills development and high education as a key to boosting growth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to the Africa Competitiveness Report 2017 released in May by the World Economic Forum, skills remain an important barrier for development on the African Continent. The report recognises that in view of growing shortage of technicians, engineers and other high skilled workers, there is a severe risk of skills gap increasing. This is where it becomes vital to invest in the TVET for productive employment and future employability. What does this mean for us in Mauritius? It means that we have to usher a change in mindset, a shift in attitude towards valorising technical education. Scandinavian countries as well as Germany, Korea and Singapore have demonstrated how successful such endeavours have been. This is why the reform in the TVET sector is so wide ranging.

We are rebranding the sector, reviewing its curriculum, upgrading equipment as well as building capacity of trainers and this is why I have been telling hon. Mrs Perraud that she was wrong in what she was saying. We have already got the expertise from Singapore. We are reviewing the curriculum. We are spending on equipment. We are renovating our centres. In this connection, the MITD has sought the assistance of Singapore's Institute of Technical Education Services, a principal provider of career and technical education and a key developer of national occupational skills certification standards.

On n'est pas en train de se croiser les bras, M. le président. Nous sommes en train de travailler. On ne fait pas de tam-tam chez nous. On travaille tranquillement et les résultats seront là.

I would like, here, to mention that revalorising also implies budgetary increases. And, again, I must thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for earmarking Rs310 m. for upgrading educational hardware and infrastructure in our training institutions namely, MITD and the projects that hon. Mrs Perraud was mentioning, *l'École Hôtelière* Sir Gaëtan Duval, Sir Rampersad Neerunjun Training Centre, Le Chou Training Centre, all these are being done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me give you the project status for these projects. *L'Ecole Hôtelière*, an apex training provider in hospitality sector and given the rising demand for trained labour, it is imperative to undergo further expansion to the growing demand for trained labour in hospitality and tourism sector. And let me tell the hon. Member that every year we receive students from Africa, Ghana, Burkina Faso and other countries coming to Mauritius for training at the MITD. Construction work is starting in July 2017 for Sir Rampersad Neerunjun Training Complex.

We have not forgotten Rodrigues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the context of the implementation of the TVET reform, Le Chou Multipurpose Centre is being upgraded to enable introduction of high-level courses pitched at National Certificate Level 4, increase enrolment capacity, provide for more conducive learning environment and for the introduction of new courses in Rodrigues. The estimated cost of construction will be Rs24.7 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to also underscore the need for Mauritius to engage in strategic partnership with renowned foreign training institutions. We have just signed *la Convention de Partenariat* between *La Chambre de Métiers et de l'Artisanat de La Réunion* and the MITD. We have also an active collaboration with *l'Académie de La Réunion* for technical upgrading of MITD trainers, a programme that will run over two years.

Coming to the National Skills Development Programme launched in December 2016, let me tell the hon. Member that the 3,000 people she was talking about who had registered, in fact, only 1,500 registered and many of them had already got employment. Finally, only 800 came for the training of which many have completed and the others are still on training.

Let me state, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the National Skills Development Programme is building solid bridges between the world of work and the training providers in

order to match skills needs of enterprises at the sectoral level. The direct participation of employers and workers together with training providers ensures the relevance of training.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one of the recommendations made by the experts from Singapore pertains to the elaboration of a National Manpower Plan to guide TVET efforts in support of Mauritius economic development. In this context, HRDC is working with *l'Agence Française de Développement* to develop a strategy for human resource development in Mauritius. The policy document will establish competencies, skills that Mauritius requires at present and in the future and the means and strategies to achieve it. So, I must add that the Skills Development Authority will soon be set up. And the Skills Development Authority will have strategic policy objectives: the coordination and planning of the TVET sector, the identification of skills, sustainable financing mechanisms for TVET, regulation of skills development sector, improvement of partnership and coordination, amongst its stakeholders, that is, HRDC, MQA and the MITD.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the Higher Education Sector. For the information of this august Assembly, the World Economic Forum released its Africa Competitiveness Report in May this year. The good news is that Mauritius figures at the top amongst the most competitive countries in terms of higher education and training in sub-Saharan Africa. It is followed by South Africa and Cape Verde.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for his interest and concern about the sector. Let me reassure the House that a number of measures are being taken in the domain of higher education where we also have 65 private TEI operators. Measure number one taken up by hon. Mrs Perraud, the Higher Education Bill, let me inform the House that the legislation has already been prepared and has been sent to the State Law Office for vetting and will soon land on the Table of the Cabinet. The proposed legislation has already been forwarded, as I have said, and it will bring up the setting up of the Quality Assurance Agency, the Research Fund distribution mechanism and many other issues.

Now, the second measure in the sector refers to s. Much has already been said about the ranking of public universities. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has been saying a number of times: 'This is the rank of the Mauritian universities', notwithstanding the fact that these universities, especially the UTM, were set up some 17 years back only. It is common

knowledge that the improvement of a university ranking at the international level is usually dependent on two factors:k quality of education and conduct of research.

Research especially leads to the improvement of both the level of the lecturers as well as their teaching methods. Again, we have to thank the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having provided my Ministry with the means through the Research Fund to start promoting our portfolio of scientific research. Officers of my Ministry and those of TEC are already working on how best to operationalise this important Budget measure.

The Mauritius High Education Desk is also being set up. It is worth remembering, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that transforming Mauritius into an education hub rests on sound and even aggressive marketing campaigns to recruit international students. In this regard, a dynamic Mauritius High Education Desk will be set up to showcase the higher education landscape in Mauritius.

The hon. Member was just mentioning that she was surprised that hon. Oree had mentioned meeting foreign students in Mauritius. It would appear that the hon. Member does not really know what is happening in the tertiary sector.

(Interruptions)

You mentioned foreign students; you were wondering where they come from, etc.

So, this is what I have to say. The medical colleges are filled with foreign students coming from South Africa and from India. In the tertiary institutions at Médine which is not a public university granted, in l'Université des Mascareignes, in UTM, you have students coming from abroad and getting into these institutions. Obviously, when she talks about the declining number of students entering the tertiary sector, I would ask her to just have a look at the demographic trend as well.

The number of students leaving the tertiary education sector last year, the number of students leaving this year, and the number that will be leaving next year would also be declining. We have only 12,000 students who have entered the primary sector this year in Grade I. So, obviously, there is a declining population, so this trend will be reflected on the number of students leaving or entering institutions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So far from losing its attractiveness, our tertiary education sector is, in fact, drawing and attracting more students. The Mauritius High Desk that I was talking about will also

disseminate information and provide the advice to those local and international students on high education opportunities in Mauritius. I must also say that we would need to ensure that information given on Mauritius on Air Mauritius, for example, should include information about our tertiary education sector. Mauritius is poised to becoming an educational hub, regional or even international one.

We must not forget that people send their children to us for studies for various reasons; the intercultural experience that you have in Mauritius cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Mauritius is known to be a safe haven, isn't it? The safety also attracts students to Mauritius and, on top of that, you will find that most of the British Universities coming to open their doors in Mauritius, are also trying to tap the students from the African Continent. We all know that every year there are African students entering the tertiary education sector. And we can definitely tap on this clientele.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is also interesting is that we have been discussing with foreign universities to see how best we can collaborate. We have been discussing with Australian universities, with the university from Reunion Island to see whether we can move on to having shared modules, where modules offered by the University of Mauritius and those by the University of Reunion could be recognised and could be accepted by the two different institutions. We are making the first steps towards trans-border recognition of qualifications. And this is something wonderful that we can do in terms of research possibilities jointly with Reunion Island, with the Seychelles in terms of papers that can be written, research on linguistic domain. So, lots of things can be done together with the foreign universities and we are moving in this direction. We are talking about multi-campuses. Certain universities get their students moving from one campus to the other to provide exposure to these students. This is what we also can do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to the polytechnics. I have heard Members of the Opposition stating that the Director of Audit had mentioned that there is wastage at the level of the polytechnics. What they do not know is that the polytechnics were, in fact - as mentioned by an hon. Member - brand new campuses that were initially meant to be rented to foreign institutions coming to Mauritius by the former Government, by the former regime. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are dealing with the needs of this country. We all know that this country requires middle management, high-level technicians for Vision 2030, for the

implementation of the economic pillars and this is the reason why these campuses have been converted into polytechnics.

With regard to these buildings, one of them was ready towards the end of 2015 and the other two were completed by April 2016. We did not sit back and rest. We have been working with foreign institutions; we have been developing the curricular. In a few weeks' time, we shall be starting courses in nursing, along with MIH at the polytechnics in Pamplemousses. For the ICT, I will come to it. I will tell you what we are doing. So, do not think that we did not do our work!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the concept of polytechnics, it seems, is still not clear in the minds of many people. So, let me take it from scratch. One of the complaints of industry for a number of years has been that graduates coming on the labour market do not have the skills that the industry requires for immediate employability, despite the graduates having an appreciable level of education. We are now working with industry for the development of the curriculum to ensure the relevance of the courses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, within the next two years, polytechnics will produce highly skilled middle management level professional staff. And these polytechnics graduates will be ready for immediate employment; they will be meeting exactly the needs of industry. This is the *modus operandi* of our polytechnic education which is called upon to help Mauritius bridge skill mismatch gap and gear Mauritius and its economy towards new heights in the near future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have opted for some of the best collaborative international partners of repute from Canada, New Zealand for the fields of Tourism and ICT.

On the other hand, we are forging ahead, as I have said earlier, with the Ministry of Health in the nursing field. Other technicians for the medical sector will also be trained. Courses related to green energy, engineering related fields and new and emerging sectors in the tourism sector are also being pursued. Additionally and as announced in the Budget, courses related to robotics, big data and the internet of things will soon be launched at the Réduit Campus. We are already actively seeking international partners of high repute to help in the conduct of these courses. We are also envisaging having co-awards. Finally, polytechnics will also be a pathway for students who would have followed MITD-run programmes so that they can move to higher education and higher national diplomas. I must

say that the polytechnics will welcome students having completed their SC and HSC as well. We are also carrying out tracer studies to ensure that the training provided is adequate and we are also identifying the areas which need to be done.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there was a PNQ on the UTM and they were complaining that the infrastructures are not proper. Now, the UTM has started operating in the year 2000. From the year 2000 to year 2014, no one saw that there was anything missing or lacking at the UTM. But as soon as we came, we started bringing about changes, and, again, you will note that we have been à l'écoute. The best education or marketing or research will all fail if the students are not happy in their learning environment. In this regard, this Budget shows that Government is attentive to the needs and demands of our children. The decision to provide a special Infrastructure Fund to revamp the infrastructure of our public tertiary education institutions starting with UTM is more than laudable. We are aware that no student will enjoy studying in inadequate and less than suitable surroundings. I have met personally the students and I have noted that whatever they were asking was *légitime*. And in a matter of weeks, we settled this problem. Obviously, we gave the boost that was required and we ensured that the students got what they needed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is pledging that we will, over the next few years, upgrade the infrastructure of public TEIs in keeping with the international ambition of the country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to consider that in the tertiary sector, co-awarding, collaboration with other institutions should be the word of the day.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for bringing up the issue of career guidance and career education. This allows me to set the record right. Just because it has not been mentioned in the budget, it does not mean that it plays second fiddle in the hierarchy of Government actions.

We are fully aware of the need for the youth to be better informed about current and future labour market needs, to be aware of the ecosystem within which they will make career choices at various stages of their life. Work is already on for the development of an integrated career counselling system. This will widen access to career awareness, career education, career information and career management services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must not forget that students today are being trained for careers, for jobs that have not yet been created. So, we need to make sure that they get the

proper counselling. That is why we are talking about the reforms. We want the students to adapt to the evolving world. ICT enabled instruments will also be used to deliver this information in a far more reachable, flexible and cost-effective manner. The services of a UK-based consultancy firm have been enlisted to the attempt and the consultants are working on a strategy to set up contextually relevant career counselling.

M. le président, bien que ce budget ne soit pas axé uniquement sur l'éducation et la formation, il y a d'autres mesures qui valent bien leur pesant d'or et je faillirai à ma tâche si je n'ouvrirais pas une parenthèse ici pour en parler même brièvement.

M. le président, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth nous a offert un budget qui nous prépare pour un avenir rempli de grandes possibilités. Sa vision est claire: une meilleure qualité de vie pour le peuple, une nouvelle société basée sur l'équité, une économie stable et florissante tournée vers la modernité. J'ai suivi attentivement les interventions des membres de l'Opposition. Je ne parlerais pas que de ceux qui ont parlé aujourd'hui, mais je parle en général. C'est décevant de constater qu'ils n'ont guère saisi la portée même des mesures annoncées. Prenons quelques exemples!

The negative income tax, l'impôt négatif sur le revenu est une mesure qui promeut l'effort. Celui qui fait l'effort, celui qui travaille et qui perçoit un salaire faible bénéficiera du soutien du gouvernement. Les salariés percevant un salaire mensuel de moins de R 10,000 obtiendront une subvention de l'État allant jusqu'à R 12,000 l'an dépendant de leur salaire et cela si le revenu total du foyer ne dépasse R 30,000. Selon nos projections, ce sont quelques 150,000 personnes qui devront en bénéficier.

M. le président, il s'agit là d'un outil extraordinaire qui désormais nous permettra de mieux lutter contre la pauvreté, de réduire le chômage et d'augmenter le pouvoir d'achat des milliers de travailleurs à Maurice, qui puisaient les incitations à l'effort et à l'emploi et à la productivité sont plus que jamais maintenus. L'introduction du *negative income tax* demeure une mesure que je qualifie sans hésitation d'historique et de pragmatique.

Deuxièmement, l'exemption fiscale chez les employés de maison. On le sait tous, la plupart de ces personnes travaillant principalement pour des particuliers ne recevaient pas de fiche de paye. Désormais, avec cette incitation, les employeurs seront encouragés à enregistrer leurs employés de maison ce qui représentera un win-win situation avec l'exemption de la taxe de l'employeur et la possibilité d'une pension à l'employé à la retraite.

M. le président, on parle là des milliers d'employés de maison que ce gouvernement est en train de permettre d'intégrer le système formel. Déjà la classe syndicale à Maurice se réjouit d'une telle mesure. Je prendrai toute une liste, le maintien des subsides sur le gaz ménager, la baisse du prix de la farine, les logements sociaux, le recrutement des personnes dans le secteur public. M. le président, le gouvernement, dans son élan à combattre la pauvreté à travers le pays depuis 2015, fait de nouveau cette année-ci, provision dans le budget de nombreuses mesures pour doter les familles en difficulté d'un toit décent. Pour le logement social, un montant de R 6.8 milliards y est prévu. Il serait bon de faire ressortir que depuis 2015, plus d'un millier de maisons étaient construites et qu'actuellement 1,248 maisons sont en voie d'être complétées. La situation de plus de 250 squatters a été régularisée et le gouvernement se penche en ce moment sur le cas de 140 squatters et une somme de R 225 millions est prévue à cet effet.

M. le président, dans notre démarche vers une meilleure distribution de richesses, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances est venu avec un *Solidarity Levy* qui aidera les plus vulnérables. Pour la première fois, une personne avec quatre ou plus de dépendants à sa charge aura son *income threshold* pour la taxe amener à R 550,000. La liste des mesures que contient le budget affectant positivement la vie quotidienne de chaque citoyen est bien trop longue, et je m'arrête ici.

Si l'opposition semble sceptique, la population, elle, se rend compte que ces mesures sont très louables. M. le président, l'attitude de l'Opposition reste triste, décevante et navrante. Ceux qui disent que rien n'est bon, insultent l'intelligence des gens. Le syndrome comme dirait mon camarade, l'honorable Sinatambou, '*narien pas bon*' semble les toucher énormément. Je leur demanderai : mettez-y un frein ! Prenez un peu d'hauteur ! Car il y va de votre image et de votre crédibilité même. Comment peut-on venir sans relâche brosser un tableau pessimiste et caractérisé par une morbidité aussi extrême ?

M. le président, c'est inacceptable ! Certains membres de cette Chambre sont même allés jusqu'à prédire que le *Metro Express will kill people on roads*. On est même allé jusqu'à exprimer le souhait qu'il y ait des *riots*, émeutes dans le pays. On a même incité à la violence, M. le président. Dans cette auguste Assemblée, j'ai entendu des déclarations gratuites et ahurissantes. À titre d'exemple, certains n'ont cessé de marteler: jeunesse en perdition, génération perdue, ONG, pitié, parmi d'autres.

M. le président, de par le langage tenu par plusieurs membres de l'Opposition, c'est clair, il semblerait, qu'il souhaite qu'il arrive malheur au pays. On parle du chômage. On parle : 'Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement a fait pour la création de l'emploi ?' Et là je voudrais dire - tout à l'heure, l'honorable Baloomoody me demandait : 'Qu'est-ce qui est arrivé aux personnes qui touchaient R 1,500 par mois?' Laissez-moi le rappeler que l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo était venu avec une mesure. Ces gens-là touchent déjà de l'argent, et si je ne me trompe, dans les environs de R 8,500 par mois. Deuxièmement, vous avez mentionné qu'ils sont des employés du ministère de l'Éducation, ce n'est pas le cas. Ce sont des employés de la PTA que le ministère de l'Éducation est en train de travailler maintenant pour trouver une formule pour les aider.

(Interruptions)

On arrivera avec une solution, mais ce ne sont pas des employés du ministère. Il faut le dire.

Maintenant, parlant de recrutement, le nombre de personnes qui ont été recrutées depuis que nous sommes au pouvoir par le secteur public est énorme. J'ai dit bien énorme parce qu'en comparaison avec ce qui s'est passé pendant les 10 dernières années, il n'y a pas eu de recrutement. Laissez-moi donner des chiffres. Parce que semble-t-il, vous faites beaucoup de recherches, laissez-moi vous donner des chiffres ! Si je ne parle que de mon ministère, nous avons, l'année dernière, recruté 347 *Secondary School Educators* et dans ce budget nous avons prévu 210 autres. L'année dernière, nous avons recruté dans le secteur primaire 591 *Trainee Teachers* et dans ce budget nous avons prévu 477 autres. Si je prends la liste de *General Workers*, l'année dernière nous avons recruté dans les environs de 300 et cette année nous allons procéder au recrutement d'à peu près 300 autres. Je parle que de mon ministère. Je ne parle pas des autres ministères.

Déjà là nous voyons un montant extraordinaire. Laissez-moi vous dire qu'est-ce qui s'est passé dans l'ancien régime? Le nombre de *Secondary School Educators recruited* pendant 10 ans: 101. *The number of primary school educators recruited:* 112. Et vous là ! Et on vient nous dire qu'on ne fait pas de recrutement.

Je ne vais pas reprendre les chiffres. Il y a plein de chiffres, si vous allez continuer à suivre, vous allez voir il y a plein de personnes que nous avons recrutées dans le secteur depuis notre arrivée.

M. le président, venons maintenant à Agaléga, M. le président, le projet d'une piste d'atterrissement à Agaléga vise un développement futur de notre territoire. Si ce gouvernement est allé aussi loin dans sa démarche en vue de maintenir sa souveraineté sur l'île Chagos, c'est que nous tenons à tout prix à sauvegarder notre territoire dont Agaléga.

L'honorable Bodha vient d'expliquer toutes les démarches entreprises par le *Mentor Minister*. Aujourd'hui, venir trouver des dessins sombres et des *ulterior motives* aux intentions indiennes, c'est vraiment aller très loin. L'honorable Bodha vient de le dire, quand nous parlons d'Agaléga, nous sommes en train de penser au développement touristique que peut proposer cette île. D'ailleurs, si je ne me trompe, il y a quelques années de cela on en parlait déjà entre 2000 et 2005. Ce que nous faisons nous autres c'est que nous passons à l'action, nous ne gardons pas des projets en l'air. Et là avec l'aide de l'Inde, nous allons sûrement réussir. Je demanderai aux membres de l'Opposition de bien suivre l'exemple de l'ancien *Leader* de l'Opposition, l'honorable Paul Bérenger, qui lui s'est félicité de la démarche indienne.

La population, M. le président, a des attentes, le gouvernement en est conscient et agit en conséquent. Sombriter dans la démesure, faire de la surenchère et de la démagogie sont à éviter à tout prix et ne vous font guère honneur. La population vous juge, n'oubliez pas elle vous regarde.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me come back to the education and training portfolio once again. I believe it was Victor Hugo who said, and I quote –

“Il n'est rien au monde d'aussi puissant qu'une idée dont l'heure est venue”

In Mauritius, education and training have come to occupy a central stage in the psyche of the population. The people want to see societal transformations and they know it is the education and training system that can give an accelerative thrust and translate intent into reality. People also want to see a system that is at once inclusive and equitable. People equally expect to see youth being prepared for jobs that exist today and jobs that are called upon to emerge tomorrow.

I have endeavoured to demonstrate how my Ministry is doing all that and more. I will now seize the opportunity to express my warm gratitude and thankfulness to the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for giving me and my Ministry the means to serve the

children and learners of this country. The various measures enunciated in the Budget demonstrate his concern for the well-being of the nation, his determination to blaze new economic trails and his commitment to fulfil the vision of the Republic. I must congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for this endeavour. This Government and this nation are all with him and all the way.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have no lessons to learn from people who have themselves gone out of their way to put their hands in the coffers of this country, and to spend it and waste it shamelessly. So, let me end by, once again, quoting Victor Hugo –

“No force on earth can stop an idea whose time has come.”

Thank you for your attention, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baboo!

(2.00 a.m.)

Mr S. Baboo (Second Member for Vacoas & Floreal): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, thank you for giving me the opportunity to talk on this Budget. This year, we have been gifted by the Ministry of Finance with a Budget described as ‘Rising to the Challenge of our Ambitions’.

Unfortunately, with all due respect to the Minister of Finance, the view of the population is rather a paradoxical one. We cannot see any economic vision of this Government behind this Budget, but only fancy words, some touching based on a few populist social measures which are more of a propaganda and manifesto for the forthcoming General Elections.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my colleagues have spoken vastly on the measures proposed in the Budget. I would like to have some time to talk on a few proposed measures regarding water supply, electricity and road infrastructure. Firstly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the 2 MW Solar PV Farm which will be set up by the CEB, that is, Green Co. Ltd at Henrietta by March 2018, it is aberrant, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that a region like Henrietta, region falling under my Constituency, such an extremely humid region, with low sunlight intensity, has been chosen by this Government to set up the CEB Solar Farm of 2 MW.

Solar Farms go through a rigorous planning procedure before they are approved, where the suitability of the specific site is taken into account. Also as per best practice, Solar PV Farms should be set up on a non-agricultural land or land which is of lower agricultural quality. However, Henrietta is one of the wettest humid regions of the island and which has also the most fertile agricultural land.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, maybe we are wrong in our thinking, I would therefore request the concerned Minister if he could please table to the House in due course the project details, feasibility, sociological studies so that the House and the population can understand the reason for setting up such a Solar Farm in one of the coldest regions of less sunlight intensity of the island and its project life.

This Government has also made a pledge to provide water on a round-the-clock basis. In the last two Budgets, big fanfare has been made on long-term and short-term projects regarding the water system. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certain areas of my Constituency, which has the highest rainfall and the biggest reservoir of the island, are suffering from inadequate water distribution.

My constituents are outraged as it has become a trend for them that during rainy days, water distributions are completely interrupted due to CWA water pumps being out of order. On this side of the House, we would request that all the realised projects by this Government - not the one started by the previous Government - be tabled for us to understand the current situation.

I am sure my colleagues from this side of the House as well as from the other side should be having the issue of concern raised during their surgeries. We cannot pretend not understanding the plight on such a vital and essential element by the people who elected us. My two running mates - well they are not here - hon. Bodha and hon. Sinatambou will surely recall our electoral campaign in 2014. They will recall how we were convinced to solve the water supply problem of our constituency and the country's development priority, an issue of concern which topped the electoral manifesto of l'Alliance Lepep as just said by hon. Mrs Perraud.

Hon. Bodha, I am sure, would recall how he himself complained against the Metro Express project and was promising *de l'eau 24/7* to our people and, at the same time, the then

hon. Leader of the Opposition was having a special meeting with Mrs Sushma Swaraj to explain to her that the Metro project was not a priority for the country.

In the very first Budget of this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, paragraphs 128 and 129 mentioned, and I quote -

“Water is a basic human right. Some countries such as South Africa have even enshrined it in their Constitution and offering a certain level of water supply free of charge.

This Government fully subscribes to this philosophy. Therefore, every household in our country will be entitled to at least 6 cubic metres of water per month free of charge. The new Utility Regulatory Authority will be responsible to implement this decision.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what has happened to this proposed measure after two and a half years of tenure of this Government? Where is the Utility Regulatory Authority, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This Government approved the amendment to the URA Act 2015 for the constitution of the URA Board in September 2016. Let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that after two and a half years, it is this budget now which is making provision for the staffing and functioning of the Utility Regulatory Authority. This is what happened with this Government for all their projects, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir; putting the cart before the horse. We doubt if this Authority will be result-oriented if it comes into operation or whether it will be additional wastage of public funds as we are getting used to with this Government.

With the political interference of this Government in all affairs and even for the recruitment of staff of parastatal bodies, instead of putting competent, apolitical people in the right place and recruiting from the masses, they are choosing from their people. We beg this Government, in this modern era, to forget the old school and to promote a spirit of equal opportunity and the concept of meritocracy where all professionals, the masses can have their chance.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come now to the proposed measure regarding road infrastructure. Unfortunately, we hardly see any new measure being announced in this Budget. The construction of the Jumbo roundabout and the A1-M1 Bridge keep repeating itself in every budget of this Government. In this Budget, for instance, we see the proposal for a flyover to connect directly M1 to the Terre Rouge-Verdun Motorway in order to

improve traffic fluidity in and out of Ébène. One thing which we find odd is why the super mega project of Metro Express misses a crucial strategic area like Ébène Cybercity, our booming financial and business centre on its *tracé*. But instead they are coming with the fixed *tracé* of Curepipe to Port Louis when Ébène is where the officers of Port Louis are migrating to the Ébène Cybercity area; they are suffering more and more from traffic congestion nowadays.

The hon. Minister has tried to resell a dream to us today which I would say an emotional visionary speech on this Government's Metro Express project. But I think he has completely overtaken our rising public debt in his speech. Hearing him, I am more perplexed with all the projects *en chantier*. We fail to understand the priorities of this Government in alleviating traffic. We heard that a third lane is being built from Bois Chéri to Grand Bassin. I sincerely doubt if we have any congestion problem or any urgent problem in that region.

The Metro Express Project which had started in fanfare with its big launching ceremony itself costing Rs7 billion is a hard pill to swallow from this side of the House and the population in general. It is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the Metro Express Project that this Government can bring its most nonsensical project to fool the population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we undertake such huge developments, make such financial criss-cross with the easy money of friendly overseas helping hands with undoubtedly strategic interest while our public debt is dangerously looming the red zone of 60% of our GDP?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government made big announcements in the Budget 2016/2017 on Public Sector Reform Programme in his endeavour to promote more efficiency to adapt fast to change the merger of CIB, CISD and the IT Security Unit; the merger of ICTA and IBA; the merger of MRA and Registrar General. Nothing as of now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! But the merger that was done *en temps record*, express, I would say, approved by the Cabinet and set up within two months was SPDC, BPML, SLDC and so on, regrouped under Landscape Mauritius which is being run by their people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was made to understand that directors of some parastatals were not being appointed because of these proposed mergers announced in that Budget.

Currently, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the NTC, the FSC, the DBM, the SIC, the SMEDA, the ICTA, the NCB and le Morne Heritage Fund are still operating without a

Director or CEO. With all the fuss made on the proposed mergers in the last Budget and with the only premature born Landscope, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development intelligently did put disclaimer clauses in this Budget to shield the non-implementation of the major Public Sector Reform Programme.

If we look at page 50, paragraph 319 of the Budget Speech 2017-2018, you will see the tactful disclaimer exercise made. Paragraph 319 (ii) states -

“The NDU and the 35 Citizens Advice Bureaus are being reorganised with the on-line Citizens Support Portal;”

Are being reorganised!

“(iv) Public sector bodies, including DBM, that have been loss-making under the previous regime have submitted their turn-round plans and they are currently being implemented.”

Currently being implemented!

“(vi) A Broadcasting and Communications Authority Bill is being finalised to merge the Independent Broadcasting Authority and the Information and Communication Technology Authority.”

Is being finalised!

“(viii) Ministries have already been empowered to recruit directly consultants and contractors for projects of up to Rs25 million.”

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what are these Ministries? What are these projects? We don't know!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we would like to understand how this Government would be bringing the reforms, it is so hardly pledging, if it is not putting the right people in the right place.

We have heard so much of the top advisers, the politically dominated people of this Government who are heading our parastatals, some acting as brokers and some treating themselves as the most privileged and terrorising staffs as we are currently seeing at the STC.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we note that the measures of this Government, which are targeted for the vulnerable, are for the far future: the minimum wage, the negative income tax, the social housing, only 300 houses under construction for the NHDC by this Government. We cannot see any strategies, plans by the Government for poverty alleviation and decreasing inequality traps. The Marshall Plan, on the table, since 2015, it is to be seen nowhere. When found, and if found, it would have become nearly obsolete.

My hon. friend, Adrien Duval, during his speech, has made a very realistic description of the alarming drug problem for our youth. I am sure that the other two MPs of my constituency, hon. Bodha and hon. Sinatambou, would agree on the devastating effect drug is having in our constituency, especially in the vulnerable areas. We cannot curve reality; it is a truth today that drugs are bombarding the *cité* or so-called *résidence*, the vulnerable areas. The most alarming problem is that these drug consumers, the prey of small children of 12 years of age and above.

Hon. Adrien Duval rightly enunciated that the problem is emanating due to lack of social activities for these youth. Drug dealers are roaming freely in these regions. We are also having the problem of Policemen, as mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, being unable to enforce the law due to lack of equipment and training. Policemen, who are rather using the easy way and turning a blind eye during the patrols, I am sure, this Government also wants to eradicate this *fléau* which is affecting our youth. We would, therefore, urge the Government to work hand in hand with the NGOs and come forward with short-term and long-term plans and strategies in order to eliminate this alarming problem which is invading our society and to save our youngsters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, every year, the Minister of Finance comes to the House with a Budget Speech, but we can only assess a budget upon its implementation and execution. If we take the last two Budgets of this Government, the first one taking the population on a lunacy ride, with its mega projects, SMEs, *Ile Maurice, Nation d'Entreprenuers*. But where are these projects, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? As the Leader of the Opposition rightly said: “*Guet la dan! Zero!*”

Unfortunately, I doubt if the population remembers if there has been a second Budget as the content of the same has majorly been eclipsed by the *fameuse mesure* regarding the amendment of the Banking Act for the transfer of the investment banking business to the FSC in order to accommodate the controversial Mr Alvaro Sobrinho. But I must say that we have

all been fascinated by the budget of my good friend, hon. Lutchmeenaraaidoo: 'Mauritius at the Crossroad'. After two and a half years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we stand still at the same crossroad where hon. Lutchmeenaraaidoo left us.

The population has been waiting since then to see these promises materialised after two and a half years, but nothing! *Miracle économique*, I would say: 'Keep waiting, my friends!' Not by this Government for sure! I think the population is more than fed up. We are now at a stage where the people cannot absorb most scandals and are more disgusted with all the false promises of this Government. The then Minister of Finance had also stated, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I quote -

"Our system for transparency and good governance is also at the crossroad. Do we stay with the present system characterised by opacity that breeds corruption or do we go all out for a cleansing that will inject more meritocracy, transparency, good governance in the management of public affairs?"

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is this Government doing apart from blaming the previous Government for their malpractices? After two and a half years in power, I think it is high time for them to forget the past and start being accountable for their actions.

What we are seeing with this Government is more corruption, bad governance, total opacity in State affairs management, blatant political interference, abuse of power, no meritocracy and full nepotism. Yes, you have your chance, but only if you are part of the lucky clique of a few families, political agents, boyfriends and girlfriends. History talks for itself and the population can no more be fooled. The MSM has never been known for meritocracy but one protecting its own people and interest.

Going further, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2015/2016 also mentioned, and I quote -

"(...) we plan to abolish a total of 70 - yes 70 permits and licences that have become obsolete, and irrelevant."

Nothing heard! The new invention now, in this Budget the Government is coming at paragraph 52 of doing more to facilitate business, and I quote -

"To eliminate inefficiencies and duplications in the licensing processes, BOI will carry out a business process reengineering on more than 125 licences and permits where some 14 Ministries are involved."

I am telling you again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government is taking us for a ride. For our youngsters, our future generation, their education, no measures apart from upgrading infrastructure, refurbishments, or financing of operational cost. I am sure that the Minister of Education - unfortunately, she is not here - has at heart the good interest of our children and their education, but we cannot find short-term measures in the Budget to upgrade the situation. What are this Government's plans to decrease unemployment among young graduates and school leavers?

We are in a situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where the country is saturated with young graduates and mismatched jobs. If we go with the same tendency, you would agree that we are getting into a precipice and we must act quickly. If we want to ensure the employability of our young people, there should be career guidance and workshops starting from lower secondary classes to ensure that our young people choose the right subjects and a job career-oriented future. Also, educate them to get into training, internships, educating them in taking a satisfactory low-income job at the beginning of their career and undertake a proper growth plan. Nowadays, we are having a white-collar job youth generation, who are overconfident, more inclined towards getting financially sound at the very start of their career, instead of going through a normal growth path where they have gathered the necessary experience, knowledge and are fit for the job. This, unfortunately, creates an increase in frustration, poor performance and untapped talents of the youth employable population. You will note that for those frustrated youth, in not getting the job and the salary of their dream, they are being inclined to going for further postgraduate studies, a way to kill time until they land in their perfect job which is creating more chaos in the youth graduate employment market.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now talk a bit about the proposed measure at paragraph 321 relating to the institutional reform in establishing the Mauritius National Investment Authority in order to invest locally the surplus funds of the NPF and NSF of some Rs130 billion. This measure is a terrifying one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I will explain to you why.

We see that the funds and the Authority falling under the aegis of the Ministry of Social Security would now be the responsibility of the Ministry of Finance. I have the impression that the latter Ministry is on full search for a State-owned milking cow. I am sure the population and Members on this side of the House are very keen to know as well how will this Authority be set up and function and in what degree of transparency will these

investments be made. For instance, we would also like to know who will be heading this Mauritius National Investment Authority. Will it be one of those political nominees, top advisers? Will it be putting the hard-earned money of our people to the mercy of these gluttonous, hand-picked people? How can we rest on our laurels, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thinking that the hard-earned money of our *classe travailleur* will be in the hands of this Government?

Government, with a record of gross mishandling of State affairs within the shortest timeline, the same bad decision-makers who are behind the crash of an investment group like BAI which, instead of curing the BAI liquidity problem by having a hand through the regulators to control any suspicious or Ponzi-like activities, but instead decided to, without second thought, revoke the banking licence of Bramer Bank. The population has been witness to the lack of transparency in which the BAI affairs had been handled. Authorities have been acting like puppets in the hands of this Government - lack of transparency by these authorities and no clarifications for not delaying the revocation process in order to reinstate the liquidity issue and the possibility of recapitalisation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everything was done *en catimini* until political interference was exposed where we could see how this Government could stoop so low. Close friend *pe amuser lor asset BAI lor le dos 5000 victimes!* One good example is that that friend was so lucky to be the best bidder for the acquisition of 43 vehicles and spare parts of IFRAMAC.

Now, you have to get ready to pay the damage and interest of Rs200 m. No, we are the ones who are going to pay and suffer for this Government's malpractices, the population and the taxpayers! Now, tell us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how can we trust this Government in the investment of NPF/NSF surplus funds? This same Government which is being compelled to pay Rs5 billion for Betamax for its incompetency in decision-making, for its overconfidence, or maybe arrogance, to even go against the advice of the Solicitor General, the cancellation of this Betamax contract without proper planning and advice, consequences which we are seeing now.

Adding on that, we are now hearing a possible case of legal action by the CEB against STC for not honouring the sales agreement for crude oil entered between these two parties, situation which may have been caused by the sudden termination of the Betamax contract where the STC is finding itself not having the capacity to secure the required stock of crude oil for the CEB. Therefore, in such a situation, what else can the STC do than contour the

specifications of the sale agreement and supply in crude oil of 380 centistokes with a high sulfur content of 3.5% instead of 3% which is causing accelerated degradation of the two Sulzer engines at Fort George? Even Wärtsilä, the maker of these engines, has confirmed as per the Press that this engine degradation is being caused by high sulphur content of crude oil.

We know that my friend and *colistier*, hon. Sinatambou, the spokesperson, the guardian angel of this Government is very busy with all the responsibilities put on his shoulders. However, this is a serious matter. The use of crude oil with high sulphur content may have significant impact on public health and our environment. For public interest, we would urge him to take some time to investigate the matter and take prompt actions to counteract any negative impact.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming to the financial aid, we have received from the Indian Government and which is being injected in projects development as proposed in this Budget, on this side of the House, we have nothing against India, our big brother. But, unfortunately, the easy way is being used again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to digress the attention of the population. This time, the Opposition, especially the PMSD, being shamelessly targeted and forcefully criticised for being communal and racist! They are using communalism, cheap politics to cover their scandal laden *bilan* and trying to tarnish the image of the hon. Leader of the Opposition in the run.

All the religions, ethnics, *le vrai mauricianisme* are represented in the PMSD, one of the oldest political parties, but with a modern mindset. The integrity of hon. Xavier-Luc Duval cannot be questioned, a self-made man *ki pa guet figure, un homme de principe*, a true politician with true idealism and surely not an *assoiffé de pouvoir*, a man elected first in Constituency No. 18 of Belle Rose/Quatre Bornes in the last two general elections, being one of the most or the most multi-ethnic constituencies of this island. What else they say? *L'opposition souffert syndrome 'narien pas bon'*. How should we call these scandals then? Should we also get into the game of cover up? We have been elected by the people and are liable to them for their votes. What else do they say? That we are anti-India!

Let me remind you that I had fully supported India for their dossier on yoga at UNESCO in November 2016 for it to be inscribed on the representative list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. I was then Minister from the same PMSD party under the same leadership. We were not racist then! We were not anti-India then! I believe Members on

the other side of the House should take the advice of hon. Bhagwan seriously and get out of their insulated incubator of VIPSUs and agents and walk around. You should be shocked to know the stance of the population on this Government.

Coming back to the financial aid from India, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, India with which we share cultural ties, has always given a caring and attentive ear to our needs, and for the well-being of our citizens. We cannot forget its help in the infrastructural development of Mauritius. Further to the end of the DTA agreement between Mauritius and India, Mauritius has been and will be facing huge loss from this decision, and India is therefore compensating Mauritius in the process. We note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Budget does not make any provision for the offshore sector, after cancellation of this DTA agreement. For the safeguard of the jobs of our young professionals, in this particular Budget, the aid from India had been immensely referred to the Government's proposed project development. A line of credit amounting to USD 500 m. from India for the proposed infrastructural projects, which is described as having been received on very concessional terms.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is clear that India is not dupe and will just give us grant when they themselves have their own internal problems to solve. We are all aware that India has increasingly high aspirations in the Indian Ocean with its continued focus on its Act East Policy. India's Maritime Strategy, which is a six-fold strategy of increasing its naval spending, strengthening its infrastructure, increasing its naval capabilities, active maritime diplomacy, exercising in the Indian Ocean as a regional power and keeping open the talk-points. So, it is clear geo-economic and geopolitic strategy, it is soft-balancing with the United States. India hopes to secure its own position against the assertive rise of China, and a growing Chinese challenge in the Indian Ocean. This is the reason why several countries like Myanmar, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Seychelles and even Afghanistan, just to name a few, are benefiting from free aid and massive injection of funds through a line of credit from India. There have been PNQs and PQs raised in this House on the Agalega issue. We sincerely hope that there is no cover up by this Government on the future of Agalega. That there will be no surveillance base for India built there, which will convert this peaceful region into a vulnerable one.

I would conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, by saying that the Government should implement, execute whatever it promises in its Budget, instead of turning the page and projects disappearing in the air; big ordeals being made on the Metro Express by this Government, risking such a capital outlay with uncertain financial viability. We are having

blatant political interference in our institutions. We are still awaiting for the ICAC investigation on rum and sugar. We were expecting a fast track investigation and trial on the record drug burst in the Port, while the primary suspect is seeking immunity and he is benefiting enhanced protection from authorities. Fact-finding Committee on the ex-Director of the Trust Fund for Specialised Medical Care, Fact-finding Committee on the ex-Director of the IBA, just to name a few, as there are too many.

On the other hand, we are having ICAC and other authorities being instructed to investigate on those from this side of the House, trying to divert the attention of the population from their *frasques*. Not to forget their *mainmise* in the Sobrinho affair; instruction and participation from the highest level of the State. My colleagues of the Opposition have spoken amply on this and the subject has been highly debated in this House. The Government cannot fool the population anymore on this issue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the National Audit Report 2016 has also discernibly confirmed several areas of deficiencies and non-effective utilisation of the public funds. We, on this side of the House, would be more than happy if Government could implement its promises in the best interest and benefit of the population, for our children and the future generation. We want this Government to be accountable for all its actions instead of burdening the population with leadfooted amateurism, trying to brainwash the population each time their malpractices are out of the box. Scandals surfacing week-in, week-out for this Government, and it is becoming a routine now for the population to see the awesome threesome making their show on the MBC news to reassure comfort and playing the victim vis-a-vis the population.

And before I end - my good friend, hon. Bodha has come - I just want to come on the vessel of Red Eagle, because I, myself, was having company in West Africa of shipbreaking. I have studied vessels in India as well in Port Alang. He was talking about the vessel of Red Eagle. Red Eagle of Betamax is of capacity 75,000 metric tons, and it carries fuel, that is, Jet Fuel, Diesel super, whatever, of 64,000 tons to Mauritius. So, it is carrying less, and...

(Interruptions)

Let me talk, my friend, please! And its draft for this vessel to berth is 13m, whereas the Port here is 14.5. He is saying this vessel has many compartments; it cannot bring heavy fuel oil, furnace oil, whatever in so and so compartment. No, this vessel was built in 2009, and it was

made especially for carrying different types of fuel, that is why if a vessel cannot travel, if it is dangerous, it will not get a Sea-Worthy Certificate. And this is being given by Lloyds, but these 2 vessels that have done the service for STC to bring fuel to Mauritius; these are 20-year old vessels. And by Swiss standard, a vessel should not be, you can say, more than 15 years old. And the last vessel that just delivered to STC has gone for shipbreaking at Port Alang.

And the other point is - I know he was Leader of the Opposition, he was talking about R 1, he talks a lot, we are the Opposition, we will say a lot also, no, but it happened that my good friend, hon. Rutnah made a big mistake on 13 m., whatever. If a family, a day, buys 10 breads, he is saving Rs1 per day.

(Interruptions)

Per day, I am talking, please. Per day, he is saving Rs1.

(Interruptions)

100 cents make Rs1. My friend, you go and learn Mathematics first yourself. Then, in one month it makes Rs30. Rs30 today in Mauritius, what can you buy? Not even one pound of fish.

Anyway, let me end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! I would end by saying that their blame game will shortly be over. Their days are counted as the population cannot be fooled further. With this, I thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo!

(2.45 a.m.)

The Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Mr S. Lutchmeenaraidoo): M. le président, le marchand de sable est passé, nous sommes toujours là. Je vais vous dire une chose. Il y a une heure j'avais sommeil, j'aurai parlé 10 minutes. Maintenant que je n'ai plus sommeil, je vais parler.

Nous sommes sur le point de clôturer les débats budgétaires. Je peux vous en parler j'ai fait une dizaine. Et à la fin de chaque budget, je me suis dit: '*What next for our country?*' C'était la question qui m'a toujours poussé à réfléchir à l'action, aux paroles, à notre volonté et à notre vision sur tout de ce qu'on pense du devenir de notre pays. J'ai fonctionné pendant

très longtemps sur la base de paramètres prévisibles. Tout économiste fait des projections sur la base de paramètres sûrs. C'est la première fois, dans ma carrière où je peux vous dire une chose, que les paramètres qui m'ont permis de faire de la projection ne fonctionnent plus. Qui aurait pensé, il y a deux ans, que l'Alliance MMM/Travailliste qui était portée par une vague furieuse et qui allait rapporter 60-0 et que cette alliance s'est retrouvée sur des récifs et que les deux rescapés, mon vieil ami, le Premier ministre adjoint et moi-même qui étions deux perdus du système se sont retrouvés finalement, nous, au gouvernement. Personne!

Qui aurait pensé qu'il y a quelques mois que le PMSD - avec mon ami, Xavier Luc Duval - avec qui on a fait campagne il y a à peine deux ans, parlant le même langage, se retrouverait aujourd'hui avec un groupe dans l'opposition et l'autre au gouvernement. Je ne juge pas. Je me pose les questions. Qui aurait pensé il y a à peine deux ans que j'ai été élu avec Sir Anerood Jugnauth sur une plate-forme promettant un miracle économique et qu'à peine un an après, je me retrouve comme ministre des Finances et mené à l'ICAC non par l'opposition, mais mené à l'ICAC par un de mes propres collègues avec, bien sûr, quelques soutiens. Je ne vais pas au sommet de l'État, mais dans le sommet des institutions de l'État.

Personne! Lorsque je vous dis: '*What is next for our country?*' *I mean it.* Nous sommes entrés dans une période où l'électorat, qui est en train de nous regarder, se pose la question : 'mais qu'est-ce qui se passe? Est-ce que nous avons été élus pour chercher nos gains personnels ou bien est-ce que nous sommes entrés en politique parce que nous aimons notre pays; parce que nous avons la passion de ce pays? Nous avons la passion de la population et nous pensons *that Mauritius can live better with us*. On l'a fait ensemble. Je suis entré en politique en 1975. J'ai 40 ans de politique. Donc, je ne parle pas parce que je viens de la dernière pluie. Donc, il y a quelque chose qui est en train de changer que personne dans cette Chambre ne peut ignorer. Nous sommes en train d'emprunter des chemins les moins utilisés, *the less used*. Nous sommes en train actuellement de courir le risque de créer dans le pays une psychologie de doute, une psychologie de gens qui disent : '*Where are we going? What is next for our country?*' Excusez-moi, je donne ma langue au chat moi-même aujourd'hui parce que si je n'ai pas pu prévoir tous ces grands événements il y a deux ans, qui vous dit que je peux prévoir quels seront les événements dans deux ans qui viennent.

We are depository of this country, of the destiny of this country whether it be the Opposition or Government, I mean, everywhere. I have been with you there. I have been with you here. I have been everywhere. I have been with the Labour Party also. So, do not speak of politics of ideology with me. Let us speak of the country! Are we doing the right

thing for Mauritius? I am not here to judge. I am just trying to find a way through a situation which is not that easy.

So, the first question which I put myself is this - we have gone through three budgets: Has this Government fulfilled its commitment? Is this Government going on the line of its strategy? Has the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in the third Budget of this Government, followed a clear strategy? I will say to the House I have no doubt that we are following since 2014 a very clear policy. Based on what? You know policies, philosophy, vision change with time, and what was true in the 80s might not be true anymore. So, when we took over Government, we had to say: let us see how. Hon. Baboo, with reason, said that in the first Budget I used these words: 'We are at the crossroad'. I never said: 'We are at a crossroad' which means that we can come out of it easily. I said that we are at the crossroad. Either we make it or we do not make it.

Number two, we said that we are taken in the middle-income trap. Middle-income trap means that we have reached a level of development, but the growth rate is just stagnating at a rate where we cannot move further up. This is a trap. Most countries that have been in the middle-income trap could not come out of it and ended up drifting along the way and finished in not a beautiful way. So, the crossroad was mostly this. The middle-income trap means that all the sectors of the economy we have, are playing their role beautifully whether it be the sugar sector a long-time back, the EPZ, the services sector, you call it. When you add together the growth of all those subsectors, you come to an anaemic growth of 3%. With these 3%, we are doomed. So, in the first Budget, we said we need to reinvent our vision of the future. Reinvent the vision of the future was not easy and was easy also. It was easy because what were asked of us is that we generate energy, we generate growth, in new subsectors of the economy.

The Budget spoke of one thing. We said – 'look here,

- (i) we are at the crossroad;
- (ii) we are in the middle-income trap;

And this is my conviction, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

- (iii) we are a nation of genius. I will never stop saying it.

In 1968, the Meade and Titmuss Report said that this country would become a failed State, which meant, therefore, that, after independence, Mauritius had no chance of emerging as a nation, as a State. We did it! We did it because we had in this country people who had

the guts, the vision, the courage and imagination to do it. We survive the most difficult crisis through this capacity of the nation of behaving as one. If we are admired today, in the whole of Africa, it is because we have achieved what they are trying to achieve. Even in the depth of the 1983 crisis, I said we should not give up. That was very tough because the Government just split, March 1983. We split for multiple reasons, but it ended up in one thing that we were at the centre of a major crisis, whether in terms of unemployment, reserve position very low. You call it we were all in the red. You need to believe in what you are doing. You have to believe in what you are saying. If you do not believe in what you are doing, you will never convince others that you can do it.

This is a dream. Dreams are made of ideas which at one time mature because people start believing in them. In 1983, we would have put 20 vessels in this Port; most youngsters in this country would have left this country because they are fed up; because they have given up. They said: 'There is no longer any prospect for us in Mauritius.' This is 1983. Maybe the Government was very good. My friend, hon. Anil Gayan, who is here, was with me at that time. But I have in deep humility said one thing that whatever we did was by the grace of the Lord. We were very lucky.

Secondly, all what we did was because we had a nation that needed to be convinced that we can stand on our feet and survive. So, there was no miracle. I would remove this world of miracle from my mind because miracle is made by the people, by the nation, miracle is made by hard work, miracle is made by sacrifice. Miracle is made because we have the bright idea, the right ideas at the right time.

So, in 1983, we came forward with the right people, the right team, the right ideas and the whole thing just moved together and the nation became one. We emerged from a country with a huge unemployment of 20% to full employment four years later. We moved from a country with 2 weeks' reserve to a country with 45 weeks of reserve. We moved from a country deeply indebted to a country 5 years later paying back its commercial debt in advance. All euros were paid in 1988.

I did not achieve it, neither Sir Anerood Jugnauth, neither this Government. We did it because we were one and what I am saying today is exactly the contrary, is that we are putting together all the spices you need for things not to work. So, today I have listened to all of you, I think that if we have made it in 1968, I think that if we have made it in 1983, there is no reason why we do not make it now. So, in the first budget, I came with a new vision for

Mauritius based on things which looked obvious, expanding our economy with 3 new pillars which will become, in the next 50 years, the most important sectors of development, highest contribution to GDP.

Firstly, the Ocean Economy for obvious reasons, I think my friend spoke of it just before me, saying that we have 2.3 million km² of maritime hub, we are an ocean State. We are not an island, we are not a small country, we are an ocean State of 2.4 million km².

Up to 2015, we have said we have to think, conceive and vision the future on the basis of a small pebble thrown in the ocean, hardly 2000 km². All the sectors were built on the basis of this small country. We came and we said: 'Forget the small country, we are an ocean State.'

Ocean means not only seafood; ocean means also protection of what we have inherited. Ocean State also means probably that we learn how to exchange information, protect it against disaster. But we are the owner of 2.4 million km² of ocean. That is huge. So, this is no.1, the new pillar of the new economy, the ocean economy, the blue economy.

Number 2, we say, well, let us give to Mauritius, - what you just said before - let us give to this country the title that it has always had of being the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean. Let the Port, the small port of 1 km become a maritime hub, the largest in this region and pretend then to develop, bunkering to develop, cruise to develop, fishing in a big way, to develop also the freeport and to enlarge our business, with whom? And this is number 3.

The third pillar is the Africa Strategy. In 2015, very few people believed in it. They said: 'Oh, Africa is not for tomorrow, probably.' But then we said it is a strategy which is very homogeneous, the ocean, the Port development and the continent which is our future. The question is whether we are following on the same strategy. I am confirming today that the Prime Minister and Ministry of Finance made a budget which goes exactly in the direction that we define. Therefore, we are very coherent when it comes to this.

Have we made a few steps forward? I will say yes! In this year 2017, we hosted in this country the AU Conference organised by the foundation of the AU for development of the private sector. Huge conference! We have proposed that the same conference be held next year. A few weeks back, we received a series of delegations from Africa, which we never received before. We have been signing joint commissions with many countries with which we are going to work.

The Africa story could have been a non-starter. Do you know why? It's very easy to have projects. In fact, when we are defining a joint commission with Ghana, we are speaking of an agenda with a series of projects where Mauritius will play a role. But we are not speaking of one million dollars, we are speaking of billion dollars of investment which we don't have. So, the story can only work if those projects in Africa find the finance, find the investors. We started speaking of corridor. We spoke of air corridor because there need to be communications and we have started with it from Singapore, we had an agreement with Changi Airport, which is not bad. But I think more and more now that probably Mauritius will have to accept that the hub will not be in Mauritius, the hub will be in Africa, probably in Nairobi, in Kenya and from there split and send the people around Africa in regional airlines.

The question was: 'Could we find enough investors at a time when the financial sector was being threatened by the end of our DTA with India?' So, we say: 'How can we be the right platform, the right connecting link between those who want and those who had and want to invest?' And this is how it worked out so beautifully. I always say it is God's grace. We can't take the honour of saying that this is me and not you. Because what happened is that the road just opened for the South East Asian Corridors, financial corridors to open one by one. My colleague, the Minister for Public Infrastructure, just mentioned the visit of a Japanese industrialist. In fact, we received this week 27 industrialists from Japan with the opening of the Japanese Embassy who have said they want to use Mauritius as a platform for Africa. They said it, we never proposed it. We went to China. China is an incredible story also because when we went to China, the whole story of the belt-and-road means for Mauritius that China has agreed that Mauritius will be the stepping stone, will be the platform for transmission of finance from China through Mauritius to Africa. They have gone much further. They have said that they are going to establish their regional headquarters now in Mauritius to invest in Africa.

And the third story which we all know about is India. India has moved in an incredible way and will become probably together with China and Japan, three major financial corridors transiting through this country. All the Funds will go through Mauritius, through SPVs, number 1 and number 2, Mauritians will have the opportunity of going in joint venture in those dozens and dozens of projects we are working with Africa. I think that the Africa strategy project is working.

The ocean economy is based on one thing: sustainable fishery. Recently, we found that yellow Tuna is threatened and we went with it. We said let us reduce fisheries production by 15%. 15% was reduced because we also feel that we need to protect this ocean and make what it produces sustainable. And in the Maritime Hub that we are developing at Bain des Dames, there is a 1.2 km of quay going in the sea that can host 18 fishing vessels all the time.

We are in the process now of discussing with Brussels to see how we can have the right agreements to reduce poaching, to reduce piracy, to reduce those who are fishing illegally in our waters and, on the other side, to see how we can best establish bilateral or regional agreements for fisheries. Fisheries, *fruits de mer*, will be a major source of revenue for this country. So, as at to date, I say my concern is no longer the vision which we have for the future. We have it! I do not fear the future. I fear the most, our division. I fear the most our incapacity of being coherent all the time on what we decide. This is why I put myself the questions when I see what has happened to all of us here. Moving from Opposition to Government, from Government to Opposition, and then, I say we have a problem.

Now, we cannot expect an electorate to trust us if we cannot create trust in them and the way we are behaving does not create trust. The risk is do you know where? Governments will be changed every six months in this country. People will be fed up with all Governments. They might not be right, but they might be right also because, finally, there is *une rupture* between the electorate and the Government and the political class. I do not say party. We have reached this point now where either we reinvent ourselves, and in reinventing ourselves, I think we have to stop playing this game of being a Government who is the father and the mother and the grandfather and the grandmother, who promises everything.

I was listening the last time - I have spent my life working for the poor because I believe in it. It is not just compassionate. It is a deep belief which I have, if we cannot share... So, when my friend, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval put the question on making something illegal legal, that is, those who are occupying lands illegally that we make those occupiers of State lands legal occupiers, I put the question to myself - and my hon. friend here was trying to please all of us saying that he will do his best - but I put the question today, I say: "Is it the right road that we have to follow?" Confucius said rightly: 'Don't give me a fish to eat which lasts one day, teach me to fish.'

The poor do not need our charity. The poor need that we learn them how to stand on their feet. This is what we have to learn. Respect them! We cannot say that because they are

poor, they need to be kept in a position where we just behave in a charitable way. *To pauvre, mo done twa inpé kas.* I find this not respectful at all because my friend, the Minister...

(Interruptions)

No, more than this! We are more than this because we are responsible for the whole plan, for the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan is built on humanity, but on humanity which we respect. A nation that comes to respect itself! So, I put the question today, I don't give the answer. I say: "Are we doing the right thing in making legal what is illegal; in telling people that once you get this land which you have taken illegally that we will build a house for you there?" And then, came one incredible question: "And what about *colonne électrique*? Who will pay for it?" This is how we make Government unpopular because we think that being generous is the right way to gain the heart of people. This is not true! Prime Minister Modi in India proved it. He promised a lot, but he did his best. In Uttar Pradesh, he won one of the largest victories you can win in a mid-term election. He did it! People do not want to be treated as babies. Spoon fed! And it is not in our interest also to make as if we are father and mother; if you need money, we are here; if you are short of this, we are here; if you are unemployed, this is our problem. It is not our problem!

A nation is built on effort; it is built on sweating; it is built on sacrifice. My grandfather came to Mauritius, worked, sweat all his life to be where I am today here, Minister of Foreign Affairs because we are a nation of builders. We are not a nation that is built on the basis of thinking that we will do good to someone, or we will catch his vote if we give him a little more. *Surenchère politique*, this is what we have been doing since the past 20 years and no one will win in this game because the more you give, the more people will ask. And we have reached a point now - you know what is instant gratification? People expect you now to instantly gratify what they want. And who can give this here? No one can promise it here! No one in the Opposition! No one in this Government also!

So, this is the time of questioning. We have a nation of genius. We have all to succeed. But then, we have, probably, also to return to the values of our forefathers, whether it comes to drug trafficking, whether it comes to corruption, whether it comes to getting an easy life, working the least to get the maximum. This is not our culture! This is not our tradition! This is not the foundation on which this country has been built! So, we are going on the wrong track. And I am saying it because I do not care being in politics. I am 73, I can leave any time, but I can also speak out my mind. We are not on the right track! Not only we

are not on the right track, the world environment is not playing in our field. We are living the end of a super cycle, we call it. There are cycles. You cannot fight cycles! Cycles start, here you have spring, summer, autumn and winter. Winter means things go bad. Cycles whether you like it or not, they create what it has to create. And we have reached now the end of a major cycle that was built on one word 'greed'. Absolute greed! A civilisation that thinks that you should colonise; a civilisation that thinks that people should be treated as slaves; a civilisation is built on the basis that the Earth is made to be violated; unlimited greed, whether it be at sea or land or under the land.

Someone said that if we want to go on the trend that we are going on now, Planet Earth, in 20 years, we will need two planets Earth. And you all know that this scenario does not exist. So, we are at the end of our cycle and I will not tell people that we are going to give them whatever they want. I never promise a miracle! A miracle is built on the basis of a vision for the future by a nation in a strong Government. But what we have to learn now, probably, with the end of this cycle, and it will come any time; the West can say whatever they want. Today, Japan is deeply indebted. The Eurozone is deeply indebted. America more than this! And those three blocks know that they will never be in a position to refund the loans they have taken. If you increase interest rate by 2%, no one can service the loans. So, they know that we are at the end of the road. They have kicked the can down the road and, probably, now we have reached the point, the day of reckoning. So, the world environment is not working in our favour. Let us not believe it!

Look at the chart of exports of Mauritius. I had a meeting as Chairman of the Inter-Ministerial Committee for exports. I called in MEXA and others and they showed me a chart of exports. It was like this and then it just went down. I said: 'This, there is deep shit there!' Excuse me for the word. This does not augur well for the future of export. If export is not a driving force, can we rely only on tourism to survive? Can we, therefore, pretend that we can grow in an environment, which is not that good, which is hostile? If you were to ask me today to manage, I would say: 'Let us prepare for the worst and hope for the best.' Number one - and not promise that we can do anything for people. We can only give what we have, not what we do not have.

Second basic principle, I would say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very difficult to tell people we have to learn to be happy with less. It is a new paradigm, it is a new philosophy, it means that we do not have two planets Earth to save us in 20 years. It means, therefore, that

as from day one to date, we say resources are not unlimited, we cannot do anything we want. This is why I come with this sentence which might feel strong, not too human, but I feel that we are going towards a period which is not that easy for us and where probably a nation that is built on the basis of instant gratification, that is based on the principle that if things go wrong with the Government, then probably what is coming down the road will force us to learn to be happy, to be happier with less. This is probably what we are trying to do, and believe me in this game, there is no Opposition, no Government. If we fail, the country will fail and anyone who will take this Government cannot go ahead. Because there are major changes, the crossroad means that there are major changes which have to be done, major reforms which will help you carry out and I feel, deep in myself, that the hon. Prime Minister Pravind is the right man in the right place. I believe that hon. Pravind Jugnauth is the right man in the right place, the right Prime Minister; I believe also that we have the right team here.

Naturally, I am so sorry that you people left, that is your choice, but I think that we have the right staff, the right people to achieve what we want to achieve, a prosperous Mauritius where people live happily. This is what we want, simple, and I hope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have taken not too much time, and I threatened to speak for two hours. So, I will allow *le marchand de sable* to come. I would ask, therefore, that we take what I said. I am not imposing anything, I am just making suggestions. Tomorrow would be the final discussions. Tomorrow, in fact, the Deputy Prime Minister will intervene...

(Interruptions)

Today, oh my God! I don't know how I will wake up, I have to call little Suzy, maybe! No, that is a song!

Anyway, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you. I crave your indulgence if I have gone too far, but really today I have spoken my heart to you.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo, can I have an indication how long your speech will be?

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for me, the night is still young.

The Deputy Speaker: Can we have a short break? The sitting is suspended for 5 minutes.

At 3.20 a.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.31 a.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Merci, M. le président.

M. le président, à cette heure si tardive, j'aurais préféré évidemment intervenir dans un environnement plus serein, avec des collègues des deux côtés de la Chambre, peut-être plus numériquement plus important, mais je pense, moi, que c'est un manque d'égard vis-à-vis de la Chambre, et tout le monde ici présent, pour ceux qui ont le pouvoir de décider à quelle heure la session terminera, ont pris la décision de laisser les débats continuer jusqu'à une heure aussi tardive que ça.

Bien sûr, que vous êtes là, le quorum est suffisant pour me permettre de faire mon intervention, mais, comme je vous dis, je n'aurais pas souhaité à n'importe quel autre membre de la Chambre pendant des discours aussi importants que les débats budgétaires d'intervenir une heure aussi tardive et avec autant de membres n'étant pas présents dans la Chambre. Comme dit mon ami, avec une audience aussi clairsemée.

Mais, en tant que parlementaire, puisque c'est mon tour de m'exprimer, c'est avec beaucoup de plaisir que je le fais, M. le président, je me suis déjà exprimé sur le budget en dehors de la Chambre. Je profite, donc, ce matin, de l'occasion qui m'a été donnée de m'adresser à vous et à mes amis de la Chambre pour élaborer davantage sur mon analyse et mes appréhensions quant aux propositions du budget.

J'ai écouté par politesse, peut-être, le ministre des Affaires Étrangères, l'intervenant qui a fait son discours juste avant moi, pour moi, c'est un honorable illuminé qui a fait ses commentaires. Je ne vais pas lui répondre, M. le président, j'aurais préféré, donc, venir directement à ce que j'ai à dire.

Je le dis d'emblée, sans équivoque, pour moi, ce budget est un budget qui manque d'audace, qui manque de tonus, M. le président. Je ne vais pas être philosophique comme l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo a été, je suis un homme terre à terre, et je vais m'exprimer concrètement sur ce que je comprends, l'impact du budget et les conséquences des mesures

budgétaires au niveau de la vie du quotidien de notre peuple. Donc, ce sont des remarques très politiques que je vais faire. Et comme je disais, pour moi, il n'y a aucun doute que ce budget vient dans un contexte précis. Il reflète l'état d'esprit d'un gouvernement qui n'a pas su oser. C'est pour moi un budget incohérent, insuffisant pour relancer notre économie.

L'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances aurait dû profiter ; il a raté une occasion de rééquilibrer les grands axes de notre structure économique et, en vérité, il ne s'attaque pas aux bases macro-économiques de notre structure d'une part. D'autre part, un budget qui prétend introduire des *social measures*, mais en vérité des *social measures* largement insuffisantes qui n'auront aucun impact réel sur le quotidien de ceux qui sont censés d'en bénéficier et j'y reviendrai.

Tristement, M. le président, les chiffres et les données que nous avons, démontrent clairement que les principaux indicateurs économiques se sont détériorés au courant de l'année financière. Je vais peut-être répéter ce qui a été dit avant moi mais je n'ai pas le choix, la croissance réelle du PIB estimée par le ministre à 3.9% pour cette année financière était prévue à 4.1%. L'investissement global prévu à 18.9% s'est plafonné à 17.6%, l'inflation prévue à 2% a atteint 2.2%, l'exportation des *goods and services* prévue à 48.2% du PIB est restée à 44% du PIB, la dette du secteur public qui a été l'objet de beaucoup de commentaires déjà dans la Chambre, prévue à 52.8% du PIB a grimpé à 66.1% pour toutes les raisons que l'on sait et sur lesquelles je ne m'attarderai pas.

M. le président, le déficit budgétaire reste toujours relativement élevé et au lieu de l'avoir ramené à 3.3% comme prévu, il atteint 3.5% pour l'année 2016-2017. En montant absolu, le déficit budgétaire se chiffre à R 900 millions de plus que prévu. En termes de performance économique, M. le président, les chiffres donnés démontrent que l'économie a stagné et qu'aucune relance économique n'a eu lieu. Comme preuve R 1.2 milliards en moins ont été collectées en termes de VAT et s'agissant des taxes *revenues* R 1.1 milliard en moins que prévues ont été collectées. Tout ceci est vérifiable dans les *Estimates* qui ont été circulés à tout le monde.

Sur le chapitre de *underspending* ou de sous-utilisation des fonds de notre budget de développement, seulement 69% des fonds alloués ont été dépensés alors qu'en 2013, par exemple, 83% des fonds alloués avaient été dépensés. Ce qui démontre aussi l'incompétence et l'incapacité du gouvernement d'implémenter les projets annoncés en grande pompe dans le

budget précédent. M. le président, je ne vais pas m'étaler davantage sur tous les pourcentages et tous les chiffres.

Venons sur la production industrielle. Le secteur textile, en particulier, a régressé. Comme nous le savons tous, l'ancien ministre des Finances, l'honorable Lutchmeenaraidoo nous avait promis à l'époque une croissance économique de 5.3% pour l'année 2015-2016, 5.7% pour l'année 2016-2017, un investissement global de 24.8%, des exportations de biens de service de 52.8%. Tout ceci n'était que des promesses. Quant à l'investissement privé, il a été bien inférieur de celui de 2012 et il sera toujours bien inférieur en 2017.

En 2012, M. le président, l'investissement privé a été de l'ordre de 17.5% du PIB. En 2013, c'était 16.2%, 2014 à 14% du PIB, 2015 à 12.6% du PIB, 2016 à 12.8% du PIB et 2017 il est prévu à rester à 12.8% du PIB. Nous voyons donc la chute de l'investissement privé. Quelle est la conclusion donc, M. le président ? Que l'honorable ministre des Finances n'a atteint aucun de ces objectifs et nous pouvons, sans équivoque, arguer que par rapport à l'exercice du budget précédent, il a été une véritable contre-performance.

S'agissant du secteur de l'exportation et en termes de la production industrielle, nos espérances sont restées au-dessous de nos prévisions. En effet, M. le président, en 2016, l'exportation de *merchandise* a baissé si drastiquement qu'elle a financé seulement la moitié des importations de nos biens.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last Budget did not fuel the economic engine nor did it set the foundations for the country to propel itself into a new era of development and the reasons are as anticipated that the hon. Minister did not address the structural weaknesses of the economic foundations and the macroeconomic fundamentals, neither did he take appropriate measures nor implemented the deep-rooted reforms to address the serious imbalances of our economy. Hence, unfortunately, the Minister of Finance never drove the country on the path of economic recovery. The indicators worsened because the hon. Minister failed to do what he pledged last year, that is, to improve the fiscal health of our economy by means of strict fiscal discipline.

Comme je vous ai dit, M. le président, ce budget que nous a été proposé est, en d'autres mots, fade sur le volet économique tant il manque d'inspiration et frappe par son manque d'ambition, que ce soit en termes d'investissements privés, d'exportations ou dans le

secteur offshore. Nous sommes frappés par l'inconscience du ministre par rapport à ces trois secteurs et j'y reviendrai au cours de mon discours.

Therefore, it is in this context of the degradation of the socio-economic context of the country, including the unprecedented level of public debt that this Budget is being presented to this House.

Et pourtant nous le savons, M. le président, que pour devenir un pays à revenu élevé, il est impératif de générer une croissance économique plus importante que 4% et un taux d'investissement d'au moins 25% du PIB. Ce qui manque cruellement dans la formulation de ce budget en vérité et je lisais quelques jours de cela M. Gnany dans son analyse du MCB Focus et il disait exactement ce que je voulais dire, et je le cite –

« (...) des réformes structurelles plus ambitieuses dans divers domaines (...) pour que le pays puisse réaliser une croissance de 5% et favoriser la création d'emplois soutenus »

Et –

« (...) l'adoption d'une panoplie de mesures de restructuration économique va grandement aider à rehausser la performance macroéconomique. »

Mais le plus grave, M. le président, c'est qu'aujourd'hui l'île Maurice, nous, notre pays, faisons face à de nouveaux défis et les règles du jeu ne cessent d'évoluer - le Brexit, l'abolition complète du filet de protection pour le sucre avec la libéralisation des quotas en Europe au profit des betteraviers, le retour au protectionnisme avec l'arrivée du Président Trump, le nouvel ordre mondial, et pire au niveau du *global business*, nous sommes confrontés avec le risque de l'érosion de la base d'imposition et le transfert de bénéfices, c'est-à-dire l'avènement du BEPS, du MLI, le *Multi Lateral Instrument* et du GAAR, la démarche de l'OCDE et de l'Union Européenne par le bille des pressions qu'ils nous imposent, et qui nous feront perdre beaucoup de nos avantages compétitifs. Voilà donc les multiples défis qui vont substantiellement peser sur notre économie durant les années à venir M. le président. Dieu seul sait comment nous surmonterons toutes ces difficultés. Et tout ceci doit nous donner la chair de poule, doit nous effrayer, M. le président.

C'est pourquoi, pour moi, ce budget est une grande déception. J'avais moi-même cru qu'après 2 ans et demi de retard en termes de développement économique, 2 ans et demi

d'instabilité politique chronique - je parle de la désintégration de l'Alliance Lepep, de la démission d'un de ses ministres, M. Bhadain, après une cascade de scandales, de multiples cas de fraude et de corruption qui ont éclaboussé les proches du gouvernement, les innombrables cas de favoritisme et de népotisme qui sont devenus légendes. J'étais convaincu que le nouveau Premier ministre allait renverser la vapeur en proposant un budget qui jettait les bases solides d'une île Maurice moderne tout en instaurant un nouvel ordre économique, moral et social, mais il n'y a eu absolument rien. Rien en termes de propositions pour combattre le gaspillage des fonds publics and décourager les irrégularités au niveau de l'État. Rien en termes de réduction des dépenses de l'État. Même au niveau symbolique, en termes de baisse des allocations pour les ministres, rien, absolument rien pour donner l'exemple, pour embigader la population, pour dire à la population, tournons une nouvelle page, envisageons l'avenir avec plus de confiance et de sérénité. Malheureusement, ceci n'a pas été le message de ce budget, *business as usual*, M. le président.

On the contrary, the measures announced are a rehash of the same strategy which has, in the past budgets of this Government or other Governments, proved to be sterile and of no lasting effect. This is why on a deeper analysis, we can see how this budget is deeply flawed with no strong foundation to succeed, and containing no necessary measures to stimulate the economy. Let us take one example, bringing the tax rates from 15% to 3% is insufficient to stimulate exports, and I will explain why in a few minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The same reasoning applies as far as the SMEs are concerned. Our exports have been declining, we are importing more. We have not created sufficient jobs in the export manufacturing industries and the prospects are bleak, not a single manufacturing export firm has opened its doors this year. Our firms are no longer competitive.

Our export model is no longer working because we have lost our international competitiveness. Why is that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The incentives we have provided will be ineffective; our present model, itself, has to be reviewed. It is because of the in-built contradictions of our model. Let me explain myself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Can we have a successful financial sector, new economic sector with high value-added jobs with innovative products, a technological and sophisticated financial industry, and, at the same time, a model utilising low technology and labour intensive operations? This is precisely the point that those who prepared the budget missed.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to revamp our model. We must have a better understanding of real sector economics, monetary policy, exchange rate policy, and how the economic transmission operates with a financial sector growing robustly, huge foreign exchange flow into Mauritius and hibernate for a significant number of days. Then, we borrow USD 500 billion, the foreign exchange reserves build-up. Currently, foreign exchange reserves are the equivalent of 9.4 months of import. This is clearly on the high side and it bears considerable pressure on the exchange rate. When the rupee appreciates, the Mauritian entrepreneur manufacturing low value added products based on labour intensive and low technology production methods finds it harder to sell its product on the international market. It is, therefore, futile giving an incentive of 3% tax on profits when no sales or hardly any sales take place. In some way, the growth and success of a revamped financial sector or a new innovative high technological sector are incompatible with the low technology manufactured exports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

If we wish to revamp our manufacturing sector, we need to understand the basics: distil lessons from the past, learn from the experience of others and examine empirical studies before adapting them into a Mauritian context. Textile is a low value product and has completed its product life cycle. It is right for delocalisation to other countries like Madagascar, Comoros, Mozambique or Kenya. It is a process already in progress, as we know. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is what I mean by rethinking the model. We need to shift to sectors that require higher technology and bring higher revenue.

To be fair, there has been in the budget, a timid attempt to innovate in terms of artificial intelligence and robotics which are necessary conditions but not sufficient. Here was the opportunity for the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to take a comprehensive outlook. How do you introduce robotics or digitalise the economy without a trained and skilful pool of high calibre achievers. One would have expected more resources geared to the universities, an import of high calibre lecturers from the world's best universities, and scholarships to our best students to go to the best universities in the world. The budget has nothing of this sort. So, we will continue to wallow in the middle-income trap, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Our growth matrix for the next 20 years has to be different. Our economy must mature, must depart from the strategies of before; must make of Mauritius a reliable centre for high value added activities in a global supply change. We shall have to move from value adding to value creation, and establish Mauritius as a leading centre for value creation in the business strategies for foreign companies.

To illustrate what I mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is perhaps worthwhile to look at the strategy that a country, known to all of us, Ireland, which was a few years ago an agricultural economy, but which has positioned itself today as a recognised centre of excellence for innovation and development in pharmaceutical, bio-pharmaceutical and chemical supply, thereby becoming a location of choice for the launch of new products.

The pharmaceutical sector in this country has become a major contributor to Ireland's economy by paying more than €1 billion in corporation tax in 2008 and employing over 24,000 people and continuing to grow steadily, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Ireland succeeded to attract some of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. Ireland did not focus its strategy and compete directly with low-cost economies on cost grounds alone, it secured its competitive advantage through smarter ways of doing business, including better use of technology, innovation, cost-control, upgrading the skills of his employees and making them flexible and adaptable to change in technologies. Keeping in mind, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that manufacturing alone will not be enough to ensure the long term presence of the industry, research, development and innovation drive the transformation process forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us look at the incentives given to stimulate the pharmaceutical industry in our country because we all subscribe to the idea of creating a pharmaceutical sector. We need to learn from our past experience and use our knowledge to build the future. This is what the budget has totally ignored. The pharmaceutical industry was first mentioned as a potential sector in 2006, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Labour Government was in power. 12 years later, the idea lingers on without anything substantial and I fear this trend will persist for the years to come because, unfortunately, Government seems to have no idea how to proceed. What do we see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? There is no site so far, no industrial park, no industrial pharmaceutical village created.

A first step would have been to identify a site of some 50 acres, provide it with a state-of-the-art infrastructure, create a Faculty of Chemistry or Pharmacology, provide priority scholarships to create a critical, intelligent pool of skills specialised in the sector, use the excess liquidity to enable easy accessibility to finance as was done in the past.

The budget is vague, without a purposive sense of direction, without any planning how to launch this sector. While a tax holiday is a stimulating factor; until and unless firms

start producing, the tax incentive is a sterile incentive. If we wish to launch a new sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need a comprehensive package adapted to the situation so that we can convince the Indians, the Swiss or the French to come here, as we did in the case of the EPZ, with a greater degree of professionalism.

Here was an opportunity for the hon. Prime Minister to impress on the Indian Government to hold road shows with the Indian pharmaceutical entrepreneurs to set up firms in Mauritius. Here was an opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to divert part of the line of credit to finance the pharmaceutical sector. Here was an opportunity for the Prime Minister to use his prerogative to formulate a policy and persuade the IMF, as we did in the past, to agree to use a line of credit from the Bank of Mauritius to finance this industry under concessionary terms.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other sector, which, according to me, requires much greater attention is another sector which has been referred to by other Members of this House. I am talking of the Ocean Economy. This budget devotes 8 paragraphs to the Ocean Economy, but all dealing with fishing and low to medium level training. Fishing, according to me, is a medium technology, low-wage seasonal sector, which will not allow us to graduate to a high income status country, a contradiction with the objective of this budget.

This is another Ministry responsible for the Ocean Economy which, unfortunately, has showed no clout so far, no clear purpose, groping in uncertainty. This budget is silent on the potential of this fairly high technology sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Ministry of Ocean Development has missed its opportunities. Until now, we can see no Master Plan. Here was an opportunity to apply high technology to exploit the sector. Other countries in Europe and elsewhere, the US, Japan and India are either experimenting or have put in place floating windmill farm. Even Germany has set up a windmill farm to cater for 250,000 households. We should have approached KFW and Siemens or we could have approached STATSOIL from Norway to explore this potential. The Ministry has no such plan. We could have exploited the cultivation of seaweeds as an input for the pharmaceutical industry or cosmetic industry to produce high value goods. The initial project of creating a land-based industry remains valid. We can replicate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the experience of Hawaii with the support of NELHA and MAKAI of Hawaii. This Ministry of Ocean Economy has been, so far, unfortunately, slow and lethargic, more involved with special interest such as oyster or the exploitation of fisheries than caring for the future of this country

so much so that it is time now for a thorough revamping of the role and potential of this Ministry.

Let me now come to the Financial Services Sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Again, to my mind, the budget has failed to focus properly on this sector with so much potential, but facing so much enormous challenges. In 2019, the present arrangement expires and some of the incentives that made our country so successful will come to an end. Worst, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government of the day has committed to replace the Deemed Foreign Tax Credit for Global Licence One Company. The DFTC regime has served our country well for almost 20 years and has accounted for the successful growth of the financial sector and Government has now agreed to review and replace this regime.

We may ask ourselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what business is it for the European Commission to sit on judgement on Non-EU Member States tax regimes and what will the European Union do if we decide not to change the DFTC, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Of course, greater pressure will be exerted on us. Of course, we could be perceived as a tax haven. But as a sovereign nation, why did we not pursue further discussions with the European Commission concerning the reform of the DFTC in order to come up with solutions and other possible options that might be feasible?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although Mauritius manages, historically speaking, to rise to every circumstance, it is vital we stay alert and get prepared to address the challenges in this sector. Honestly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the problems in this sector, are difficult, but they are not irremediable. We must be cautious that the Blueprint, for example, which has been proposed in the budget, does not become a subtle way to put the problem on the back burner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, according to me, what is smothering the global sector, what is the main problem of this sector is the legal instability and the overregulation in this sector. The amount of FSC circulars and the amount of conventions for mutual exchange of information that we have been signing lately has made Mauritius to be an overregulated jurisdiction. More importantly, the excessive application or interpretation of the rule by the overzealous officers of the FSC has made obtaining a licence *un parcours du combattant* unless you have some political connection at higher level of the State.

Investors, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, do not want to go through these onerous procedures when other well-established jurisdictions like London and Luxembourg have

expedient and simpler licensing procedures. Should the same investor opt for a domestic company instead of a GBC1 company, he would not have to suffer all these investigations and verifications! Regulation is important ...

(Interruptions)

Don't worry! I will come to Mr Alvaro in a few minutes.

Regulation is good, but overregulation can stifle the sector.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: The new tax of 3% on profits earned from export by manufacturing companies should have been extended to the export of services also. This would have encouraged many professional companies such as Consultants, Design, Pensions Company, Risk Assessors, Intellectual Property Companies to be located to Mauritius with this tax of 3% only on profits earned. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, besides the levelling of the playing field, our global sector needs supportive sectors to thrive.

These include not only International Law Firms but also financial houses for more Asset Management Capabilities. Our banks should be able to broaden their activities to provide Trade Financing, Custody Structured Finance, Pensions Management, Intellectual Property and International Leasing Facilities at simpler terms and competitiveness cost. To encourage these entities to set up in Mauritius, the licensing procedures should be simplified, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. An incentive should be provided to attract them reporting excessive licence cost and restrictions on the amount of funds that can be remitted to Mauritius through bank transfer, should be made easier.

Therefore, this is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this important sector is today a sector without a sense of direction. For nearly two years, there is no substantive Chief Executive. Can such a vital sector grow, expand and inspire in these present circumstances? This sector, as we all know, was blasted by the most abominable scandals that shook the country with serious implications in terms of economic impact, international image and governance issues. It lost seven places in Wall Street Heritage Index, ranked 16 in Africa when only a few years, it held the place of pride.

It takes years to build the image of a country but only a few minutes to destroy it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We find it strange that the hon. Minister went on public air and stated he could not find competence in this country. This was an insult, in fact, to the thousands of Mauritians who built this country from scratch. Does it make sense, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for a country that relies so strongly on the private sector to have such a great dominance of public servants on the Board of the FSC, which is the second most important financial institution?

Is it good governance that the Financial Secretary should chair FSC and its Deputy is the first Deputy Governor of the Bank of Mauritius? In which incestuous world are we living, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Doesn't it strike anyone in this model of democracy where we pride ourselves for the rule of law that we are creating potentials for conflict of interest? And in so doing, are we sending the right signals to foreign investors? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it took years to get Mauritius out of the OECD backlist.

Today, we are accepting Alvaro Sobrinho, considered as a toxic investor and on whom investigation is going on in Switzerland. Being the Minister of Good Governance - and I said it to the Minister although he is not present - it requires great responsibility towards the country. No Minister of Good Governance could continue to hold office when licences are granted to an investor with a reputation like Alvaro Sobrinho! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, leave alone our political divide, no sensible person will dare to deny that Mr Sobrinho affair has diminished the credibility of this country!

How many times, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the past, the FSC announced its wish to fill the post of Chief Executive Officer! It made many advertisements, called candidates for interview but stayed action. All the vacancies at the FSC, an institution responsible for over 12% of the economy, have not been filled for nearly two years. How then are we to produce a blueprint that will chart the future of the Financial Services Sector? All this does not send the right signals in terms of seriousness of purpose. This sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has become too important to be managed with so much levity and in such an amateurish manner.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I comment on a few other issues in the Budget, I would like to say a few words on what is now commonly termed as the social measures. Let us take the measure of a drop of 10 cents on a loaf of bread, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. To me, this measure has virtually no impact. Assuming a person consumes two loaves per day, this allows him a saving of Rs6 per month and Rs72 a year.

This is such a negligible proportion on the income of people that it has really no impact in alleviating poverty. Just as the decrease *sur la farine*, *M. le président*, no impact really on the day-to-day life of the average Mauritian. The negative income tax, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to me, it is a positive measure, but you must be careful. It is a redistributive toll, but in so doing, in proposing this measure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I agree with the Trade Unions when they argue that this is an indirect way of *subventionner le patronat* because, true it is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have said it myself, many friends in this House or the Trade Unions have said it, we know the large number of employees in this country, in the private sector who earn less than Rs9,000 or Rs10,000, nearly more than 100,000 in our labour force in the private sector. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was it the role of the State to give an increase in wages? Because this is what it is in fact.

It was *subventionner le patronat*; it was also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, covering up Government institutions like the NRB which, in fact, had failed not only under this Government, but under past Governments also for updating. This is the role of the NRB for updating the wages of the different sectors of the workers in the private sector. By failing to do so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for years, as I said, we know that there have been sectors in this country where the Remuneration Orders have not been updated for 8 or 10 years sometimes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, this is why *il y avait un rattrapage à faire* in terms of wages, in terms of salary of certain categories of workers in the private sector. So, by providing, therefore, this increase of the negative income tax of the amount that has been proposed in the budget - *nous avons vu le barème*, *M. le président* - by coming with this proposal, as I said, Government was, in fact, substituting itself for covering up what the NRB had failed to do in the past. The solidarity tax, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a measure I applaud. I agree with the measure. It is another measure of redistribution. It is a measure of social justice, but when I think about it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister should have gone further, should have thought about other measures providing for more social justice in this country.

I will give you one example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which you will easily understand and also all hon. Members of this House. We know what Land Transfer Tax is all about.

Land Transfer Tax is a tax which all of us pay when we sell a property. We pay a registration duty when we acquire, and when we sell our property, it is 5% tax on the value

declared in the title deed. We all know that. I have thought about that for a few years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A small man sells his house, sometimes it is a CHA house for Rs500,000, Rs600,000, Rs700,000, Rs800,000; sometimes he has to send his son somewhere; his child who is sick or who is in university or he wants to sell his house to share the money between his two children who have grown up now, for whatever reason he is selling his property which is not of much value - *aujourd'hui R 700,000, R 800,000* - he has to pay 5% on that, excluding notary fees and so on. *5% sur R 800,000, ça fait combien, M. le président?* Rs40,000! 5%! *10% sur R 800,000, c'est R 80,000 et 5% c'est R 40,000.* *R 40,000 pour quelqu'un qui vend sa petite demeure pour des raisons quelquefois difficiles.* *C'est beaucoup, M. le président!* He has to pay that.

Now, think of another scenario! This gentleman who has means, he is selling his yacht, his Porsche for Rs4 m., Rs5 m., Rs3 m., of course, this is not an immovable property, but he did not have to pay anything, one single cent! All these yachts in our blue azure waters, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir; I have nothing against yachts or Porsche owners, but is that justice in our society when you think about it? Either we do two things: we impose a 5% tax on these people who have all these big limousines, all these yachts and who can sell one today and buy another one in one month - we impose a 5% tax - or we must have thought about the possibility of excluding these people who are selling a small house of Rs600,000, Rs500,000, allowing them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the liberty not to have to pay this Land Transfer Tax. It is unjust, I say it again. Why should a poor man, when he sells his house *pour R 500,000, R 600,000, paie 5% le gouvernement* and why should this rich man who is selling his yacht for Rs8 m. or Rs6 m. or his car for Rs4 m., Rs3 m., does not pay one single cent to Government, to the coffers of the State?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think we must reflect upon this and there are other cases, examples if the hon. Minister wanted to play Robin Hood, and it is a good thing that we play Robin Hood because we have been elected by the people and we must seek for each and every opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to do justice, to redistribute wealth in this country. We have nothing against people who have acquired wealth legitimately, licitly, but this is precisely the task of Government to redistribute wealth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

As I am on this score, I want also to make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands, who is not present, about an appeal which many of us have made in the past, concerning the housing sector, the asbestos houses, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where there are

thousands of them around in this country. The EDC houses were built after cyclone Carol or Alix in the 60s, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Some of us were not born during those days, but we remember in what circumstances these houses were built of asbestos and CIS. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many of these people who bought these houses at that time, who were renting it, in fact, who were leasing it from the CHA at that time, have now become owners, but they have become so old that they cannot pull down and rebuilt and reconstruct a new house of concrete today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I have made so many appeals to the previous Governments, to hon. Soodhun also - you can check from Hansard - to come up with a scheme. There is so much money now which is available and is being pumped in the social housing sector. I would have, again, appealed to him to come up, to conceptualise, design a scheme pertaining to these asbestos houses which are, as we know, a threat to the health of the occupiers, and to come up with a scheme to allow them, to give them the possibility of pulling down their houses. In fact, they don't have the right to pull down the houses. It is the District Council or the Ministry of Environment which is supposed to do that, but to give them this possibility of living in a new and in a safer home, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

It is still early, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

(Interruptions)

I promise I would finish at 5.30 a.m.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, India and Agalega, let me also say a few words on this issue. We all know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the history of this special relationship between our two countries. India has been our leading trade partners and is still is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and we know in terms of donor country what India has represented to us, to little Mauritius. We all have to be respectful of this relationship. We all have to be careful and not to cause any harm or distress to this relationship and we must be realistic today and be alive to the fact that India is a growing economic and military power and that Mauritius falls into the geopolitical sphere of its influence.

I was reading a few days ago, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, somewhere on the Net, an article entitled ‘Towards strategic economic cooperation between India and Japan.’ And in this article the author was writing about this partnership between these two countries to counter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, China’s influence in our neighbourhood. I am quoting –

“On the maritime front as well, New Delhi has been wary of the growing number of Chinese infrastructure projects in its neighborhood especially in the Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. (...) India has watched China’s presence in the Indian Ocean grow with some concern (...).”

The Republic of India has tied up with Japan, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this common project of countering the People’s Republic of China’s influence in the region and in other regions of the world also.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, having said this, the respect that we owe to this relationship, the realisation that things have changed, we are living in a new era of geopolitics, but the geopolitical strategy of India cannot be above the socio-economic interests of Mauritius. I am sure even the Indian authorities and leaders are aware of this. Yes, India has its geopolitical strategy, but Mauritius also has its own socio-economic interests. Of course, we are too small to wield influence as to change the course of international events, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. On the one hand, as I said, we have the Chinese One Belt, One Road, the Silk Road Diplomatic Policy of economic and political policy. We know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have the issue of the American presence in our region, in Diego Garcia and its obsession to police the world and protect the oil route. We have the British with their double standard, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, still perceived as wielding their imperialist ambitions. The French presence in the Indian Ocean is also quite visible. India, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will, in all logic and legitimacy, seek also to exercise its influence. But, at the end of the day, we, as Mauritians and a sovereign nation, we need to keep our territorial integrity. It may be a good diplomatic and strategic ploy to woo another power, to play one another, to bargain, to set up, to come up with bargaining mechanism in our endeavour to recoup Diego Garcia, to retrieve that territory which is ours. But we need to be cautious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

That is why we must be aware as a Mauritian nation of what exactly is going on in Agalega. The Prime Minister has a moral right to inform the nation. He cannot escape not being transparent, he must play the card of transparency. He must answer the questions of the

nation. Why a runway of 3,600 metres, when for years Plaisance Airport with an impressive tourist industry had a runway of only 2,850 metres until 1987.

In the interest of the whole nation, such questions have to be answered. The hon. Prime Minister has to spell out what he has agreed with the Indian Government. He must not act in any way and be responsible if suspicions are created in the minds of certain sectors of our population, mistrust in the minds of the population with regard to India's presence in that part of the region. This is what Mr Rocard once said and it has always stuck in my mind –

“En politique, il faut faire ce qu'on dit et dire ce qu'on fait. »

So, so much so on the issue of Agalega and India, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I come to another issue which is very close to my heart, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is about the drug issue.

And I have no doubt, when I am talking about the drug issue. I have heard a few Members on the other side of the House and this side of the House and I have no doubt that unanimity prevails in this House and in the whole country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the extent that this scourge is devastating our social fabric and our youth in all four corners of our country.

Unfortunately, again, besides announcing for the Master Plan which has already been announced in a Cabinet communiqué at the beginning of the year, there is hardly anything new on the chapter on drugs.

There is an announcement with regard to new equipment and modern and sophisticated tools, logistics and so on. This was already announced in last year's budget.

But to come back to the *ravage de ce fléau*, *M. le président*, I just read an article and I am sure you all read it in 'Le Mauricien' a few days ago. The article was entitled –

'Drogues Synthétiques: l'Ouest touché en plein cœur.'

And a few days afterwards, there was another article in 'l'Express' this time. I am sure you have all seen it –

'Pourquoi Maurice se drogue?'

To come back on the article in 'Le Mauricien' 'L'Ouest touché en plein cœur', I am quoting one line -

« Les habitants des régions de Bambous et de Rivière Noire assistent impuissants à la recrudescence des drogues synthétiques et ses dégâts dans leurs quartiers. Depuis quelques années déjà, ils voient certains de leurs jeunes se détruire. Ils ont constaté que même des adultes plus âgés se laissent tenter par l'expérience destructrice de ces produits. »

Indeed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *c'est une épidémie qui ronge toutes les régions du pays*. So much so, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because in my constituency, there are many of these *foyers* infested by these dealers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I know of localities, but, of course, I won't name them, where citizens are now selling their properties at a loss in order to flee that precise neighbourhood for their own security and the future of their children. Selling their house which they had bought, with so much sacrifice, blood and sweat, selling it at a loss just to get away from these areas for *l'avenir* of their children who are growing up, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. By reflecting on what I just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, imagine how deep-rooted is this *fléau* in our country! Deep-seated! And how can we win this war, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We all want to win this war and sometimes the social workers and the experts say it is a lost battle. Indeed, year in and year out, our Government and all the Governments in the world are budgeting millions and millions of rupees, of pounds or whatever foreign exchange, whatever money you can call it, we are budgeting millions and millions of rupees or dollars to repress this ill, but like the mythic dragon, it keeps on rearing its ugly heads, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. How will we win this war?

Hon. Bodha talked about Iceland. I read also what is taking place in Iceland - and I will come to it in a few minutes not to repeat what you have said – but one of the best ways to hit the mafia, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is to strike them at a place, at the spot where they can be weakened the more, their financial resources, their pockets. This is why in the past, we, I mean all of us in this House, all Governments, have tried in the past to destroy this flourishing and lucrative illicit trade by legislating, for example, to seize the property of drug traffickers.

Let us admit it! This is a measure that did not yield the expected results. But there is another suggestion that we have made on this side of the House, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the hon. Prime Minister, to Government. Government should do like what Mr Modi has done, demonetise the Mauritian rupee and issue new notes like the Indian Prime Minister did so

that all the millions and millions of bank notes which are the rotten fruits heaped, amassed and hidden by these public poisoners should become useless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Yesterday, I read in newspaper ‘l’Express’ entitled – I’ll just show you the title: “*R 3 millions dans des boîtes de carton.*” You have all seen it I am sure.

(*Interruption*)

‘Drogues et blanchiment: R 3 millions chez un marchand de fruits. Les limiers ont fait main basse sur six boîtes de cartons dans lesquelles étaient dissimulées plusieurs liasses de billets. Montant total R 3,016,100. Cet argent proviendrait d’un trafic de drogues. »

This is what ‘L’Express’ is saying.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I urgently appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to review his decision - this decision to issue new bank notes was, in fact, proposed by the Central Bank for other reasons not necessarily for the reason I am talking about – to issue banknotes. I will appeal to him, beg him, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to review that decision before the mafia has time. You know what they can do or what they are still doing. Fortunately, I have heard that measures have been taken...

(*Interruptions*)

They go to the money changers and so on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but I understand that control has also been extended there. So much the better but we must, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, reflect seriously on this possibility.

I was asking the question: *pourquoi la drogue?* Why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? There are many social workers working on this issue but why has our youth today become so much a prey, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to these dealers, to these public poisoners, to this mafia? Why is *la drogue* doing so many ravages? There is one answer to it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Of course, we have all reflected on this, all of us have our own analysis and we have got our own ideas.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *notre jeunesse aujourd’hui souffre d’un mal-être, M. le président, qui les envahit, une souffrance intense qui les étreint. C’est une des raisons principales, je ne vous dis pas que c’est la seule raison. Il y a un problème psychologique, M. le président.*

The reference of hon. Minister Bodha to the success story of Iceland on treating addiction amongst teens can be emulated, can be copied in our country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The percentage of 15 and 16-year old in this country, who were addicted to drinks fell from 42% to 5% in 2016. The percentage of those who had ever used cannabis is down from 17% to 7%. Those smoking cigarettes everyday fell from 23% to just 3%. This is the experience of Iceland. Surveys were conducted. Alarming findings were detected. Almost 25% of the youth aged 16-18 were smoking every day, 40% were consuming alcohol in the month that the survey had been carried out. The experts, who were conducting the enquiry, identified precisely what was the cause of all this *souffrance*, what was the cause of so much addiction.

The analysis revealed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, clear differences between kids who took up drinking, smoking and other drugs and those who did not. Some factors emerged and they were made to participate in organised activities, to do sports three or four times a week, to spend time with their parents during the week, as hon. Bodha was telling us. They were made to feel cared for, to feel loved in their schools or wherever they were, not being outdoors in the late evenings.

Before that experience, there had been all kinds of substance prevention efforts and programmes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but these programmes were not working. Then came the different approach and a new national plan was introduced, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, which was called 'Youth in Iceland'. Laws were changed. It became illegal to buy tobacco and alcohol under the age of 18 and so on. Parents were encouraged to attend talks on the importance of spending quality time with their children and talking to their kids. Curfews were imposed, as hon. Bodha reminded us. What happens today in our modern society is that we do not even have time to talk to our kith and kin, to talk to our kids and to keep the children home in the evening.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are not pointing fingers at our *travailleurs sociaux* or the NGOs and so on, but I think repression is not the only answer. Government has to stand to its responsibilities, State funding for sports, music, arts, dance to give these kids the alternatives.

This is true, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When I go to one of my *cités* and I see so much drugs being sold, I realise that there are no sports facilities in that area. What will these young people do in the afternoon, in the evening or even during the day? Most of them have no School Certificate. They try to find a job and we know the question of adaptation; they have

no work culture; they are easy preys. And once we don't provide them with all these facilities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is an alternative to feel part of a group, to feel good rather using alcohol and drugs. These kids from low-income families receive help from the State, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I know it is perhaps an ambitious project for us but we have to rethink about ways to curb the drug scourge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. More importantly, and I will finish on that on the drug issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

Ce qu'on devrait faire aussi c'est la mise en place d'un service d'addictologie dans le pays que l'on n'a pas, M. le président. Nous témoignons aujourd'hui cette augmentation significative des troubles liés à ces nouveaux produits synthétiques et aux complications graves menant jusqu'à la mort de certains consommateurs, M le président. Nous avons entendu beaucoup de cas. Nous devrions mettre en place d'urgence un service spécialisé pour la prise en charge des troubles d'addiction.

Qu'est-ce que c'est que l'addiction, M. le président? L'addiction est une maladie complexe et une discipline médico-psycho-sociale, M. le président. En égard de la nette progression des addictions, l'État doit mettre en place cette facilité d'hospitalisation en addictologie, M. le président. Ce que j'ai appris c'est que nous n'avons qu'un seul addictologue à Maurice, M. le président. Donc, comme nous le savons tous dans notre pays...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: L'addiction de toute substance est possible, l'alcool est un produit hautement consommé, le rhum local, le tabac importé, le cannabis est consommé, M. le président. Donc voilà toutes les raisons de l'addiction. Il nous faut émuler l'exemple d'Iceland et aussi réfléchir pour mettre sur pied ce centre d'addictologie.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will go very briefly on the Betamax affair. *M. le président, en 2010, sept ans de cela...*

(Interruptions)

It is getting late, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Sept ans de cela*, 7 years ago, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was a Member of the Opposition and I remember there was the Labour and MSM Government and, I think, PMSD also, *Bleu/Blanc/Rouge* was in power, Mr Deputy Speaker,

Sir. I remember this was the first question which was asked on the Betamax affair, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Je vais vous dire la date exacte.* I will ask my hon. friends to bear with me because I will be finishing in a few minutes...

(Interruptions)

On 10.08.2010, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the question was about Betamax. It was a PNQ put by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, then, Mr Bérenger, and the question was about the Betamax project. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I asked this question and it was the first time that it was asked in this House. The hon. Minister is talking of the procurement practice and so on. Since we have to give a guarantee of 15 year cargo to Betamax Ltd and this project amounts to nearly Rs1 billion; the Expression of Interest was issued in March 2008, and the Public Procurement Act came into effect in January 2008, we are dealing with a major project, does not the hon. Minister think that this transaction should have been monitored by the Central Procurement Board and everything should have gone through this Board? The STC should have never issued directly an Expression of Interest and thus acted in breach of the PPA which came into effect in January of 2008. From that time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many of us had doubts on the legality of this transaction. I asked the hon. Minister whether a proper procurement exercise had been conducted.

Everything went bulldozed at that time. It was hon. Soodhun who was answering this question since he was then the Minister responsible for trade and industry. After the elections of 2014, l'Alliance Lepep came to power, *portée par l'euphorie de la victoire, M. le président, et dans l'ivresse d'un mandat électoral sans équivoque, le gouvernement croyait que tout était permis dans le royaume du soleil. L'essence de notre état de droit s'est affaiblie, M. le président. J'ai écouté le ministre ce matin et j'ai relu le discours de l'honorable ministre Gungah il y a une semaine de cela. Pour moi, il n'y a pas de doute que des négociations auraient pu aboutir à une meilleure solution. Je ne pense pas que the root of negotiations was fully utilised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Je pense que des négociations auraient pu aboutir à une meilleure solution, mais, malheureusement, c'est fort de cette victoire peut-être que c'est une attitude condescendante qui a prévalu ces jours-ci et cette attitude, M. le président, a même continué pendant tout le long du mandat depuis 2014, concernant l'affaire de Betamax. Je vais vous dire pourquoi. Je vous cite une question parlementaire que j'avais moi-même posée à l'honorable ministre le 5 avril 2016, as to whether he will obtain information from the STC indicating if the prior advice of the State*

Law Office was sought and obtained before the termination of the contract; if Government has been apprised of any indemnities that would be payable to Betamax; if there is a possibility to renegotiate the price and if an arbitrator, mediator has been appointed the profile and the current status of the arbitration.

Le ministre, M. le président, ce jour-ci avait réclamé son droit de silence car il aurait pu nous donner certains renseignements. This is what he said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

“I want to give the information but I cannot.”

Hon. Uteem asked him –

“I can understand confidentiality as regards the content and the defence of the Government. What we are asking here is: who is representing the Government of Mauritius and how much this is costing taxpayers?”

Je suis sûr que you would have answered the hon. Attorney General and this had nothing to do with our defence and so on. But the hon. Minister, again, refused to give any information. A few PQs were asked in the past years about this Betamax, and this was shrouded in a mystery. The old subject matter was shrouded, as I said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Aujourd’hui, nous aurons à payer cher cette arrogance et cette désinvolture. Hier matin, l’honorable ministre a réitéré son exploit, à son tour maintenant le manque de transparence, en refusant de répondre la question* concerning the law officer’s opinion. This is what he said: “Because I tried to have a copy of the reply you gave, but I read it from ‘Le Mauricien’, I hope they gave the correct version.” Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wanted to make a point of order this morning, but there was so much *brouhaha* and pandemonium in the House that I did not have time and I am not usually allowed to ask supplementary in this House for reasons well known to everybody.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is what Erskine May says about Law Officer’s opinion.

(Interruptions)

You said! Do you want me to read?

(Interruptions)

No, the Attorney General said the advice came from the Law Officers and also from private lawyers and this is why he did not want to disclose. Therefore, this is what I can read from Erskine May Parliamentary Practice, page 443, Law Officers' Opinion -

“The opinions of the law officers of the Crown, being confidential, are not usually laid before Parliament, cited in debate or provided in evidence before a select committee, and their production has frequently been refused; but if a Minister deems it expedient that such opinions should be made known for the information of the House (...).”

The Speaker has ruled that the orders of the House are, in no way, involved in the proceedings. So, it depends on the Attorney General. He has to take the decision. But I think that in the interest of transparency he should have given his opinion, and this is what Erskine May says and Erskine May never errs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

M. le président, Betamax doit servir de leçon pour tout le monde, pour ce gouvernement et pour l'ancien gouvernement. Mais le gouvernement doit adopter une attitude responsable pour que notre pays ne doit pas être taxé comme un État voyou, un rogue State, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In fact, we have all again read what an expert in the course of an interview said regarding the Betamax affair: “What are the consequences for Mauritius if it decides not to pay?” The answer was: “Not paying an international Arbitration Award would invariably damage Mauritius reputation as an investor-friendly country and ultimately its economy. A country which is heavily dependent on foreign investment, on the support from foreign lenders and international organisations, would send the wrong signal by refusing to comply with an international Arbitration Award.”

M. le président, c'est ce que j'avais à dire sur le passé, mais pour l'avenir, je pense qu'aucune transaction de l'État, entre l'État ou une de ses entités, comme la STC, et une autre personne morale ne doit contenir des clauses de confidentialité, ne doit voiler le contenu du contrat, parce que c'est une transaction financée par l'argent public, relevant du droit public. Il ne peut être un secret face au grand public, M. le président. C'est pourquoi je suis convaincu, M. le président, que pour l'île Maurice qui est une démocratie *mature*, avec toute l'expérience riche que nous avons en termes de *Good Governance* et de transparence, après le saga Betamax, je suis convaincu que tous les contrats entre l'État et les sociétés privées, les IPPs, les autres promoteurs, sans distinction, incluant les promoteurs des établissements

hôteliers sur les pas géométriques. Tous ces contrats doivent, sans distinction, être déposés sur la Table de l’Assemblée nationale.

It is a reasonable demand that I am making, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think we all need that. Even next time, when you will be in the Opposition, there will be another Government, I am sure that will help you. All these transactions involving *les finances publiques doivent être déposées sur la Table de l’Assemblée.*

M. le président, j’avais dit à cinq heures, trois minutes. M. le président, je termine. A l’aube de nos 50 ans, il est grand temps de moderniser notre république et ses institutions, à commencer par notre Constitution et notre Parlement, M. le président. C’est pourquoi, moi et mon ami, l’honorable Barbier, nous avions proposé le *repatriation* de notre Constitution qui fut rédigée au *White Hall* par des Britanniques, nous fut octroyée par ces Britanniques par le biais d’un *Order in Council*, M. le président, annexé.

Notre Constitution n’a jamais été votée par cette auguste Assemblée. Plusieurs anciennes colonies nous ont précédées. Nous devrions suivre leur exemple et ceci nous permettra dans le même souffle de dépoussiérer et mettre à jour notre Constitution en introduisant des clauses qui reflètent les changements sociaux que Maurice a connus.

La limitation du mandat du Premier ministre, l’épineuse question du transfugisme, en particulier, la révocation des élus par leurs mandants dans des circonstances exceptionnelles et le *second generation of rights*, M. le président. Ça c’est pour la Constitution.

Dans le cadre de la célébration de nos 50 ans d’anniversaire, l’*Attorney General* doit présider un comité pour réfléchir sur *the advisability of this House voting a new Constitution with new clauses pour update our Constitution.*

Quant à notre Parlement, M. le président, il nous faut moderniser nos *Standing Orders*, introduire le comité système pour favoriser plus de transparence, pour sanctionner des ministres qui refusent de circuler les réponses des questions qui sont restées sans réponse à cause du temps. *And this, Madam Speaker, cited the relevant Standing Orders, the Ministers are bound by Standing Orders to circulate the answers.* Il nous faut de la transparence, M. le président.

Finalement, pour moderniser ce Parlement, vous savez qu'est-ce que nous avons besoin, M. le président?

(*Interruptions*)

I am finishing on that!

Introduire la langue Cr  ole, M. le pr  sident !

M. le pr  sident, nu bizin capav cause Creole, pour qui la population capav comprend nu ek seki pe passer dans sa parlement l  . C'est ene question de justice, M. le pr  sident. C'est ene question de respect pour nu population. Est-ce ki ou conner, M. le pr  sident, en 1977, Sir Anerood Jugnauth ki ti Leader l'opposition sa lepoque-l  , li ti amene 3 motions priv  es, M. le pr  sident, ...

(*Interruptions*)

The Deputy Speaker: The Standing Orders would apply and, therefore, I would invite you to continue your speech in English or in French!

Mr Ganoo: Okay! I have the solution, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because Standing Order 5 provides that we have to speak in French and English. But we have another Standing Order whereby we can suspend any Standing Order with the will of the House, of course, with the pleasure of the House.

(*Interruptions*)

This Motion does not need notice. So, I could have moved that we suspend Standing Order 5 and the House allows me to talk in Creole.

(*Interruptions*)

Okay, I will finish!

M. le pr  sident, nous avons aujourd'hui un dictionnaire en Cr  ole. Cette langue a son lexique. Elle est enseign  e dans l'  cole, dans les universit  s, au MIE, des chercheurs de l'universit   sont en train de travailler sur un logiciel pour corriger le Cr  ole sur le *Microsoft Office*, M. le pr  sident.

Donc, cessons d'avoir des pr  jug  s contre la langue Cr  ole, M. le pr  sident, que la majorit   des mauriciens utilisent.

(*Interruptions*)

Puisque nous sommes tous d'accord, M. le président, je demanderai, donc, au Premier ministre, à travers les ministres présents, de venir avec un *Statement* et d'informer la Chambre et la population que oui, un *Select Committee* peut être nommé et peut travailler sur toute la question, M. le président.

M. le président, je termine en disant ceci. Ce budget sera sans doute adopté par le Parlement compte-tenu de la majorité dont dispose le gouvernement, mais un budget, M. le président, n'est qu'un exercice comptable, financier et économique. L'économie, M. le président, est le concentré de la politique. Ce dont a besoin l'île Maurice aujourd'hui est un nouvel ordre moral, social et économique.

En effet, notre pays a besoin d'une moralisation de la vie publique et d'un nouveau cadre technique pour ne pas exploser sous le poids de la décadence morale. Notre pays a besoin de compétences, M. le président, pour ne pas dépérir sur le poids de la médiocrité. Notre pays a besoin de solidarité, de justice sociale pour ne pas exploser sous le poids des inégalités et d'une pauvreté grandissante. Notre pays a besoin de méritocratie, d'une vraie égalité des chances pour ne pas sombrer sous le poids du népotisme, du favoritisme et de passe-droit.

M. président, face aux attentes d'une population en désarroi et d'une jeunesse sans espoir, réunissons nos forces patriotiques pour construire *une nouveau Maurice!*

Merci!

Mr Gobin: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 20 June 2017 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 5.03 a.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 20 June at 11.30

a.m.