



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 05 MARCH 2015

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Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Tourism and External Communications
Hon. Showkutally Soodhun	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Seetannah Lutchmeenaraidoo	Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Local Government
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Marie Joseph Noël Etienne Ghislain Sinatambou	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Ravi Yerrigadoo	Attorney General
Hon. Mahen Kumar Seeruttun	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
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Hon. Mrs Marie-Aurore Marie-Joyce Perraud	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sudarshan Bhadain	Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform

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Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries,
Shipping and Outer Islands

Hon. Jayeshwur Raj Dayal, CSK, PDSM,
QPM

Minister of Environment, Sustainable Development and
Disaster and Beach Management

Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen
Cheong, MSK

Minister of Civil Service and Administrative
Reforms

Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn

Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations,
Employment and Training

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 07 of 2015

Sitting of 05 March 2015

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 11.50 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to apologise for the delay in starting the business of the day due to an administrative and technical problem. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

MINISTER OF TECHNOLOGY, MINISTER OF FINANCIAL SERVICES, ATTORNEY GENERAL/Mr D. G. & DUFRY LTD REPRESENTATIVES - MEETING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs, Minister for Rodrigues and National Development Unit whether, in regard to the discussions allegedly having taken place recently between, on the one hand, the hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation, the hon. Minister of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms and the hon. the Attorney General and Mr D. G., and the representatives of Dufry Ltd., the overseas supplier of Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd., on the other hand, he will state if he has confirmed with the said Ministers whether same have indeed taken place and, if so, indicate –

- (a) the content of the discussions;
- (b) the involvement, if any, of Mr D. G. in the said discussions, and
- (c) if the two representatives of Dufry Ltd. have been prevented from leaving Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition is aware, this Government has been elected with a clear mandate to investigate into malpractices and irregularities with regard to all major Government contracts which have been entered into by the previous regime.

In fact, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, himself, has pledged to the Nation that he would clean such “*pourriture*”, and to clean such “*pourriture*” and to give him a helping hand, he got me out of Réduit.

The people of Mauritius has witnessed that this Government has already unveiled serious malpractices and irregularities in many quarters, including major Government contracts like the one with Betamax, Neo Town, Jin Fei and Terre Rouge-Verdun.

A new Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms has been set up, and accountability and adherence to the principles of good governance are clearly high on the agenda of this Government.

The newly created Ministry has been looking into processes and procedures in the awarding and performance of major contracts.

As the hon. Leader of the Opposition is also aware, a lot has been said about the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd. The House will recall incriminating statements made in relation to procurement contracts for goods and services.

The second Member of Moka-Quartier Militaire, Hon. P. Jugnauth, had reported the matter to the Police in January 2013, but nothing had been done under the previous regime. This Government will certainly not turn a blind eye to such malpractices.

Currently, the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd falls under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office. This was not always the case, as the former Prime Minister decided to remove the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd from the portfolio of Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and brought it under his aegis.

My Office, in collaboration with the Ministry of Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms, started a thorough review of the activities of the MDFP and two major contracts which have been signed with a foreign supplier, Dufry A. G., namely one exclusive supply contract for goods to be sold at the shops of Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd in Mauritius and Rodrigues and a Management Service Agreement also for more than one billion rupees.

It is also worth mentioning that the Management Services Agreement provides that the CEO of MDFP is a representative of Dufry A. G.

The Office of the Attorney General also collaborated in the review being conducted.

I was personally being kept informed of all the developments relating to the ongoing review, including meetings and discussions which were being held with relevant stakeholders, and their outcomes.

With regard to part (a) of the question, I am informed that, at one stage during the review, several documents were provided by Mr D. Gooljaury with regard to another contract which had been signed between the supplier Dufry A. G. and a company called Frydu which had been incorporated in Switzerland.

Mr D. Gooljaury had provided several emails exchanged between the top management of Dufry A. G. in Switzerland, Mrs Nandanee Soornack, Mr Laurent Obadia, a lawyer in Switzerland called Alexander Schwartz and himself relating to negotiations of the setting up of a structure for the payment of commissions through the creation of an agency sales agreement.

A share purchase agreement was also provided, which showed that the shareholders of Frydu were Mrs Nandanee Soornack and D. Gooljaury had transferred shares to a company called Wigam Holdings Ltd set up in Nicosia, Cyprus.

A meeting was scheduled at the Prime Minister's Office on Monday 16 February 2015 at 15 hours in the office of Secretary for Home Affairs, at which a senior member of Dufry A. G. top management from Switzerland and the local CEO, Mr Simo Carevic, had been convened. However, the senior member of top management did not turn up and instead delegated a junior member from his team, who was dispatched from Tunisia, Africa.

At that meeting, several questions were put to them, for which they could not provide any explanation.

Later, on the same day, the two representatives of Dufry A. G., who were apparently having dinner with Mr D. Gooljaury, asked for a meeting that same evening, as Mr Galet was flying out the next day. Accordingly, a meeting was held at the Attorney General's residence where his colleagues and himself were present, and the two representatives agreed to meet at the Attorney General's residence.

The discussions revolved around full and frank disclosure of all documents from Dufry A. G. to the Government of Mauritius regarding the agency sales agreement which had been signed by Frydu and the transfers of shares to Wigam Holdings Ltd.

With regard to part (b) of the question, Mr D. Gooljaury had provided documents relating to transactions which had taken place prior to 2013, when he was apparently kicked out of the structure when part of the ownership was transferred to Wigam Holdings Ltd.

Mr D. Gooljaury asked the representatives of Dufry A. G. to provide to the Government of Mauritius all other documents from October 2013 to date. Both representatives of Dufry A. G. could not provide same, and had to contact several representatives of their higher management to obtain relevant information regarding the structure of Dufry A. G., Frydu and Wigam Holdings Ltd post October 2013.

With regard to part (c) of the question, as no information or email were available for potential suspected offence that have been committed, the representatives of the Dufry A.G. were informed that the authorities had to be informed of the matter, which was done.

I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on Tuesday 17 February 2015, an objection to departure was lodged to prevent the two representatives from Dufry A.G. from leaving Mauritius. Subsequently, Senior Management of Dufry Ltd in Switzerland provided to Government a number of documents evidencing the following -

- (1) with regard to the contract between the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise (MDFP) and its supplier, Dufry Travel Retail AG, it has come to light that substantial commissions have been paid by Dufry in Switzerland to a company called Frydu, which has been set up in Switzerland as recipient of commissions of 4.2% of net sales of MDFP.
- (2) Frydu was initially 50% owned by Nandane Soornack and D. Gooljaury, each. A Swiss Bank a/c with VP Bank (Schweiz) AG in Zurich was opened for Frydu to receive commissions on the supply contract with MDFP as follows -
 - On 24 October 2012, EUR 431,000.
 - On 02 May 2013, EUR 211,351.
 - On 21 October 2013, EUR 464,179.

At that stage, commissions paid on the MDFP supply contract amounts to EUR 1,106,530.

Madam Speaker, on 12 October 2013, Nandane Soornack and D. Gooljaury, then transferred their shareholding in Frydu to a company incorporated in Cyprus called Wigam Holding Ltd, which was apparently controlled and managed by an Irish national, resident in the UK.

A Share Purchase Agreement dated 12 October 2013 was signed by Nandane Soornack and D. Gooljaury to change the ownership structure of Frydu apparently to accommodate one Laurent Obadia and Wigam Holdings Ltd. Nevertheless, Frydu continued to receive commissions from Dufry Travel Retail AG in the Swiss bank account during the year 2014, as follows -

- On 06 February 2014, an amount of EUR 389,558 was paid to VP Bank in Zurich, but then Frydu's bank account was changed to another bank in Geneva, called *Union Bancaire Privée*, UBP SA, Rue du Rhone, Geneva, and
- On 16 July 2014, commissions of EUR 337,134 were received in the new bank account.

Madam Speaker, on 16 January 2015, a further amount of EUR 296,466 representing 4.2% of net sales of Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd was paid to Frydu.

In total, Madam Speaker, Dufry has to date paid commissions of EUR 2,129,688 to Frydu on the supply contract only with Mauritius Duty Free Paradise Ltd.

Madam Speaker, the Government will have no stone unturned to clean up the country.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, is the hon. Prime Minister seriously telling us that it was proper for three Ministers in the middle of the night and until 2.00 a.m. to respond to a request from Mr Gooljaury for him to bring these two gentlemen to the Attorney General's residence in Quatre Bornes, whereas Mr Gooljaury should himself have been arrested, as we all know, in the Roches Noires bungalow case. Is the hon. Prime Minister telling us that this was proper?

The Prime Minister: Well, since at least one was to leave or both were leaving, and since the three Ministers were having a dinner at the place of the Attorney General and they wanted to have all relevant documents, I do not consider it improper. I think they were fully justified to do what they have done.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker,...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please! Order, please! Please, allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to ask his question. Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: *Zot pé faire expré pou pas pose question!* The Prime Minister...

(Interruptions)

Who said that? Madam Speaker, did you hear?

Madam Speaker: I did. Hon. Jhugroo, could you, please withdraw what you just said. The mot '*volere*' is unparliamentary.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, I am asking you to withdraw the word!

Mr Bérenger: Or if it was somebody else, he should be, at least, decent...

Mr Hurreeram: I withdraw!

Mr Bérenger: *Mais ratt target, pas mo la faute!*

(Interruptions)

So, it is confirmed that the three Ministers were there, that these two gentlemen came, proudly escorted by Mr Gooljaury. This is confirmed. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell me how, therefore, yesterday - *en direct à la télévision* - the hon. Minister for Good Governance said he was not present, because he was not in Mauritius, he was with the Queen in London?

(Interruptions)

He said that! It is recorded. It is on ION News. Shame!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Mr Bérenger: If they want, go to ION News! Last night, we heard him replying to that effect.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I did hear him, but there must have been some confusion about the date on which they met, because it is a fact that the hon. Member was absent for some time from the country.

Mr Bérenger: Madam Speaker, he said that he was not in Mauritius when the dinner took place on 16 February. Can I, therefore, ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he can tell us on what dates the hon. Minister was out of Mauritius and back?

The Prime Minister: He was absent from 21 February to 07 March.

Mr Bérenger: The dinner took place on 16.

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: 03 March !

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Therefore, it is established...

The Prime Minister: Sorry, I also understand that hon. Minister Bhadain never said what is being alleged.

Mr Bérenger: It is easy to obtain a recording from ION News last night. Easy! And, therefore, it is established that the Minister was in Mauritius, was at that dinner.

The Prime Minister: Well, that I have already said, they were present, they were there and for what purpose.

(Interruptions)

What are we arguing about, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: I invite the hon. Prime Minister to have his services, and if required, that we, Members, should hear the hon. Minister saying that last night.

(Interruptions)

Of course, they were there, including ION News, Madam Speaker! Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that on 26 February these two representatives sworn an affidavit before the Supreme Court here in Mauritius, damning, according to them? Has the hon. Prime Minister attempted to obtain a copy of that affidavit?

The Prime Minister: No, I have not got anything of that sort. I have read on the papers that they have sworn affidavits, but how much can you rely on their affidavits?

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Shut up!

The information is also, Madam Speaker...

(Interruptions)

... that the whole thing was recorded; the whole dinner, the whole conversation was recorded and it is being held by the firm concerned. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister – since we are talking about good governance - whether he will request both a copy of the affidavit and from the company concerned, a copy of the recorded conversations during the whole evening?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I will be pleased to have them. I hope people concerned will send them to me.

Mr Bérenger: It was published in the press that this dinner took place and so on, very serious innuendoes, can I know whether the Police took statements from Mr Gooljaury, the three Ministers concerned, and the paper that published that, the ‘Weekend’ of 01 March 2015?

The Prime Minister: I cannot answer that because I have not got the information.

Mr Bérenger: Can we know whether the Police has impounded phones because, according to my information, Mr Gooljaury phoned the Ministers before bringing the two gentlemen in? Has the Police impounded the phones of, especially Mr Gooljaury, but of the Ministers also?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I am not aware of this.

Mr Bérenger: Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that during those conversations as per the affidavit, it was offered....

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, can I proceed?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhadain, please don’t interrupt!

Mr Bérenger: So, Madam Speaker, will the hon. Prime Minister be surprised that according to the other side - that is why it is important that we get the recordings and the affidavit – dirty business was proposed to them in exchange for information against the former Prime Minister and according to them ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Bérenger: ... it was suggested by one of the three ...

(Interruptions)

...that they should enjoy the company of women and girls in Mauritius?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I have no trust whatsoever in those dirty rotten fellows.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: It is good to hear, but will the hon. Prime Minister go to the bottom of the whole thing, request copies of both the affidavit and the recordings?

The Prime Minister: I just answered that!

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister passes judgment before he hears witnesses.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, as far as Mr Gooljaury is concerned, it has been confirmed, I think, that the dinner took place, that he phoned and so on; so, can I insist at least his phone - and later on I am given to understand he phoned the Police also in that affair, before turning up at the airport on the day these two gentlemen left. Has the Police or is the Police going to interview Mr Gooljaury, impound his phones and find out the truth about that?

The Prime Minister: I have no information about that.

Mr Bérenger: I take it that the hon. Prime Minister has no information that he was at the airport also on the day that these gentlemen left. This also!

The Prime Minister: How can I know whether they were there or elsewhere?

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister could have asked his Chief Executive since apparently he had a meeting with them and so on.

(Interruptions)

Palabres! Palabres! This is the biggest shame that can fall on the country!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

If there is no order, I will have to suspend the session!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order!

Mr Bérenger: Of course, Madam Speaker, we are absolutely in favour of every possible inquiry by the proper persons, not in the middle of the night by Ministers and Mr Gooljaury. We are totally in favour of a full inquiry on the transaction of the former Prime Minister with Mauritius Duty Free Paradise, but this should not be a pretext for that kind!

(Interruptions)

Can I have some silence, Madam Speaker! You have put the hon. Member to order! You have called him to order!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Okay, I have asked all hon. Members not to lose the time of the House. Allow the hon. Leader of the Opposition to ask his question and allow the hon. Prime Minister to reply to his question.

Mr Bérenger: It has been confirmed that interdiction to departure was lodged against the two employees of the firm concerned. Has the hon. Prime Minister checked who talked to the Police for that to be lifted, whether it was not one of the three Ministers plus Mr Gooljaury?

The Prime Minister: The only fact that I know is that Police took certain action.

Mr Bérenger: You don't want to know, obviously! Can I know on that score whether any kind of representation has been made by the French Embassy concerning this *interdiction* to departure and so on and we have all learned about the visit by the French Ambassador to the Ag. Commissioner of Police at 08.00 in the morning?

The Prime Minister: Well, I am not aware of this. Neither the Ambassador nor the Commissioner has talked to me about that.

Mr Bérenger: Okay! My last question, Madam Speaker, will be: being given the urgent need to establish the full truth, *d'aller au fond de l'affaire*, will the hon. Prime Minister be prepared to invite these two representatives back to Mauritius on a guarantee of both their security and their immunity to come and to spell out their part of the truth being given that the three Ministers concerned and Mr Gooljaury are already here available to the Police?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Well, I must say one thing...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! The Rt. hon. Prime Minister is replying.

(Interruptions)

Can I call you to order, hon. Bhadain! The Rt. hon. Prime Minister is replying; allow him to reply!

The Prime Minister: I must make one thing very clear, Madam Speaker, the three Ministers had not been investigating. Having got certain information, they simply wanted to help so that the necessary document and evidence can be made available to the Police. That was the main concern and all the rest that the hon. Leader of the Opposition is speaking about is all superfluous.

Madam Speaker: Okay, no question!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10 (2)

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Housing and Lands (Mr S. Soodhun) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(12.18 p.m.)

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

CT POWER PROJECT - LETTER OF COMFORT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Thank you, Madam Speaker, for allowing me to make a statement.

In answer to the Private Notice Question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition on Tuesday 03 March 2015, I stated that my Ministry had not received the letter of comfort which CT Power had been asked to provide.

Yesterday, 04 March at 14.36 hours, an email was received from one Dato Subramaniam reading as follows –

“Dear, Sir,

I refer to media reports on your response to the Public Notice Question on CT Power Project at Parliament yesterday.

I believe that you had somehow not been informed that we had sent a copy of the “Letter of Comfort” to the Ministry of Finance on 27 February 2015 and hence your response.

We wish to correct the position and are pleased to advise you accordingly in letter as attached.

I thank you for your kind support.

Regards

Dato M. Subramaniam”

That email included a letter from Dato Subramaniam informing me that CT Power had, on 27 February last, delivered to the Ministry of Finance, a letter of comfort alleged to be in

compliance with Condition 15 of the EIA licence delivered to CT Power. I am going to table a copy of that letter.

Attached to that email was a document alleged to amount to a “letter of comfort” emanating from a company called “Aventus Capital (UK) Private Limited”.

I have consulted my colleague, the Minister of Finance who agrees that this letter is not a letter of comfort as required by Government.

I have considered the letter from Aventus and I accordingly see no reason to alter the views I expressed in my reply to the Private Notice Question of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

I have to stress that, at the time I gave my reply to the Private Notice Question, neither my colleague the Minister of Finance nor myself had cognizance of that correspondence. I place on the Table of the Assembly a copy of the whole correspondence including the alleged letter of comfort.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan! Hon. Bhagwan, please!

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE FINANCE AND AUDIT (AMENDMENT) BILL

(No. I of 2015)

Order for Second reading read.

The Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr S. Lutchmeenaraidoo):
Madam Speaker, I move that the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill (No. I of 2015) be read a second time.

The object of the Bill is to provide for –

- (a) a simplification of the annual estimates of revenue and expenditure, both recurrent and capital, in respect of the services of the Government;
- (b) the appropriation of the estimated financial requirements, by vote of expenditure instead of by programme, and

- (c) a change in Government financial year from calendar year to a period of 12 months ending 30 June.

In the Bill we are presenting to the House today, we are bringing a number of amendments to the Finance and Audit Act before the budget to simplify the process of annual appropriation of budgetary resources, make the Estimates documentation much simpler, clearer and more user-friendly. We are also making provisions for the use of public funds.

The Programme-Based Budget (PBB) Estimates in its current format has proved to be a document that is unnecessarily complicated not to say opaque for Members of the National Assembly and the public at large making the appropriation process at the National Assembly tedious and laborious.

Madam Speaker, let me re-assure the House that the changes we are bringing, while simplifying the whole process will adhere fully to the principles of a modern and performance-based budgeting approach.

The Budget Estimates will continue to be presented in a 3-year rolling Macro Fiscal Framework and a Medium Term Expenditure Framework.

There will continue to be a full disclosure of information on the financial resources being appropriated in relation to all the services of Government in the Budget. The details of expenditure will continue to be set out under each Vote of Expenditure in terms of sub-heads and items of expenditure and the House will continue to have full opportunity to put questions on their use at the level of the Committee of Supply.

Appropriation will continue to be for a total sum that integrates both recurrent expenditure and capital expenditure.

I should stress that all along my Ministry has had consultations with the IMF - in fact, a delegation was here last week with whom we had discussions and we had a consensus reached on what I am just announcing - and other Development Partners were consulted also and we have taken into account their comments and observations.

I would like to highlight the main provisions of the Bill.

Clause 3 of the Bill provides for a definition of the term “head of expenditure” so as to harmonise with the term ‘vote of expenditure’ contained in the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly.

Clause 3 also provides for a definition of the term “department” for budgeting purposes. It can include a Ministry, a Government Department and the Centralised Services of Government.

The Budget Estimates will now be presented by Vote of Expenditure for each department and the sums will be appropriated by the National Assembly by Votes of Expenditure under a new budget format.

The period of October to December has proved to be inconvenient and hectic for both Parliament as well as the public and private sectors regarding the conduct of the Budget exercise, and the enactment of the Appropriation Bill and the Finance Bill. In addition, the requirement to close financial accounts on 31 December, on the eve of New Year, has been putting a lot of pressure on Government administration. Accordingly, Clause 4 provides for restoring the definition of financial year to ‘a period of 12 months ending 30 June’. This change will take effect on 01 January 2015.

To ensure a smooth transition, I am proposing to present simultaneously two Appropriation Bills together with their Budget Estimates: one covering the 6 months period of 01 January to 30 June 2015; and the second one covering the 12 months period of 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2016.

I would like now to explain the other provisions of the Bill.

Clause 5 provides for the possibility of carry-over of capital expenditure in the context of our gradual move from cash accounting to accrual basis accounting in the Public Sector.

Clause 6 provides for an alignment of the ‘Vote on Account’ provision in the Finance and Audit Act with those of the Constitution. Thus, the maximum period of vote on account will be raised from 4 months to 6 months and the limit of expenditure from one-third to one-half of previous year’s budget.

Clause 7 provides for every Ministry or Department to submit a yearly report on their performance as well as its intended strategic direction in respect of the next three years. This will contribute to better performance management, better reporting and greater transparency in the Public Sector. In fact and in essence, we are moving away from a Programme-Based Budgeting approach to a more Performance-Based Budgeting approach.

Clause 9 provides for exclusion from the ceiling of Advances of car loans to public officers as per the PRB entitlements and which are repayable over a period of five to seven years whereas Advances should normally be cleared within a period of one year only.

Clause 11 specifically empowers the Minister of Finance to issue financial instructions for the making of *virement* of funds. Previously, the authority of the Minister of Finance in respect of reallocation/*virement* was specified in the Financial Management Manual.

Since the appropriation as from fiscal year 2015 will be made by Vote of Expenditure instead of by Programmes, the Supplementary Appropriation Bill for fiscal years 2013 and 2014 will likewise be made by Vote of Expenditure. Provision to that effect has been made in Clause 14 of the draft Bill.

Clause 17 provides for consequential amendments to the Local Government Act, the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act, the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act and the Bank of Mauritius Act. However, since a Municipal Council, a District Council and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly have already presented their 2015 Budget, the change in the financial year for them will take effect on 01 January 2016.

I should mention that the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has given its agreement in principle to the inclusion of the proposed amendments to the RRA Act in this Bill.

The change in financial year will have to be accompanied by a number of adjustments in many other areas. These are being studied and discussed with the relevant stakeholders in order to minimise any inconveniences.

In respect of personal income tax, it is proposed to align the tax year with the new financial year. Accordingly, there will be exceptionally two income tax returns during the year 2015. The first one will be the normal income tax return to be submitted by 31st March and the second one to be submitted by 30th September 2015 to cover the six months income for the period January to June 2015. Thereafter, by every 30th September the annual tax return will have to be submitted.

Concerning corporate tax, companies will continue to submit their annual income tax returns 6 months after the close of their accounting year as at present.

Madam Speaker, hon. Members will note that following the enactment of the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill, the Standing Orders and Rules of the Assembly will have to be amended accordingly. In this respect, the hon. Prime Minister will move a motion to the House for the Standing Orders Committee to look into the provisions relating to the procedures in connection with the Appropriation Bill.

I would like to conclude by emphasising that the amendments to the Finance and Audit Act are not only simplifying the estimates and the process of appropriation but will also contribute to promote accountability and transparency in the management of public money.

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

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo) rose and seconded.

Madam Speaker: Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(12.30 p.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger): Madam Speaker, as the hon. Minister of Finance has pointed out, there are two main issues here, one, giving up on programme budgeting and secondly, going back to a financial year that ends at the end of June every year instead of at the end of December. These are the two main issues and I will offer a few comments thereon, with your permission, Madam Speaker.

In fact, the hon. Minister has tried to oppose programme budgeting and performance budgeting. This is not very serious! We all know that performance budgeting is one step or is supposed to be one step in the direction of programme budgeting. Programme budgeting well prepared, well done, well administered, is the last stage on the way to more and more performance budgeting. So, it is not very serious to oppose one to the other.

As far as we are concerned, in Government - I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will remember - in 2002-2003 in Government together, we moved one step ahead on performance budgeting on the way eventually to programme budgeting. We introduced what was then called and what we then called the Medium Term Expenditure Programme, that is, instead of looking at things one year to the next and before reaching the full programme budgeting stage, it was one step in that direction.

The point is that this whole matter of performance and programme budgeting is a process and we have been for years now engaged in that process. I agree that programme budgeting was not well introduced in Mauritius and has not been well implemented either. But to me, it is a question of throwing the baby away with the dirty water. To us, it is clear that it is *un pas en arrière*. It is a step backward and no talk of performance budgeting instead of programme budgeting will hide the fact that it is *un pas en arrière*. It is throwing the baby away with the dirty water.

There is no use, Madam Speaker, at paragraph 4 (b) to bring in what is purely an eyewash. In the Bill before us, paragraph 4B is entitled: "Report on performance", and as the hon. Minister said earlier on, it says that –

"Every department shall, not later than 31 October in every year, submit to the Minister, a report on its performance in respect of its previous fiscal year and on its strategic direction in respect of the following 3 fiscal years."

This is merely an eyewash! I suppose it is done so as to run into not too much trouble with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, Madam Speaker.

In fact, as we know, now programme budgeting has become - all over the world, not only in the developed countries - but has become the norm all over the world. I am given to understand that some 50% of the countries in Africa itself have reached that stage of programme budgeting and we choose to move one step back and this point in time, Madam Speaker. We, therefore, disagree with that. We agree that the way programme budgeting has been devised, introduced, implemented *laisse à désirer* but, we should have kept on moving ahead.

A lot of people are satisfied that we do away with the programme budgeting. Okay! Because *ça demande des efforts*. We should have improved on programme budgeting and not thrown, as I said, the baby away with the dirty water and it is the wrong signal on performance in general. That is what worries me. The hon. Minister has tried to oppose performance budgeting to programme budgeting. Artificial! It is a process and we had reached, in an imperfect way but, we had reached the programme budgeting. When we stopped that it is the wrong signal that we send to everybody not just the staff of the Ministry of Finance but to everybody in the country, it is the wrong signal as relates to performance in general.

As far as the second issue is concerned, I am not convinced that it is right now that we go back to the financial year as defined before, that is, ending 30 June of every year. *Ça va tout chambouler* and it costs money whenever you go back on an issue like that. It costs money when we move to calendar and now it is going to cost money for us to revert on that also. What worries me is that it will make, for a number of years, comparisons all the more difficult. When we will want to compare financial years, performance three years ago as compared to this year and then next financial year, however defined, it will make that vital exercise of comparison much more difficult, at least, during a few years before we resettle down in the financial year that ends on 30 June.

We are not for going back on the two issues. We think that we should have moved forward with the programme budgeting and that we should have kept the calendar year procedures.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungrur!

(12.38 p.m.)

Mr D. Sesungrur (First Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE): Madam Speaker, I would like to speak in support of my colleague, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development and particularly expand on the nature and purpose of the amendments proposed to the Finance and Audit Act.

I have heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition saying that the Programme- Based Budgeting has not been well implemented and he is also not agreeable for the change in the financial year. Being myself a practising accountant for over 25 years, I have always seen the benefit of a system in its actual result.

When you looked back from the implementation of the Programme-Based Budgeting and the results that it has produced for the past Government, it speaks for itself. We have seen lots of cases of budget overrun, lots of cases of dilapidation of funds, many projects have not been well implemented and we've heard the Rt. hon. Prime Minister stating last Tuesday the billions of rupees of arrears that have been accumulated by the NDU. These are gross mismanagement of public money and mismanagement of public funds. So, I fully support the initiative of the Minister of Finance and Economic Development in bringing all necessary

changes and reforms which will improve productivity and efficiency of our economy. This is very important because this legislation is particularly focused on the budgetary process and the estimate of expenditure.

Madam Speaker, it is Government objective to transform Mauritius into an economically vibrant country and to improve the quality of life of one and all. This is stated in our programme. Government is committed to conducting business on the principles of discipline, transparency, accountability and exemplary governance. This implies responsible and judicious use of public funds and a crusade to weed out wastage. The amendments which are proposed are rightly in this direction. In this respect, reforms are necessary to inject productivity, efficiency and quality of service. Money is a rare commodity and we need to manage it properly. Not the way the previous Government did.

In this process, budgetary planning and control is singularly important as the rising aspirations of people are placing more demands on financial resources. Budget is the Government most powerful tool to meet the needs and priorities of a country and its people. It helps Government in decision such as how public funds will be raised and spent. Management of public finance basically deals with all aspects of resource mobilisation, prioritisation of programmes, the budgetary process, efficient management of resources and exercising controls. No Government has a greater responsibility than its stewardship of public finances which is an essential part of the governance process.

Madam Speaker, the financial planning process is an important process in making sound financial decision for the country and implementing the governmental programme. The Bill focuses primarily on the administrative aspects of the planning of Government and budgetary process and proposes a new financial year to end on 30 June instead of 31 December, as has been widely explained by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

The objects and reason of this Bill is to adapt the Finance and Audit Act to the new political and economic context. The Bill makes better provision for the control and management of public monies. Madam Speaker, the Bill provides a new legislative framework for the financial planning process. It is necessary to allow the Government to implement its programme, vision and goals. The Bill provides for the management of public finance in an economical, efficient and effective manner consistent with best practices.

The Bill proposes a new architecture for financial planning and budgeting at the national level. Government wants to simplify the budgetary process which will be easy to understand with a view to getting a better outcome for the country and for the people. The Bill requires new arrangement to be in place before the next budget and it is urgent. The Bill proposes a shift from the Programme-Based Budgeting, which is considered to be too prescriptive, rigid and restrict Government action in certain cases. A more simplistic method is, therefore, proposed and explained by the Minister of Finance and Economic Development which will have the advantage of being understandable, flexible and will build capacity.

The aim of the present legislation is to foster more open participatory approach with a flexible budget calendar. It is also aimed at measuring advancing transparency, accountability and public participation in the budget process by allowing ample time for discussion and meeting with the stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, the new law when voted, will bring in flexibility and allow budget reallocation in certain cases where this is necessary. This will allow greater effectiveness and efficiency and better outcomes for the Government and the country. Madam Speaker, in this Amendment Bill provision, provisions have been made for progress reports on achievement and performance. Continuous assessment and progress evaluation with regard to publicly financed project is a vital aspect of good governance. It should be the aim of everybody to ensure that each rupee of tax payers' money is properly spent.

The IMF report on Mauritius title: Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability Assessment released in 2011, highlights that in many instances, extra budgetary units are not fully monitored and reported. A decline in performance was also noted with regard to expenditure outturn compared to original year approved budget.

The Programme-Based Budgeting has not been successful instilling rigour in resource allocation and improving overall management of the public finances. There have been many abuses and, in some cases, massive budget overrun.

Madam Speaker, I will end my remarks here because I know that there are other members who would wish to contribute. The amendments cover vital issues that need the House urgent approval and I think that we need to vote this Bill.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(12.46 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, this Bill is being debated at a time where many African countries are progressively moving away from Line Budgeting towards a system which is more focused on the outcome and places more emphasis on results. The rationale for this move is well explained by the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative, a professional network of Senior Budget Officials in African Ministries of Finance and Planning, and I quote –

“The shift from traditional budgeting methods to modern budgeting methods with results and performance at its focus is noted to be more useful as a policy or decision-making tool and assures elected and administrative officials of what is being accomplished with the money as opposed to merely showing that it has been used for the purpose of approved inputs.

In moving towards performance budgeting, countries would be adopting a system of planning, budgeting and evaluation that emphasises the relationship between money budgeted and results expected. The process often requires a programme budgeting structure, which many African countries are moving towards and at a more advanced stage, incorporate explicit performance measures and systems of performance assessment including higher level of accountability with associated sanctions and rewards.”

Today, Madam Speaker, we are doing exactly the opposite. For this side of the House, this represents a giant leap backward.

When Programme-Based Budgeting was introduced in 2008, there was consensus in this House whether from the Government side or from the Opposition side, whether it was from the hon. Leader of the Opposition or from hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun and hon. Bodha who intervened on the Bill. There was broad consensus. Of course, there were certain reservations, certain words of caution uttered, whether our civil servants were properly equipped, properly trained to go and shift into this new way of budgeting. But, there was broad-based consensus in this House.

It could not have been otherwise Madam Speaker, because this represented the culmination of a process that started as far back as 2001 during the Government of MMM/MSM; as far back as June 2001, when the MSM/MMM Government presented its

economic agenda for the new millennium. And this policy culminated in 2003 in the adoption of the medium term expenditure framework.

In a paper issued by the Ministry of Finance in 2003, the rationale for replacing line budgeting to a programme-based budget under the medium term expenditure framework was explained as follows –

“The medium term expenditure framework is the casting of the budget on a three-year rolling basis within a sustainable macroeconomic framework. It is presented here as an integrated version, which includes a programme-based budgeting component so-called result based budgeting. The current budget system line itemisation, which MTEF seeks to replace, emphasises inputs or budgetary resources without linking them to output or results achieved. The integrated version of MTEF on the other hand is intended to focus on outputs and outcomes as a means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of expenditure.”

“Budgetary allocations are tied to measurable objectives while performance indicators are an inherent part of MTEF, allow progress to be measured in terms of attaining the objectives. As budget programmes, measurable and realistic objectives and performance indicators substitute for line item, and the budget is presented within a realistic medium term framework, greater discipline is introduced in the budget formulation. The sectoral allocation becomes transparent and is based on well-defined policy choices. Accountability is enhanced in the budget execution process as the Programme Manager is tied to performance and results. Public expenditure management is improved.”

Accountability is enhanced, public expenditure management is improved. That was the vision of the 2001-2005 MSM/MMM Government when they advocated a move from the line budgeting to a gradual project-based budgeting.

The medium term expenditure framework was implemented in phases. It started in five pilot sectors. First of all, in 2004/2005, it was extended to the education and training sector. Health, social assistance, environment, including sewerage, and public infrastructure, including transport sectors, were earmarked to undergo a similar transformation in the second phase. Of course, there were teething problems. As with any new system, there was bound to

be teething problems, and in a case study published by the Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative entitled “Programme-based budgeting: Experiences and Lessons from Mauritius”, this is what they had to say about the Mauritian experience –

“Within the pilot ministries there was a no change in the culture of budgeting, which remained incremental and adversarial. With no explicit policy framework guiding the budget process, ministry officials had little incentive to prioritise and control spending within politically agreed, hard budget constraints.”

So, Madam Speaker, there was a need for tougher fiscal management. There was a need for greater coordination between the Ministries, greater coordination between the line Ministry and the Finance Ministry. There was need for civil servants to be more accountable, to start thinking in terms of delivering output, in terms of delivering results as opposed to just meeting targets set in every year’s recurrent and capital expenditure budget. It is no surprise that with the help of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, the then Government came up with project-based budgeting. Addressing the House in 2008, the then Minister of Finance, hon. Sithanen, went at length to explain the rationale about moving from line budgeting to project-based budgeting. He gave concrete examples about how things would improve, how there would be a more efficient allocation of resources, how there would be more operational efficiency.

I am not going to take the time of the House to repeat everything that was said by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance or any of the hon. Members who intervened on that matter in that Bill. Suffices to say that in 2008, when this House moved from line budgeting to project-based budgeting, there was broad consensus, and that was in line with what was happening in the international arena, in line with best practices.

Madam Speaker, the introduction of programme-based budget has resulted in more collaborative relationship between the Budget Strategy and Management Department in the Ministry of Finance and the line Ministries, with more interaction with the Ministries concerned. In fact, the Budget Strategy and Management Department itself has seen its role evolved, because now it has to sit down with the line Ministries, discuss the objectives, analyse the result, and see whether they have achieved the output that they had set themselves one year before, and what output they intend to target in one year’s time, because project-based budgeting was on a three-year basis.

Similarly, project-based budgeting enhanced greater professionalism among the various civil servants in line Ministries. At the level of each Ministry, focus was changed. Each Ministry had to have a strategic plan, each Ministry had to set objectives, set targets, determine priorities and implement policies in a cost effective and timely manner. There was an on-going monitoring system because civil servants knew that they were going to be accountable during the budget allocation process when MPs would question whether the targets that they had put on themselves had been achieved or not.

Of course, the new system is not perfect, Madam Speaker. Of course, there is room for improvement. The Director of Audit still highlights wastage and inefficiencies, but that is not a reason to stop the process and revert to a system of line budgeting, which is far more opaque, with no key performance indicators.

Madam Speaker, the second change being brought by this Bill today is the change of a fiscal year from the calendar year end 31 December to 30 June. Again, in 2008, when the decision was taken in this House to change the fiscal year, to align it with the calendar year, there was broad-based consensus. Madam Speaker would remember that the rationale for having the fiscal year on 30 June was that back in the colonial years, most of the proceeds, most of the GDP of Mauritius relied on sugar cane, and by May, June, we had an idea about all the proceeds that were going to come in, and it was easier therefore and better to manage the cash flow also to have a budget on 30 June. Of course, this rationale no longer exists. Today, we have a diversified economy, and there is no need to go back to 30 June. But there is also another reason the then Minister of Finance, hon. Sithanen, put forward in support of changing, aligning the fiscal year to the calendar year, and that was to avoid confusion, because today there is a lot of data collection, a lot of statistics that are collected. Some are based on 30 June, some are based on the calendar year. In order to avoid any uncertainty and to have consistency, and also to be able to analyse and compare economic and social indicators, it was felt that an alignment was necessary.

Today, I have listened carefully to the hon. Minister of Finance, and I am totally not convinced. He has not advanced a single reason to justify moving from December to June, if not because in December people are more busy and try to go on holiday or what not.

So, for us this is also a big leap backward, Madam Speaker, and I don't know if the hon. Minister realises the harm he is causing, that the Government is causing to the business community by taking this decision today. Because, today we do not rely only on the domestic

economy, we have the global business sector and the global business sector where we have thousands of companies, dealings in trillions of dollars and they are used to filing their accounting records within six months. I heard the hon. Minister saying that, and I am glad he mentioned that he is going to keep for companies this flexibility of six months. Fair enough! But what about for the individuals, what about the cash flow management, and there are other repercussions. When are we going to have increment? Will the workers be paid an increment as from 01 July; will they be paid as from 01 January? Would there be a realignment of PRB Report to provide that, this year, we are going to have a double compensation? Are we going to have one compensation in July and another one in December or are we going to have two compensations next year? All this will inevitably create problems, because you will have to readjust all your accounting programmes, all your cash flow, all your budgetary projections, and again, Madam Speaker, I have not heard a single convincing reason why we have to backpedal and go back to how it was before 2008. Why get all the people through the stress - you know how stressful it is for a person to file his income tax return, especially people who are on pensions, especially people who are uneducated, people who are afraid that they may be arrested if they don't pay their tax in time. Now, we are going to make all these poor people, including pensioners to file two times their income tax return. Why? We have not been given any convincing answer, I am sorry, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, there is a third and very important change being brought by this Bill today before this House, and I am not surprised that it is not mentioned at all in any of the object in the Memorandum of Explanation that has been circulated with the Bill. I am talking about the amendment being brought to the First Schedule under the Act, Part A - DEPARTMENT, Attorney General's Office where the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions will henceforth be under the Attorney General's Office. My learned friend, hon. V. Baloomoody on Tuesday, in his intervention on the Government Programme, expressed strong objections to bringing back the office of the DPP under that of the Attorney General. I am not going to repeat whatever he said, suffice it to say that, on this side of the House, we fully support the arguments put forward by hon. Baloomoody. I would be failing in my duty as a Member of Parliament, I would be untrue to the oath that I have taken before this House, if I were not to direct the attention of hon. Members of this House to the potential Constitutional challenge to the decision that we are going to take today, approving this Bill. And, I am not the only one who feels this way. The very issue of the financial autonomy of the office of DPP was considered by the Law Reform Commission in an issue paper

published in March 2009, entitled the “Office of Directors of Public Prosecutions and the Constitutional Requirement for its Operational Autonomy”. We are not talking only about its Constitutional duties to prosecute, we are talking about its operational autonomy, and I would invite hon. Members to read that report which is very short, only four/ five pages, very succinct, very straight to the point. And in that report, Madam Speaker, the Law Reform Commission makes a very simple statement. We have the Constitution; the Constitution is the sovereign law of this land. Any Act of Parliament which is contrary to the Constitution will be declared null and void, and, in fact, even a Constitutional provision, an amendment to the Constitution can be deemed unconstitutional and can be struck down as has been reminded to us by the Privy Council.

(Interruptions)

I will explain to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. There was in the case of Philibert, which is the case I was referring to, an amendment to the Constitution - the mandatory sentencing in drug trafficking cases and the Law Lords, the Privy Council held that this Constitutional amendment went against Section 1 of the Constitution, which provides that Mauritius shall be a sovereign democratic State.

(Interruptions)

So, that an unconstitutional provision automatically is deemed to be *non écrit* by virtue of the decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, because under our Constitution after we became a Republic in 1992, we preserved the right of appeal to the Privy Council. So, the Privy Council is the apex court...

Madam Speaker: Yes, but hon. Uteem, can I bring you back to the object of this Bill? Can you come precisely to the object of this Bill, and come back to your speech with regard to the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill? You can mention, *en passant*, but you cannot go *in extenso* into another debate.

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, on a point of order, I would like to get your guidance on it. We are debating a Bill. The Bill proposes an amendment to a Schedule. We have to approve this new Schedule. So, we have to approve having the DPP’s office under the Attorney General’s Office and I am giving reasons why I think that this House should not approve the Second Schedule, in as far as it is making the DPP’s office no longer an item on its own, but a sub-item under the Attorney General’s Office. So, I would like to know in what way what I am talking is not relevant, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: What I said, hon. Uteem, is that you can mention *en passant*, you explain, but you cannot go *in extenso* into that debate.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Madam Speaker, it is in the Bill. I am trying to refer to this House the reason why this Section has been held to be unconstitutional in the opinion of the Reform Commission. Why, because in Mauritius we have recourse to the Privy Council and there has been a case known as Mohit vs DPP where the Privy Council has reinforced the obligation to have an autonomous DPP's Office, free from the Attorney General's Office. Lord MacKay in his Report, he revisited his Report in 2006 precisely to say that, in the light of the judgement of the Privy Council of Mohit versus DPP, the DPP's Office should be separate and distinct from the Attorney General's Office, And, it is for that very reason that the Law Reform Commission formed the opinion that the operational autonomy of the DPP's Office is a Constitutional requirement, and I quote -

“Since independence, the salary and other allowances of the DPP appear in Appropriation Acts as a vote item under the Attorney General's Office. This practice also is unconstitutional and must cease. We, therefore, recommend that henceforth in Appropriation Acts the budget of the Office of the DPP should appear as a vote item for an independent body, as is that of the Judiciary.”

So, this is the opinion of Constitutional lawyers, you have Guy Ollivry, one of the leading authority on Constitutional law, you have representatives from the Attorney General's Office. They formed the opinion that you need to have a vote item especially for the DPP. And I am not here, Madam Speaker, in any way condoning the DPP. In this House and outside this House, we have had chance to criticise the DPP. As a lawyer, I have challenged the opinion of the DPP. That is why Courts are there for. As a politician, I have challenged the decision of the DPP, be it in the Yatin Varma affair or the Med-Point saga or recently when he decided to object to leave which the families of the accused party in the case of *l'Amicale* went before the Privy Council.

As far as we are concerned, we are not here defending the DPP or the present person. We are talking about the office. The office has to be autonomous.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member from a sitting position is talking about the expense incurred by the DPP's office. Yes, if the DPP is overspending, if the DPP is acting irrationally; it is for Parliament, it is for us to come and decide whether to increase his budget or to decrease his budget. Parliament, as the Legislature, we will do that when we will come to the voting item, but it is not the Executive. It should not be the Attorney General. It should not be the Executive who has to decide whether the DPP whenever he will have to buy furniture, whenever he will have to attend a conference, he does not have to go and knock at the door of an Executive. This is why the more so to avoid of the pressure on the office of the DPP that we need to have...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, as I said, we are not defending the DPP here. We are defending the office. Of course, I will not go as far as the hon. Vice-Prime Minister who invited the DPP to join the executive of the Labour Party. I don't think that dragging the DPP in the political arena just because he is a relative, serves any purpose. In fact, quite the contrary....

(Interruptions)

...it is quite dangerous to do so because if we start with the DPP, we have also Judges who are related. So, are we, next time, going to challenge Judges because their husbands or children are in a political party. I think it is going very far when we try to amalgamate between the office of the DPP and his relationship with his siblings.

Madam Speaker, if ever there is a constitutional challenge to the decision of the Government of the day to insist on making the DPP answerable to the Attorney General for its budgetary requirements, then let it be known that hon. Members on this side of the House took very strong objection to this course of action.

Madam Speaker, it is not because this Government was elected on the slogan 'viré mam' that they think they can do anything...

(Interruptions)

...and have a mandate...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: ... to *dévire tout enbas lahaut.*

Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I am on my feet. Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Yes, hon. Minister! You can proceed!

(1.13 p.m.)

Mr Lutchmeenaraidoo: Madam Speaker, *je suis dans une situation un peu cocasse aujourd'hui.*

(Interruptions)

Because when I was Chairman of the Economic Commission of the MMM, systematically year in year out, we used to denounce the fact that the way the PBB was being misused by the then Government, had led to a situation where information had become very opaque and where the hon. Minister of Finance then with Mr Mansoor, had been using the PBB to mislead the House. I said it, year in year out in the Opposition that the PBB was being used by the hon. Minister of Finance to hide information from the House, to mislead the house, to mislead the nation. Why? Because the document was so complex, the PBB document is so complex, Madam Speaker, that even professionals in this House cannot make any sense out of it. I was having problem understanding it. I would say also that the hon. Leader of the Opposition knows it very well, had also problems at times interpreting the whole concept because it is very, very complicated. It becomes still more complicated when a Minister now is vicious enough to use this to hide information from public. This is what we said and, at that time, I promised, I said: "The day there is a change in Government, we will have to revert back to what I am suggesting today."

Therefore, that was the stand of the Opposition then. It makes sense even more. And the No. 2 issue is this: we are spending public funds; the House needs to understand how this money is being spent. The country needs to understand how this money is being spent. Now, it is not because at one moment the IMF has used us as a *cobaye* to test and try to see whether

the system could work in Mauritius that we should flow with it without questioning the fundamental principles of accounts. It must be transparent. And that was what motivated my action while becoming Minister of Finance. I said: "People need to understand what this Government is doing". Not only people, the House itself! By changing from PBB to what I am doing now, in fact, I am exposing myself to more questions. I will go with it because this is in the name of transparency. You know, the document was so thick and added to it - you remember- the special funds. The hon. Minister used to create special funds out of the air that was completely out of the control of the budget. Those were dark times - and for you also that was dark times because the technique, the accounting system was being used in the wrong way.

Therefore, I feel very comfortable today and I am sure the whole Government here feels very comfortable after all the abuse of power that the country has lived through year in year out, I think it makes sense that in our public meetings, out of Parliament, in Parliament we say we want this country to know that we are transparent. We are moving for transparency and we want people to know what is happening. In public funds, I am telling you I feel very comfortable to move to the former system.

Naturally, we have to ensure that money is not only well spent, but money is also accountable for, but that this fund also is used within a global context of performance for the country. We are very conscious of it. This is why, in fact, we have set up the Public Expenditure Control Bureau which is under the responsibility of my colleague, hon. Minister Bhadain and this is why we have also instituted, in the Ministry of Finance, a system where Ministries will have to report back on the performance of their Ministry.

So, we are very conscious that we have an engagement to explain, to justify and to feel good ourselves that what we are doing is good for the country. This is the feeling I have today. I am reverting back not because we are moving back from modernity. I am a bit proactive by nature but this type of proactiveness has not helped the country, has not helped Parliament. If we, in Parliament, cannot digest this PBB; for the new hon. Members here who are just elected, it is a real maze. It is very hard to make one's way through it because it is very complicated. And I know very few countries in the world which have experienced with this method and would say: "Success"!

If you put the question to me, in the Ministry, my own staff at the back here said: "Oh my god, fortunately we are stopping with it". Therefore, it hasn't helped my officers. It

has not helped this Parliament to see through reality as to the expenditure of former Governments. I am sure the nation also would love to be able to read a budget which any young guy, any young man, any student can read and understand. This is the aim of accounts. People should be in a position to understand, to judge and to say that the expenditure is good or not. So, I am reverting to something which is very simple.

All Members here will have in their hand a budget where you have a Ministry recurrent expenditure, capital expenditure, simple and easy to understand. So easy that I cannot hide when I need things to explain! So, for me, today this Bill is not only an implementation of this Government's intention of transparency. I wish to remind hon. Members, on the other side also, that we were at that time favourable to stop this gimmick of using a technique whereby a Minister could hide information, hide figures, and I say again, mislead the House and the population when giving information. So, I am very happy that we are moving on the right track.

Number two: the question of reverting back to the financial year as it was before. I agree with hon. Utem when he says that this system was in force when the final price of sugar had to be awaited for in March of each year. But then, I am sorry, here again, we have made our experiences, we have to experience them and see whether it works or not. When we came back to calendar year January and December, problem first with the Ministry itself working overtime in December, problem with Parliament having to sit up to 23 December to vote a Bill. So, the idea, the concept might have been good, but it worked out not in the right direction as we wanted to do it. So, this has compelled me, after careful consideration and thinking, and the Ministry also and Cabinet, to return back, therefore, to a financial year which is from 01 July down to 30 June. Those two decisions, I think, have been taken rightly.

Hon. Utem put up the question of why the Schedule has provided for the decision of Cabinet to put the Office of the DPP under the Office of the Attorney General. I am sorry to say that we are here to implement policies. The Cabinet, in its wisdom, has taken this decision and the Schedule, as it is here, reflects this decision. So, I have nothing more to add on this issue.

On this, Madam Speaker, I wish to commend the Bill to the House.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time and committed.

COMMITTEE STAGE

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

The Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill (No. 1 of 2015) was considered and agreed to.

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

Third Reading

On motion made and seconded the Finance and Audit (Amendment) Bill (No. 1 of 2015) was read the third time and passed.

Madam Speaker: I suggest we break for lunch for one and a half hours.

At 1.25 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 3.04 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

MOTION

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS – MOTION OF THANKS

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the following motion of the hon. Second Member for Grand River North West & Port Louis West (Mrs D. Selvon).

"That an Address be presented to the President of the Republic of Mauritius in the following terms -

We, the Members of the Mauritius National Assembly, here assembled, beg leave to offer our thanks to the President of the Republic of Mauritius for the Speech which he has addressed to us on the occasion of the Opening of the First Session of the Sixth National Assembly."

Question again proposed.

Mr S. Fowdar (Third Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or): Madam Speaker, I will join all the other Members of this House to congratulate you on your appointment as

the first Lady Speaker of this House and also my good friend, hon. Adrien Duval, for his appointment as Deputy Speaker. I would also congratulate all the Members of this House for their election in December last year, all of them on this side and the other side as well. I know it has been a very hard work for the Members of this side of the House to get elected being given the aggressive campaign held by the other side.

Madam Speaker, I am really thankful to the four leaders of this Alliance, the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, my leader, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, hon. Collendavelloo, the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval and also the leader of the MSM, hon. Pravind Jugnauth. I must also congratulate my two friends of Constituency No. 6, hon. Minister Gungah and hon. Rughoobur who have been by my side. Despite the *campagne de mensonges* against me, they have been by my side *sans relâche* and I really thank them deep down my heart.

Madam Speaker, I am standing on this side of the House that is my luck. If I did not take the right decision in October, I would have been on the other side of the House, not in the House probably, most probably outside the House standing *sur le chemin*. Fortunately, I took the right decision but still, it was really tough. I remember when I resigned from my ex-party, the MMM, one of the journalists told me: "My God, you have got guts! You have guts!" To resign against the ex-Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition was like playing with fire. I knew I was going to be in the line of fire and, I was in the line of fire. I was in the line of fire, Madam Speaker, and it was very unfair on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition, the way he treated me. I was *la cible* in all the public gatherings and *congrès nocturnes*. I was the star, the hero! He was talking about me. I was just a simple candidate! I was not going to be the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister or even a Minister! But everything was on me, he was talking about me!

What is more serious, and he never expected, I always admired this person. I had so much respect for him; I admired him for his discipline and for his *savoir-faire*.

But then, I was really upset on the day when he started *venir avec les fausses allégations*. He said - and that was *répercuté à la MBC, dans la presse* - that I had a police case in the UK. He should have known that these things can be checked. How could he say something like this?

You know, at that time, my mother who is over 70 was sick and I was worried for her. She was really upset and believed in that. She said: no, you are lying and hiding from me.

Because if the Leader of the Opposition, a person like him is saying that you had a police case in the UK, then it must be true. But, it wasn't. It is not true. I have got a Police certificate from the UK, Madam Speaker, stating that I don't even have a penalty fee paid in the UK for speeding or for over parking time or whatever. Nothing at all! The Leader of the Opposition, now, repeatedly, insinuated that I have a police case in in the UK. And, you know what was more insulting! This person always used to say: '*MBC c'est la pourriture*' 'MBC is what not' – Callikan is this or that. He used that same MBC *pour diffuser* that I had a police case in the UK. He used that MBC, he should have said no, don't put me in the MBC because I don't like the MBC. They are not fair and just.

(Interruptions)

Yes he did. In fact, he did. He joined them. He was with them.

Madam Speaker, I listened to my very good friend, hon. Baloomoody last time and also to the other Members on the other side. They give us the impression that we, on this side, we've been in Government for nine or ten years and we have to answer for all the bad things that the previous Government has been doing. Right! What if we ask them! If we ask the Opposition questions Madam Speaker! If I ask the opposition this question today: what have they been doing for the last nine years to discover, to uncover what the ex-Prime Minister has been doing? They fail to depict this. Today it is *grâce à ce gouvernement là qu'on a pu savoir*, what is the evil behind and it is not the end, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I was in the UK, recently and I travelled back last week. I will tell you what, I was sitting next to a British fellow and we had a chat. He was asking: Oh, you are Mauritian. I say: yes. Proudly, I am Mauritian. He said: Oh, you are Mauritian. I heard that there are some bad things going on in Mauritius. The ex-Prime Minister has been caught with a lot of money, there is money laundering case. I was really ashamed. I say: no, no it is just a sort of finding. At the end of the day, Mauritius is Africa. I had a feeling that Mauritius was a little bit out of Africa. We were out of the lot. We were not the same type of Africans, Leaders of African Government or politics in Africa. It was totally different from Mauritius. This is what the people are saying out. We are Africa at the end of the day because our ex-Prime Minister has been keeping Rs220 m.

(Interruptions)

Petty cash!

(Interruptions)

It is not the end, Madam Speaker. I can see that there is a lot more to come. It seems that there are a lot of things to be uncovered. We had our good friend, hon. Minister, who has informed the public, how Mrs Soornack has been taking commission on behalf of the Government? But this is unacceptable. The Leader of the Opposition was going to condone this person and they were going to be in power. Now, for one minute, let's say that they won the last election in December, we would have never known that Rs220 m. were held as petty cash, and more to come or all this money was going as commission.

Madam Speaker, this is really unacceptable. The present Opposition are behaving as if this Government is responsible for everything. But it really hurt me when the Leader of the Opposition started having *fausses allégations* against me. On Tuesday, I learnt from our friend, hon. Sinatambou, that he had the same sort of allegation and he even went to the Police station to do a report because the Leader of the Opposition and the ex-Prime Minister made certain allegations regarding his family affairs. And now, we also know what he did with the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, allegations against his family. So, it has become a practice for the Opposition now hitting below the belt. When they do not have arguments, they start going into private affairs of the Members on this side of the House. It is really a shame, Madam Speaker!

This country has, up to now, known four Prime Ministers, namely, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, hon. Paul Bérénger and Navinchandra Ramgoolam. It is not a coincidence, Madam Speaker, that this Rt. hon. Prime Minister is elected for the sixth time. It is not a coincidence. It is not a coincidence that people voted for him again and again. They voted for him despite his age. I had so many chats with Sir Anerood Jugnauth in the past asking him if he is coming, he replied: I have to, it is because of the country. So, this is the philosophy of this man because of the country and now what about the others! We have seen the one who was so cherished - if you watched the news on the TV, everybody is just doing '*arti*', singing, paid people to do sort of '*sega*' dancing, to make people feel that he is so cherished. He is the Prime Minister who is liked by everybody. In fact, today, wherever you go, this is a fact. I know, people on this side know about this and when we meet people on the roads, there is only one thing they tell you '*Zot pe mari bien faire!* You go and tell the Prime Minister he has our support and tell him that we wish him good health'. This is what the public is saying today. Fortunately, even those on the other side of the House, *les partisans de l'alliance Travalliste et même le MMM sont pour cela*. They are wishing good luck and congratulations to this Government.

Madam Speaker, I sincerely wish this Government, deep down my heart, that they achieve what we have in the Government Programme presented by the President. I sincerely wish, for the benefit of this country, that we succeed in what we have in mind. Particularly, you know, there is one thing which really worries us all. And we know when we go to meet our fellow people in town, there is only one thing in their mouth: jobs. It really worries us. This Government has got this enormous task of creating jobs. Now, of course, jobs will be created only if the GDP growth is positive and goes on increasing. This is not going to happen in the immediate term or in the short term. We know that the GDP growth will take time and while the GDP growth increases then the number of unemployed people also is increasing at the same time. Now this is really, really worrying that the number of unemployed people is increasing and increasing.

I know - because I was *dans le comité économique de l'Alliance Lepep* - that you have got certain plans for job creation. But I know also that all these plans will be really focused on the SMEs and entrepreneurship, which is really a good thing; creating jobs through small scale enterprises, which is something which has happened in many countries. Jobs are created through SMEs. But I would make a plea to the hon. Minister of Finance to look into the possibility of bringing jobs to Mauritius instead of creating jobs, but also for the immediate term to bring jobs to Mauritius, and there is a big opportunity for this. We can bring jobs to Mauritius by enhancing, developing the BPO sector and the call centres, and there is a massive potential for that.

I would request the hon. Minister of Finance to do what we did for *zone franche* in the 1970s, using government buildings, giving financial support, tax rebate, tax holiday. We can do that to incite people to start BPOs and create jobs. BPO does not only mean accounting or secretarial duties or secretarial job, but they have other jobs also - laws. There is a series of fields that can be used to start the BPO sector. I know I have got limited time, but but I've got two more points which I would like to raise.

Madam Speaker, I would also want to raise one more issue, which is a public pain, that is, the time the court takes to finalise cases. I am not a lawyer, but I know the lawyers would know where the shoe pinches here. But it is impossible that cases take three, four, five years to be finalised. What I am saying is that we have got more than three-quarter majority votes here. Why don't we once for all trash out and get this done? Cases must be finalised within a year. This is what happens in the UK. Why not in Mauritius? Some cases take like four years, five years, ten years to be finalised. It is unacceptable. This is my plea to the

Government; to look into this issue, and see to it that we come up with a solution and get this done easily. I know in the UK, before you go to court, you have to submit all your papers, and you have to be honest. If you are not honest, you will be penalised by the judge. Now, you have to submit everything before you go to court, and the court will sit only once; maximum two times, and then it is finalised. So, why don't we start something like this in Mauritius and get things done? Because probably we don't know, but a small common man suffers a lot, and my friends lawyers are making a lot of money out of it.

(Interruptions)

It is a fact, but we have to find out a solution so that we get this done as quickly as possible.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I understand that my friends lawyers here are Members of Parliament, and they are for the people of Mauritius, not for themselves. So, they must be fighting for the people of Mauritius.

One last thing, Madam Speaker. One more public pain - the hon. Minister of Financial Services is not here - is insurance claims. People keep telling us 'you pay premium and you have to pay premium on time. If you don't pay, you don't get the policy.' But when it comes to claim compensation indemnity, it is a lot of pain, and it takes a hell lot of time. So, I would urge, I would make a plea to the hon. Minister - he is a very dynamic Minister by the way - that he needs to come up with something that gets the insurance claims sorted out without pain, and it must be done quickly.

Madam Speaker, I am being told to stop. I have got a lot of things to say, and I would come back at budget time. I've got a lot of issues to raise. Once again, I would congratulate all the Members of the House, and in particular the Rt. hon. Prime Minister. I know he is a genuine Prime Minister, and under his leadership we are going to make things happen.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(3.24 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Madam Speaker, it is an honour and a pleasure to address this august Assembly on the Government Programme. Let me from the outset congratulate you on your appointment as first lady Speaker and, at the same time, congratulate hon. Adrien

Duval on his appointment as Deputy Speaker. I wish both of you well. I also seize this opportunity to thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister on my appointment as Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions. My thank goes also to the people of my constituency, Constituency No. 19, for having brought me back to this august Assembly. My colleague, hon. Collendavelloo, and myself have campaigned together during the last election as a real team, and we won the elections.

The Government Programme which was presented on 27 January 2015 before this august Assembly reflects, in fact, the “*manifeste électoral*” which came out in November 2014, and upon which *l’Alliance Lepep* based itself during the electoral campaign and got the candidates elected. We are now in Government – we have a vision. Above all, a vision to bridge the gap which exists between the economically strong and the economically weak. The aim of this present Government is not only to create wealth by encouraging economic development, but also ensure a fair distribution of that wealth. We are here, Madam, to ensure that our acts will be in the best interests of the nation as a whole.

The recent events seem to confirm the voice of the people - a sense of “having had enough” of the previous Government - for the right reasons. That’s why we say that the people have voted with their heads rather than with their heart.

The vision of the present Government is also to bring meaningful change. The Rt. hon. Prime Minister is a man of principle. People connect with him easily. On this side of the House, we form a wonderful team, with Members of long standing experience and new Members. The people have nothing to fear. There is already a feeling good factor prevailing all over the island. We may not be miracle makers, but we have the will to transform Mauritius into a country où “*il fait bon vivre*”. As a caring and responsible Government, we reiterate an unflinching commitment to put things right and give the best service to the nation. The measures which have been announced in the Government Programme pave the way to efficiency, transparency, and above all care.

I have been honoured of heading a Ministry, the Ministry of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions – a Ministry entrusted with a duty of care and passion. Care and passion for the most vulnerable sectors of the community – elderly, disabled, widows, orphans, juvenile delinquents.

To meet the aspiration of those weaker persons in our community, we have a tall order. My main focus, therefore, would be to provide a public service that do honour to their

dignity. This can only be achieved through an efficient, speedy and transparent system, whereby everybody knows what to expect from all services provided.

I wish to inform the House that in order to address this issue, in the coming weeks, the Ministry will come up with a Customer Charter on the services provider.

This document will not only set out the wide and diverse range of social services which the Ministry offers, but will also spell out the Ministry's Vision, Mission and Core Values. You will find listed the Ministry's commitments in terms of service delivery, the rights of claimants and obligations of beneficiaries. The document will contain guidance on how to apply for pensions, social benefits, assistance, the eligibility criteria for each type of benefits and the relevant documents required therefore. This informative leaflet will help and facilitate the public in general to locate the different offices of the Ministry as it will include contact names, addresses and phone numbers.

This measure, Madam Speaker, will strengthen our position towards good governance, provision of up-to-date information and timely delivery of services to the people, especially the most vulnerable.

There are some 235,000 beneficiaries of different pensions relating to retirement, widowhood, invalidity and orphan which are concerned with monthly payments. Since December 2014, Government has initiated all necessary for payment of an increased monthly pension to all the 235,000 beneficiaries concerned. This measure which has been announced during the electoral campaign paves the way for care. The Ministry of Social Security and Ministry of Finance have acted diligently and promptly to implement this important measure. This shows the importance given to such vulnerable groups and ensuring that they have the necessary financial support to sustain the present cost of living. This is, Madam Speaker, a Government by the people and for the people. As such those aged 60 to 89 have obtained an increase of 38% from Rs3,623 to Rs5,000, the elderly aged 90 to 99 have obtained an increase of 39% from Rs10,789 to Rs15,000 and centenarians have obtained an increase of 63% from Rs12,300 to Rs20,000.

It has been noted that the present procedures practised for the processing of cases have major weaknesses which need to be dealt with to ensure good governance.

You will agree with me, Madam Speaker, no meaningful progress can be made if we do not adopt new technologies. The Ministry is, therefore, embarking on a landmark project of reviewing all procedures, infrastructure and present schemes to ensure that the Ministry

will only adopt new technologies, but also provides a transparent, equitable and rapid service delivery. You will agree that there has been very slow progress in the past years for the Ministry to integrate modern communication channels such as the internet and mobile technologies, which are now the basic channels to ensure proximity and transparency to the people. Services of the Ministry will be reviewed to become real citizen-centric ones whereby any claimant will be able to get information or benefit due in time and as per level required.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the ageing population. The world is ageing at an increasing rate, affecting both developed and developing countries. Mauritius is also experiencing this unprecedented ageing phenomenon. The elderly population stands at around 184,000 representing about 13% of the total population which is 1.25 million. There is around 181,000 elderly, aged 60 to 89 and the population aged 90 and above stands at about 3,000. However, among the elderly, female life chances are higher than men.

The female population stands at 103,000 (56%) and the male population at nearly 81,000 (44%). This trend is likely to persist in the future. It is forecast that in 2050, the elderly population will reach 30% of the total population of Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, in this end, Government will ensure that the necessary measures are taken so that we succeed in catering for those elderly people. We will also ensure that the fourth Recreation Centre for the Elderly and Disabled at Riambel be set up to provide more residential and recreational facilities for the elderly. The Elderly Day Care Centres now known as Activity Centres will offer new and needs-related programmes to promote the well-being of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Additional Activity Facility Centres will be opened, especially in urban areas where there is a lack of such activities.

As announced in the Government Programme, special counters will be set up at the level of primary health care centres and hospitals to cater for the needs of the elderly and disabled. This measure, Madam Speaker, will certainly facilitate their access to health services in a prompt manner. I am making an appeal to other organisations like banks, post offices and other service providers to have special counters for the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Madam Speaker, Government will also provide special support care to elderly persons with disabilities and those living alone as part of its strategy to provide a *service de proximité* to them. Home visits will be introduced to ensure that these needy elderly persons are being well cared for.

In order to enhance the protection and security of our elders, in line with the Protection of Elderly Person's Act 2005, Government will further strengthen the existing legislation in respect of Charitable Institutions. Among others, these institutions will be required to install CCTV cameras in their premises, ensure the presence of a full-time Medical Practitioner and the recruitment of qualified and trained carers as well as a psychologist. The network of Elderly Watch working at community level to identify, report and prevent abuse will be surely empowered. Intensive sensitisation campaigns will be reinforced at school level to educate our children on the need to protect our elders.

Madam Speaker, as a responsible Government, we have to fulfil our obligations to our people and the international community with regard to the issue of disability. Mauritius has signed and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. As a result, we are proposing to amend sections 3 and 16 of the Constitution to prohibit discrimination. We are also coming up with a full-fledged and comprehensive Disability Bill to better protect persons with disabilities against all forms of discrimination.

The Bill will also make provisions for a one-stop shop which will integrate all the Units presently providing services in the disability sector with a view to providing cost-effective and customer-friendly services to persons with disabilities while avoiding duplication and dispersal of resources.

In the same vein, we propose to align ourselves with the Disability- Inclusive Post 2015 Development Agenda presently being elaborated by the UN to mainstream disability.

One important philosophy of the present Government Programme relates to the care of the most vulnerable one and their empowerment for individual and collective advancement. To realise its vision, Government and the Ministry will forward to working in partnership with the civil society and NGOs as they play a key role in complementing the Government's social agenda.

Madam Speaker, since my assignment of the portfolio of Reform Institutions, I have made it a duty to personally attend to the existing problems of the Rehabilitation Youth Centres, the more so as it concerns young children. I have conducted two visits at the RYCs and held two meetings with the State Law Office and the Commissioner of Prisons and others to find ways and means to improve the aspects of security and proper rehabilitation. The Commissioner of Prisons has been requested to assist in the maintenance of discipline at the RYCs. Regular meetings to monitor the situation at the RYCs are being held with a view to

improving the conditions of the youth of the inmates as well as exploring the possibilities of allowing them to attend schools and participate in outdoor activities. Furthermore, consultations have already started with the State Law Office to consider the possibility of creating a new set-up for the RYCs through the setting-up of small homes to cater for the detention of smaller groups of inmates in a more conducive environment that would pave the way for proper and real rehabilitation.

Madam Speaker, in the past months, it has been noted that the present procedures and response with regards to provisions of social assistance following heavy rainfalls and other such calamities require a major review. We have, for example, noted a lack of emergency shelters for the region of Port Louis, a lack of standard procedure for processing of applications, lack of coordination between stakeholders and lack of information for the public.

Discussions have been held with the Police Force and the National Disaster Risk and Management Centre to define procedures to attend events following heavy rainfall for the whole island and a special Emergency Flood Scheme for the region of Port Louis. A standard reporting form is being designed by the Ministry and the Police Force to standardise the input received by the Police, which triggers benefit payment. The list of emergency centres for the region of Port Louis has been increased, and a similar review will be done for the other regions of the island. The opening of an additional office for the region of Port Louis is being worked out to decentralise work from the single office serving the region. A fresh list of flood prone areas is being finalised and will be circulated for discussions and policy formulation with stakeholders such as the Mauritius Police Force, National Disaster and Risk Management Centre, the Ministry of Social Integration and Empowerment and the National Empowerment Foundation. May I remind the House that we are now here dealing with public funds and that there should be check and balances to ensure that the real needy are assisted. We have at heart, of course, the vulnerable, but we should not be seen to have a '*laissez-faire*' policy that results in abuse of public funds.

On a long term basis, the Government has been clear in its programme with regards to new innovative social housing policy. The relocation of the most vulnerable households to non-flood prone areas will be considered.

Madam Speaker, before ending, let me say a few words on my constituency. Government is very keen to put the Plaza theatre in service and this has been highlighted in

the Government Programme. The roof of Plaza has already been repaired under Phase I. I understand that procedures have started with regards to Phase II and that consultants have been hired and documents have already been forwarded for the tendering procedures regarding Phase II. We do hope that Plaza theatre be restored and repaired soon.

We have also - and this is very important - to pull down or bring necessary repairs with regards to Rose Hill market. It is long overdue. I understand that things are at the level of my colleague, hon. Nando Bodha and needful will be done.

Some new drains project would have to be implemented to cater for Crétin Street and other regions of Camp Levieux. We have also to enlarge, upgrade and resurface Berthaud Road which is the main link between the town of Rose Hill to Quatre Bornes and which is being used by hundreds of people daily.

With these words, Madam Speaker, I thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Uteem!

(3.44 p.m.)

Mr R. Uteem (First Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Madam Speaker, elections are over; the euphoria is gone; we are back to reality and the reality is that thousands of people in Mauritius are suffering. Thousands of people are in dire poverty.

Last week, when we were in this august Assembly, at the same time, on a Tuesday, dozens of inhabitants from Tranquebar had gone to the Police Station of Pope Hennessy, almost assaulting the Police Officers to get a voucher which would have enabled them to get a meagre Rs160 compensation for damage to their houses due to heavy rainfall. And this was also a reminder that my constituency, Tranquebar, is the constituency which was most badly hit together with Constituency No. 1 following the flash floods of 2013. Although, there had been a Fact-finding Committee headed by former Judge Domah telling the Government that there were flood prone areas, the report was shelved and what had to happen on 30 March 2013 happened. Unfortunately, 11 people perished out of whom one young Sithanen from my constituency who was washed by the river overflowing behind his house.

The Government started a programme of building canals and drains in my constituency and then as often happens, for some reasons somewhere everything stopped.

Today, in Tranquebar, the place at the foot of mountain Le Pouce where the flood started, that is, where the water started to go into the rivers and then ended in Caudan, today, we still don't have canals; we still don't have proper drainage. I hope that the hon. Prime Minister who is now responsible for the National Development Unit will give priority to those flood-prone areas so that we no longer have to see a queue before every Police Station as soon as there is a heavy rainfall.

The elections are gone; the euphoria is over; thousands of people are suffering; thousands of people live in absolute poverty; thousands of people around the country don't have proper housing; don't have basic necessities; don't have sewerage connection. A big task! An uphill task is what the new Government has to face.

Madam Speaker, Port Louis is our capital. It is the economic nerve of the country. We have the port. We have skyscrapers. We have banks. Yet, only a kilometre away from these icons of prosperity, hundreds of families live in houses made of rusted iron sheets. In Crown Land Tory, Nazareth, Camp Manna, families are living in dire poverty. Children are not sent to schools because there is not enough food to feed them and the parents are ashamed to send their children without food to eat.

A few years ago, the people of Tranquebar held a procession. They walked all the way from Tranquebar to the office of the then Minister of Social Integration, hon. Xavier Duval, and handed over a petition, urging the Minister to come down and see the state in which they are living; to give them financial assistance. Unfortunately, that was not the priority of the then Minister. I hope that with the coming into power of this new Government and the appointment of hon. Roopun as the Minister for Social Integration, their plight will finally be heard.

Madam Speaker, as hon. Fowdar stated before me today, we have a serious unemployment problem in this country. Most of our unemployed are youngsters and women. Can we, in Mauritius, when we are trying to target to become a high income nation, afford to have so much wasted manpower? Today, our youth are educated, they have legitimate dreams, legitimate expectation, they want a decent job.

Madam Speaker, a few years ago, I went to India with my wife. We visited the Taj Mahal. I remember I met a gentleman in his early thirties, he was wearing some torn clothes, not very appealing. He approached us and told us that he was going to give us a tour guide. He was not an official guide, but we felt sorry for him and he asked only, I think, Rs50. So,

he gave us a guided tour and I was really impressed by his command of the English language and his mastery of the History of India, not only about the Taj Mahal, but of the Mughal empire and all the kings who came before and after that. So, I asked him, out of curiosity: “What are your qualifications?” I was surprised to learn that this gentleman who is charging fifty Indian rupees to make us visit the Taj Mahal, had a double doctorate with distinction and he had no job.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, the plight of our youngsters, our young graduates today, are not far from that gentleman in India. I am not exaggerating, Madam Speaker. Two weeks ago, we had a vacancy in our office for a secretary and we did not receive one, but five applications from graduates - graduates in History, graduates in Politics, graduates in Human Resource - who were happy to take the job of a secretary because they needed the money. They needed the money because their parents have been taking loans to pay for their education, there were other brothers and sisters behind them waiting to get with their education and they would accept anything. Overqualified, underpaid, this is the plight of our youngsters today!

I remember when I was a child, my parents used to tell me: ‘You know, study hard, work hard and you will get a job’. But, can we today look in the eyes of our children and tell them: “Study hard, work hard and you will get a job in Mauritius”? How many of us who have children studying outside of Mauritius will tell our children: “Come back to Mauritius, you are sure to get a job, a decent job. You are sure to get promoted whenever there is a vacancy”? How many of our children would we in a way tell them to go and migrate because the grass is greener outside of Mauritius?

At the root of the problem, Madam Speaker, is the mismatch between demand and supply in our workforce. We all know that. But, what are we going to do to remedy the situation? I think we need to look into our education system, have a dispassionate debate and examine whether the type of education system that we have today is equipping our children to get a job.

I listened carefully to the second half of the speech of hon. Hurreeram on Tuesday, full of passion, enthusiasm, talking about how innovation is the wayforward. He is right; innovation is the way forward. I really hope that the hon. Minister of Finance will give a big budget for research and development in Mauritius. But it serves no purpose to talk about the

ICT sector if we do not have a proper academy to train our people, if we do not have a world class academy headed by competent staff and regularly visited by business leaders.

The ICT Academy was a good idea, but it was never given effect to by the former Government. It was a good idea, it was going to be a joint initiative between the Government and stakeholders, people who know the business, who know the demands of the ICT sector. I hope that with the new Minister of ICT, a new impetus would be given to this ICT Academy because, Madam Speaker, there is a lot of scope in the ICT sector.

Last week, I had lunch with some businessmen from France. I recall ten years ago, I had invited them to come and invest in ICT sector in Mauritius. I even had to go to France and do a presentation to the top management. They came, they stayed, they prospered, but, instead of employing Mauritians, they ended up employing Malagasy, people for Madagascar. Why? Because year in year out, Mauritian students from the University of Mauritius were failing the aptitude test. Univesity of Mauritius were churning people, engineers who had strong academic backgrounds, who could reproduce text by heart what they have learned, who can give you a technical textbook solution to any problem you asked them. But if you then ask them to think, to come up with a solution, to come up with ideas, to think outside the box, they could not do that. I think it is very important that we review the whole education system because our education methods are outdated and if we do not evolve, if we do not adapt, we will perish.

Madam Speaker, I must confess that, being given the number of jobless people, I was very disappointed when I read the Government Programme under the heading “Job Creation”. If I may say so, that showed a total lack of imagination and vision.

We were told that 15,000 jobs would be created annually. How? At paragraph 31 and I quote –

“A new dynamism will be instilled in the existing economic sectors and, later on, from new development poles, such as regional bunkering hub, the ocean economy, duty free shopping and the ICT enabled services sectors.”

Du déjà vu! It was as if it was cut and paste from the previous year’s budget. But, may I ask out of these 15,000 jobs, how many jobs will be created for our graduates? How many of our graduates will be employed in the bunkering sector? How many of our graduates will be absorbed, if not drowned, by the ocean economy? How many of our graduates will work on cruise, in shipping and hospitality sectors?

Madam Speaker, if we want to sustain growth and achieve long-term prosperity, we are bound to diversify our market; we are bound to diversify our products. Being an island, we are too vulnerable to external factors. We have seen how the high price of petroleum product coupled with mismanagement and dubious hedging had hampered growth a few years ago. Now that the petroleum prices are down, we are faced with new challenges, what I call the double currency impact. On the one hand, a weakening euro, on the other hand a high dollar. We are hit twice, because as the euro goes down, our proceeds are less, our tourism proceeds are less, our proceeds from the sale of our product are less. At the same time, because of the high dollar, our import is more expensive, our raw material is more expensive and this resolves in our product being not competitive, and, therefore, we lose on the market. I will wait eagerly for the budget to see what measures the hon. Minister of Finance will propose in response to these new challenges. But, I am sure, Madam Speaker, that like my predecessor, he will give us a lecture on how we have to turn to Africa, and so, we should, Madam Speaker.

The McKinsey Report on Africa published in 2010 predicts that by 2020, Africa's collective GDP will be around 2.6 trillion dollars and Africa's consumer spending will be 1.4 trillion USD.

According to the Economist, 7 out of 10 of the fastest-growing countries will come from Africa in the next five years. 60% of unused arable land in the world lies in Africa. Africa has an important internal demand driven by a market of 1 billion people and a constant increase of purchasing power.

Mozambique has hit gas. Several sub-Saharan African countries are booming. But, what are we doing to take advantage of the situation? We are part of Africa, we are part of the African Union, of SADC and of COMESA, but are we doing enough?

Madam Speaker, there was a question put by hon. Mohamed on Tuesday, unfortunately, we did not reach this point and I have been looking for the written answer which I did not receive. The question was: who represented Mauritius at the African Union Summit which was held between 23 and 31 January 2015? That was an important Summit and we, being part of Africa and telling people that they have to come to Mauritius to invest into Africa, who represented us at that Summit? Was it the hon. Prime Minister? No. Was it the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs? No. We were represented by a *chargé d'affaires* from

our Addis Ababa! How can we, on the one hand, try to sell Mauritius as a gateway to Africa and we don't even participate and meet our peers from African nations?

Madam Speaker, I have just mentioned the potential with the emerging middle class and upper class population in Africa. But do we have a strategy to attract tourists from African countries other than South Africa? How much effort is put by the MTPA into roadshows to attract tourists from African countries? Are our hotels ready to meet their demands? Do we know what their demands are? Do we have a strategy to penetrate the African market for our products? Are we still going to be focused only on South Africa? Have we carried out an in-depth study as to the comparative advantage that Mauritian products have over our competitors? Again, have we identified the demand or projected demand for the African market and then go and market for investors to come and set up in Mauritius? So, I may ask and I hope the hon. Minister of Finance in his Budget Speech will answer me. Do we have a strategy for Africa at all?

I hope that this Government will learn from the mistakes that were made by the Deputy Prime Minister, hon. Duval, when he was then Minister of Finance. He came up, I think it was two years ago in 2013, with the idea of having two roving ambassadors for Africa. One of them roved so much that she ended up in Moscow! The other one who is a good friend of mine roved only around the office of hon. Duval. He did not even have a proper budget. He did not even have an office in the Ministry of External Affairs and this is how we are going to promote *la diplomatie économique* in Africa! This is not serious, Madam Speaker. We need to have a strategy for Africa. If we need to open more embassies we have to do it. If we need to open more trade mission, we have to do it and we will have to increase our connectivity. Again, another idea thrown two years ago by hon. Minister Duval, but nothing happened.

Can you imagine if you have a business meeting in Kenya, you have to wait for one week before you can get another direct flight back? If you go through South Africa, you lose one day; if you go through Dubai, again you lose one day because of the connecting flight. How can we, Mauritius, be the hub to Africa when we are so badly connected to Africa? Again, I hope hon. Duval, who is now the Minister for External Communications, will speed up contract signing for code sharing with existing airlines in Africa or even encourage Air Mauritius to fly more frequently to African market.

The point is, Madam Speaker, most of us do not know about Africa. We are next door to Africa, we do not know Africa and this state of affair cannot continue. Last year, a group of students who were graduates and in the final year of the University of Mauritius, came for an interview and were asking me questions about Government policies. Inevitably, the question came about Africa because everybody talks about Africa. So, I asked these elites of ours a few basic questions on Africa. I asked them: what is the capital of Tanzania? They were unable to tell me. They did not know. I asked them: what is the language spoken in Mozambique? They did not know. So, I lowered the standard and I said: what is the capital of South Africa? Then, they said they knew! They said: "Of course, Sir, it is Johannesburg." They have never even heard of Pretoria. And we are talking about the University of Mauritius students, people who will be selling Mauritius as a gateway to Africa! This has to change. We need to introduce African studies in the *cursus*. We need to get people to learn Portuguese, Spanish and Swahili so that we can communicate and not just say we are part of Africa. We must really start feeling like Africans, thinking like Africans. Only then, we will be able to get the respect of the international community and only then we will be recognised as the gateway to Africa.

Madam Speaker, we will have to revisit these issues in a few weeks' time during budgetary debates. Budget is not just about spending; it is also about financing the budgetary deficit. In an interview given to Week-End newspaper last Sunday, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, announced that there will be no increase in value added tax. This is most welcome. But this is so typical to what people are used to hear from the hon. Minister. I still remember his dramatic budget speeches in the 80s when after preparing people for the worst, he would come and say that it is a no tax budget. So, we are very familiar with no tax budget, but what we did not know, we were not familiar with is that today we no longer have no tax budget, today we have no budget taxes. We have taxes without the budget. We have taxes outside the budget. Yes, Madam Speaker, in this very House, the hon. Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection informed us in an answer to my parliamentary question that users of petroleum products will be paying an additional Rs1.3 billion in new taxes. Of course, he did not use the term 'new taxes'. He used terms like 'contribution to build Mauritius Fund'. But, by whatever name it is called, tax remains tax! The end result is, without going through budget, without going through parliamentary approval, Rs1.3 billion additional taxes!

That is not all, Madam Speaker. The hon. Minister of Finance has also introduced another new tax which, I am sure, many hon. Members of this House are not even aware of because that was done even more surreptitiously. In January, the hon. Minister of Finance passed a regulation amending the second schedule of the Income Tax Act. The second schedule relates to exempt income, income that is exempt from taxation. Now, by amending the second schedule he has introduced short-term capital gains tax realised on sale of units and securities held by entities other than global business companies for less than six months.

If you are a pensioner and you have decided to invest your increased pension into some stocks, you have decided to buy some stocks on the stock exchange, and before the expiry of six months the price has gone up and you decide to sell at a profit, this would now be subject to tax.

Previously, all profits and all gains realised from sales of shares and unit on the Stock Exchange was exempt because it was not deemed to be in the course of the business. The Income Tax Department had recognised that. Investors can invest in stocks and when they sell the stock at the profit, this is capital gains and that is not taxable income. But, today as from January, a new tax has been introduced without most of the Members of this House even realising it. I don't know how much the hon. Minister expect to collect in these additional capital gains tax. I hope that he will come in the Budget speech and tell us what is the provision made under that item. What I do know, Madam Speaker, is that taking such a measure will do no good for the Stock Exchange. It will affect the already illiquid Stock Exchange and it will certainly not encourage savings.

Madam Speaker, at paragraph 189 of the Government Programme it is provided that and I quote –

“Government will implement an equitable tax policy based on the philosophy of *‘fiscalité légère’*”.

What is *‘fiscalité légère’*? Is *‘fiscalité légère’* so light that you don't even know when you're being taxed? You are no longer told that you're going to be taxed. Taxes are being imposed by regulation. Taxes are being imposed on petroleum products using different names. Is that the *‘fiscalité légère’* that this Government is going to offer to us? Anyway, Madam Speaker, I am sure that we will be able to revisit all these aspects of collection in the coming Budget Speech.

Madam Speaker, there is a long list of orators after me. I don't want to take more time of the House, I would leave by saying that elections are over, the euphoria is gone, the population is watching us and surely sooner, far much sooner than we think, we will have to answer back to the population.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

(4.11 p.m.)

The Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research (Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun): Madam Speaker, allow me at the very outset to extend to you, Madam, my warmest congratulations for occupying such a high constitutional post. Knowing you and especially keeping in view the way you have been managing the proceedings of this august Assembly so far, I have absolutely no doubt that all the hon. Members feel the gavel is in the right hand. My congratulations also go to the young Deputy Speaker, hon. Adrien Duval.

Madam Speaker, I stand before you as Minister of Education and Human Resources, with the additional responsibilities of Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.

But I also stand as a politician who would wish to start her intervention on the Government Programme with words of reassurance meant for the hon. Members of the Opposition.

Yes, it is true that we do have a substantial majority in this House, and yes, we could easily override any objection or opinion emerging from the other side of the House.

But we, who have been called upon to assume the heavy and demanding responsibilities of Government will not shy away from the viewpoints albeit from the other side of the House.

I believe, Madam Speaker, that there is one lesson that the last elections taught us, that is, provided we are willing to open our eyes and ears to see and hear. It is a lesson in humility.

At this stage, I will allow myself a digression to take up something that is still fresh in all our minds. Last year, at this time of the year, we recall the 'birthday cake episode' when the MMM/MSM Remake had reached cruising speed. At that time, nobody would have bet a single cent on the capacity of the then Government to return to power.

But then, Madam Speaker, that was before the bait was dangled to catch the shark!

Madam Speaker, I am not being facetious or even seeking to twirl the knife in the wound. The reason that I am going back to this ill-fated alliance between the MMM and the Labour Party is to precisely indicate what happens when overconfidence holds supreme sway and goes to the heads of people.

Moral thinking often refers to what are called ‘7’ Deadly Sins’: wrath, greed, lust, envy, gluttony, sloth and pride.

Remember this last one - pride and its brother in arms, arrogance - and how they manifested themselves all through the electoral campaign. Some leaders felt they were invincible. They were unbeatable because they felt they could take the people for a ride.

Indeed, they believed that ‘*le peuple admirable*’ could be taken for granted. That *le peuple* would unquestioningly and placidly accept to swallow anything and everything – hook, line and sinker. They felt they would be out and out winners.

But, Madam Speaker, they forgot one universal truth: what really matters – “is not the size of the dog in the fight, it is the size of the fight in the dog”. I have to salute *le peuple admirable*, indeed for being pellucid and open eyed. We have to show our appreciation for the people for being coherent in their thinking, for not allowing considerations other than national well-being to be in the forefront.

You will appreciate, therefore, Madam Speaker, why I referred earlier to the importance of being humble. The people, in their wisdom, preferred to place their trust in those who demonstrated no pride, no arrogance, but who are humble despite the landslide victory.

So, I would state again the important lesson in humility that the last elections highlighted. As a humble person, I am willing to accept that I do not have the monopoly of knowledge, that is, infinite, let alone the monopoly of wisdom. The hon. Members of this House will appreciate that the world of education and training is a domain that logically cuts across-party politics and partisan lines.

We all have a stake in education. Someone somewhere whom we know, whom we are related to, is impacted upon directly by educational policies and decisions we take. In fact, a diversity of views and opinions can only be welcomed.

Not simply because such diversity enriches the debate on education, but also because it shows that everybody feels highly concerned about it. So, I would be more than willing to listen to alternative views and suggestions. However, it is worth underlying that this Government has a mission to fulfil, goals to meet and targets to attain. We are, therefore, not likely to have spanners thrown into the wheel just because of political gimmickry.

Madam Speaker, Stephen Covey, the management guru, once said -

“You can retire from a job, but don't ever retire from making extremely meaningful contributions in life”.

Professionally, I started as a teacher and I hope my students will remember me as a person who made some difference to their lives. And although I am away from the school compound today, I must confess that I am actually very honoured to have belonged to the family of educators. I feel all the more honoured, now that I have been invested with the responsibility of the education portfolio, to be given the opportunity to make extremely meaningful contributions to the lives of so many learners.

In parenthesis, Madam Speaker, allow me to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, for having shown so much of trust in me and putting me in charge of a portfolio that is a driver of change, of innovation and of development.

The contributions that I was just talking about, Madam Speaker, are not going to be just meaningful, but far-reaching as well.

Madam Speaker, let us take the pre-primary subsector of our education system. We all know the significance we attach to the learning experience at a formative period in a child's life. There is no doubt that some sound work has been done so as to enrol more and more children in pre-schools and this since the 1980's. It is important for all children to secure the experience of early childhood education, an experience that will act as a foundation to scaffold new learning on. Madam Speaker, we must now think beyond enrolment rates. We must think seriously about enhancing the quality of education. We need a proper Quality Assurance Unit for the Early Childhood Care and Education Authority, to ensure that a proper and uniform standard is attained in all pre-primary schools, public and private, so as to eliminate the wide disparity that exists today.

It is important that we do not limit ourselves, however, to our boundaries. We have to go continental, so as to share our experience and our expertise with others. I am glad to inform the House that the Association for the Development of Education in Africa has

requested Mauritius to lead and drive the Inter-Country Quality Node on Early Childhood Development. It is from this perspective that in February itself I had the opportunity to formally launch the Inter-Country Quality Node on Early Childhood Development, commonly referred to as the ICQN ECD.

As hon. Members are probably aware, early childhood development is one of the priority areas of the African Union Plan of Action for the Second Decade in Education in Africa. The Inter-Country Quality Node for an Early Education Development is thus an inter-governmental organisation for policy dialogue and collaborative action among African Ministers of Education, strategic partners for advancing early childhood development agenda in Africa.

The collaborative approach relies on a networking of African countries, institutions and experts for exchange of knowledge on concepts, research findings and capacity building. Mauritius will lead the ICQN for early childhood development, and will act as a regional platform for capacity building, knowledge sharing, peer-learning, establishing community of practice and disseminate findings of policy research for countries to translate into effective early childhood development policies, and this will develop common core skills in early childhood development that countries can put at the heart of good quality and relevant basic education.

With regard to the primary and secondary sub-sectors, the Government Programme states in clear terms our determination to make 9 years of basic continuous schooling a reality. For quite some time, my predecessor in office had been proposing to make the 9-year basic continuous education operational. The concept of the nine-year schooling itself is in line with international trends, with many countries, including Finland, having adopted the principles of inclusive and holistic basic education.

On the other hand, it is also the preparatory stage for lifelong learning, which has become a crying need today. This, in order to free our children from highly competitive system that is burdening them since long time, and which has prevented their proper holistic development.

It has become our duty today to relieve our children and to give back to our children their childhood, and allow them to learn and develop in a right and conducive environment.

It is of crucial importance for children to be given the opportunity to develop all their potentials and talents, and to grow up to become creative, versatile and critical thinkers having problem solving skills, and ready to face the challenges of this new era.

I believe that we have today reached a defining moment in the history of education. Today, Government, teachers, parents all have the same objective, that of giving our children the best education and allowing them to have a holistic development. The French critic and historian, Hippolyte Adolphe Taine, once wrote that history is clearly made when three factors synergistically come into operation –

« *L'homme, le moment et le milieu.* »

Et le gouvernement est pleinement conscient de cette synergie, et sous aucun prétexte, nous ne laisserons échapper cette opportunité qui se présente à nous de faire de Maurice un pays où les enfants pourront s'épanouir pleinement. Si la population a placé sa confiance en ce gouvernement, c'est justement pour qu'il se fixe comme objectif principal le bien-être de ce peuple. On ne peut se permettre d'échouer quand on a quelqu'un de visionnaire, d'avant-gardiste, mais aussi surtout pragmatique que notre Premier ministre Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Les parents sont soucieux de l'avenir de leurs enfants ; cela tout à fait légitime. Mais, quand ce même enfant est dépourvu des moments de loisir, comment peut-on prétendre à un épanouissement complet? Madame la présidente, il est essentiel que tout cela change, et la tâche de combattre cette perversion de l'apprentissage chez les jeunes nous revient à nous. On veut que renaissent ce dynamisme, cet enthousiasme, ce sens de débrouillardise, et surtout la curiosité tellement nécessaire pour un apprentissage fructueux et sain.

On a beaucoup parlé de taux d'échec des enfants au niveau de la CPE. L'ancien régime est même venu avec une mesure pour qu'ils puissent reprendre les examens une deuxième fois en décembre. Mais, pour vraiment aider un enfant à réussir, il est crucial d'identifier très tôt les élèves ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage, afin d'éviter un échec plus tard. Je voudrais informer mes collègues du Parlement que mon ministère met sur pied une unité, la '*Remedial Unit*', dans chaque école primaire, pour s'assurer que les enfants ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage, dès la première année du cycle primaire, soit pris en main. Aussi, l'éducation physique et les arts feront aussi parti du cursus scolaire.

Let me assure the House that my Ministry is very soon coming with the implementation of the 9-year basic schooling plan. Of course, that will be subjected to widespread discussions with stakeholders prior to full execution. But let me inform the

House in no uncertain terms that, during the nine years of continuous and basic schooling, learners will be expected to acquire appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, and most importantly life skills while also imbibing the relevant moral, ethical and civic values. Madam Speaker, values education will certainly form part of the curriculum. Reference to values, Madam, brings to my mind this quote from Theodore Roosevelt –

“To educate a person in mind and not in morals is to educate a menace to society”.

For a long time, questions have been raised as to the type of person we want to see emerging from our education system. Do we want to perpetrate the existing system that leaves a number of pupils and students on the wayside? Is it not our responsibility to give them a school of experience that is fulfilling in more ways than one? Should an education system worthy of the name not seek to cater for the emergence of a whole person? It is true that, today, companies, whether national or international, the corporate sector, are all headhunting for people with higher skills set. They are looking for people who are capable of thinking in an independent way and have easy communication skills, especially, the openness to novel ideas and adapting to changes of the new fundamentals of high-end occupations.

The discourse today is on the 21st century skills. Jacques Delors “Learning to Learn” and “Learning to Live Together” are today gaining greater currency than never before. All these certainly posit new challenges to the education system and demand that they be confronted and addressed. And this Government, Madam Speaker, will deliver. But what also comes out loud and clear, Madam Speaker, is that, if, on the one hand, we do not want a skills slowdown that would be catastrophic for the country, on the other hand, we do not want one-dimensional people who concentrate exclusively on their material well-being. We want the system to cater for the integral development of our learners. You will note that the private providers of primary and secondary education do that quite well – but there is still a dearth of activities in the public schools that would cater for the whole person. It is in this context that I would wish to highlight one major measure mentioned in the Government Programme. This relates to the setting up of a school of arts to promote the holistic learner development.

Madam Speaker, Dreda Say Mitchell, the award-winning crime novelist as well as freelance Education Consultant, wrote in *The Guardian* in April 2014 -

“Art isn’t an extra; it’s an integral part of a well-balanced education curriculum. The private school youngsters standing at a bus stop with a

musical instrument strapped to their back is a familiar sight. We need state school students with instruments, easels and scripts standing there too.”

Lest we forget, the Arts - whether it is Performing Arts, the Crafts, etc. – help us to look at life differently, to use our imagination differently and, especially give a booster to potentials that are latent for so many students and youths.

However, Madam Speaker, this also presupposes that we are able to provide for genuine equity in the system.

Today, in the world of Education, a concept that is fast catching on is what has been termed as the Education ‘tri-lemma: the ‘tri-lemma’ of access, quality and equity.

We have, today, won the access battle and the drive for quality in education is inevitably bound to be an on-going feature. But, you cannot work wonders with kids coming to school on an empty stomach. Nor can we break the cycle of poverty, if we do not ensure that the home environment becomes a vector of change.

There are vulnerable groups in this society of whom it would be immoral to ask that they dig a little deeper in their pockets!

The Government Programme has hit the bull’s-eye with its series of equity measures. I will only mention some of them, especially those having a bearing on the educational set-up.

- The special financial assistance scheme to help students from modest families to pursue tertiary education and thus contribute to their own economic and social advancement.
- Measures that will facilitate the home ownership for economically and socially disadvantaged.
- The provision of hot meals to primary school pupils.
- The provision of 100% subsidy for examination fees for SC and HSC students.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to a very important point. When we say that we are providing 100% subsidy for examination fees for SC and HSC students, we are removing hurdles. We are allowing young people from any walk of life to access to education and this is extremely important and this has always been in our philosophy.

Madam Speaker, let me now come to the tertiary sub-sector, the one that has remained in the news for a long time now - but for the wrong reasons altogether.

Allow me at the very outset state that we are very much keen on developing Mauritius into an Education and Knowledge Hub.

Et qui dit 'centre de savoir', dit 'centres d'excellence'.

Allow me to use the definition of an Education Hub as given by Observatory on Borderless Education for the benefit of the House.

It is defined as, I quote -

'The process of building a critical mass of local and foreign actors - including students, education institutions, companies, knowledge industries, science and technology centres - who collaborate in a strategic way on cross border education, training, knowledge and innovation initiatives.'

No one can deny the significance of investing in this sub-sector.

The benefits are indeed numerous -

- Innovative national development can only become a reality when we have a fit-for-purpose human capital formation.
- Higher levels of education are a guarantee for economic growth and therefore for breaking the cycle of poverty.
- Equally significantly, higher education is strongly conducive to a successful participation in the global knowledge economy.
- It is also critical for the promotion of faster technological growth and building human capabilities.

So, yes, we have to invest in Higher Education.

We have to encourage the provision of cross-border education and encourage regional student mobility.

We also need to create conditions that will attract the setting up of off-campus branches and brand-name Tertiary Education Institutions in Mauritius. Many countries have shown that this has worked well for them: Dubai, Singapore, Malaysia are some of the favoured student destinations that come to my mind here.

Madam Speaker, the question needs to be asked: why has this scenario then not worked for us? I believe we all in this House know exactly why. Somewhere, institutions have failed to fulfil those obligations and responsibilities that have been part of their

mandate. Some of the institutions that have come here have been driven exclusively by 'Profit Motive'. And during the last Regime, obtaining easy access to ministerial offices opened the door for a clear flouting of basic rules and regulations governing the sector. As Minister of Tertiary Education, I find myself opening a Pandora's Box every time I come across one of those institutions.

Madame la présidente, il serait bon de souligner que l'ancien gouvernement, après les élections de 2010, est venu de l'avant avec la création du ministère de l'enseignement supérieur sous la tutelle de l'ancien ministre Jeetah. Dans pratiquement, chacun de ses discours et de ceux de l'ancien Premier ministre, mention été faite de cette initiative. Le gouvernement se félicitant à chaque fois de l'avènement de ce ministère. Tantôt qualifiée de sans précédent, tantôt qualifiée de décision audacieuse, tout a été fait pour présenter ce ministère à la population comme la réponse à la problématique que représentait le chômage parmi les jeunes et l'incapacité de l'Université de Maurice d'accueillir un plus grand nombre d'étudiants, mais surtout aussi pour vendre le slogan creux qu'avait trouvé le ministre d'alors, '*One Graduate per Family*'.

Madame la président, quatre ans après, le bilan était des moins honorables ! Une période durant laquelle, le ministre Jeetah n'a fait que protéger ses proches. Je citerai, ici, l'exemple flagrant de l'EIILM University, dirigée par le *Trust* familial dont il est, lui-même, un membre. Et aujourd'hui, il nous faut répondre de ses actes irréfléchis et irresponsables aux parents d'étudiants. Ces jeunes ont effectué en toute confiance des études à l'EIILM University. Leurs diplômes ne sont pas reconnus et ils ne savent plus à quel saint se vouer. Pire, ces parents ont dû s'endetter pour financer les études de leurs enfants et, aujourd'hui, ils se retrouvent engloutis sous des dettes de plusieurs millions de roupies. Alors que le ministre Jeetah, en tant que ministre de l'enseignement supérieur était mandaté au premier lieu de faire respecter la législation régissant ce secteur, il n'a fait qu'aller lui-même à l'encontre des procédures établies. Inacceptable ! C'est toute une nation indignée, Madame la présidente. À tel point que Rajesh Jeetah a été qualifié d'indésirable par les alliés de son Parti. Il n'aura eu d'investiture aux dernières élections législatives mais son bilan aurait été à faire sombrer son Parti avec pour résultat la débâcle de décembre 2014.

Madame la présidente, l'EIILM *University* n'est qu'un exemple. D'autres institutions ont été autorisées à dispenser des cours et à délivrer des diplômes sans qu'elles aient les accréditations nécessaires des universités internationales auxquelles elles étaient affiliées. Nous avons aussi la fameuse École de Médecine, D. Y. Patil Medical College, sommée

d'arrêter le recrutement de nouveaux étudiants par nous, Madame la présidente. Et nous avons des jeunes aujourd'hui, qui, après trois années d'études de spécialisation en médecine, se retrouvent sur la route. Ils ne trouvent pas de place, ils ne peuvent même pas faire une application au ministère pour se présenter comme spécialiste. Quatre ans d'existence pour un nouveau ministère, censé de faire de Maurice un véritable *Knowledge Hub* ! Quatre ans de gâchis ! Gaspillage de temps et de ressources motivées par les intérêts premiers d'un ministre insoucieux, arrogant et pensant seulement à remplir les caisses du *Trust* familial !

Je ne souhaiterai, Madame la présidente, m'attarder davantage sur ce personnage.

My mandate is to clean the rot and I will do precisely that.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education of UK is making an audit of the tertiary education institutions and will soon submit its final report to the Ministry of Education. And the House would wish to know that my Ministry has already discussed with the Audit Team and given a set of pointers as to the direction we would wish the sector to take.

It is unsound, even improper, for the accreditation agency, TEC, to itself undertake quality assurance of those institutions to which it has issued operating licences.

Hence, the present regulatory framework for Higher Education in Mauritius needs to be strengthened so as to ascribe an even greater credibility to the higher education and training provided locally. We have to ensure that only reputable institutions are allowed to operate and that their programmes are recognised by all professionals and academic bodies and are of an international standard.

I want to give the guarantee to the House, henceforth, extreme vigilance will be exercised to ascertain that fraudulent, spurious and low-quality providers - those infamous 'degree mills' - are not allowed to set base in Mauritius.

On *bona fide* Tertiary Educational Institutions whose diplomas and degrees are fully recognised and have international currency and portability, these will be welcome. Quality in Tertiary Education Provision will never be sacrificed on the altar of quantity.

Allow me also to inform the House, Madam Speaker, that we have already engaged in proactive discussions with different Embassies, most notably, the British High Commission as well as the French side, so as to attract some of the best universities to set up campus branches in Mauritius.

The Government also intends to strengthen the Tertiary Education Commission as a regulatory body and review its Act. On the other hand, we need a new legal framework for the sector and my Ministry will come up with a Higher Education Bill.

What I would like to stress is my determination to modernise the Tertiary Education System, to bring greater collaboration and stronger working relationships between public and private universities and have a better coordination of the entire system.

And it becomes all the more important that, as part of the mission of transforming Mauritius into a Knowledge Hub, our Tertiary Education Institutions be encouraged to improve their research and innovation capacity and output and hence generate new knowledge.

I am accordingly working on a scenario where, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, our Embassies and High Commissions could serve as focal bodies to market Mauritian institutions for higher education.

Madam Speaker, one of the mainstays of the Government Programme 2015-2019 is to transform Mauritius into a higher income economy. This entails developing existing sectors and triggering new ones – and, in turn, this further entails placing a premium on furthering skills development.

International evidence has shown that a major determinant of enhanced productivity and competitiveness as well as economic success is the capacity of countries to invest in a skilled and technically qualified human resource base. The private sector expects to see emerging from the education and, especially, the training sector, the kind of persons whose skills are aligned to its needs.

This is where I expect the Human Resource Development Council to conduct regular research on skills shortages. As the House knows the HRDC acts as a bridge between education and training systems and the workplace. The research it undertakes will be used as a means to feed information to the education and training institutions so as to improve the relevance of their outputs.

Madam Speaker, Technical and Vocational Education and Training has to be scaled up and its relevance improved. That also means strengthened partnerships with the private sector. I intend to re-engineer TVET sector as a whole. We all know the stigma traditionally attached to it: it is supposed to be meant for the intellectually weak, the school drop-outs,

does not guarantee better job prospects and so on and so forth. We have to move away from this narrow perception.

TVET needs to incorporate and integrate entrepreneurial and generic skills in its delivery and, especially, it has to move towards establishing pathways for higher and further learning instead of being seen as a dead end, a *cul de sac*.

In this context, we could perhaps take a leaf off the book of countries like Ghana and Singapore where polytechnics are being given University status. The MITD will accordingly be called upon to establish strategic partnerships with training institutions of world repute. This will have the twin benefits of enabling MITD to benchmark with the best international practices in the TVET sector and also increase its international courses and qualifications.

Madam Speaker, let us not forget that the SMEs are called upon to be one of the major torchbearers of our economy. People with higher level skills that the TVET sector can provide, will be the ones to cause the wheels to run more smoothly. It is in this context that, as per the Government Programme, the HRDC is being called upon to initiate the 'skills for growth' scheme with a view to support small and medium enterprises and promote skills development. This scheme aims at matching SMEs with young graduates to assist them in terms of manpower, knowledge-sharing, creativity and innovation.

Prenons, l'exemple de l'agro industrie, Madame la présidente. L'université de Maurice produit les meilleurs agronomes de la région mais malheureusement, la plupart se trouvent dans la fonction publique et très peu ont réussi à monter leurs propres entreprises et à utiliser leur connaissance et leur créativité afin d'innover le secteur agricole.

Chaque année, avec un surplus de légumes ou d'autres produits sur le marché, les petits planteurs encourent des pertes considérables. Ce problème perdure depuis des années. Il est temps d'y remédier car l'agriculture aujourd'hui n'est plus ce qu'elle était auparavant. Si le concept de l'agro-industrie a été tout ce temps rendu incompréhensible et difficile aux petits planteurs, ce gouvernement entend faire les choses différemment et Madame la présidente, je peux vous dire qu'avec la vision et les ambitions qu'on prône, bientôt les petits planteurs à travers une formation ciblée pourront intégrer le marché de la transformation et aussi conserver le produit! Le but ultime c'est de s'assurer que les jeunes ayant des connaissances, étant familiers aux nouvelles technologies puissent eux-mêmes se lancer dans l'agriculture et l'agro-industrie.

I must also add that, given the agenda of this Government to develop the Ocean Economy, the HRDC has been mandated to assess the current and future skills needs and proposed new skills development programmes for this emerging sector.

Madame la présidente, pas plus tard que ce matin, on vient de lancer le site web du ‘*Career Development Stairway*’, un outil pédagogique permettant d’explorer les divers profils d’emploi et indiquant une échelle de progression de carrière par type de compétence. Dans ce cas précis, c’est l’industrie des TIC/BPO qui était concernée.

Cela démontre clairement la nécessité primordiale d’un Integrated Career Counselling System. Such an integrated system covering career orientation, information and management services will play a pivotal role in informing people about the career choices at various stages of their life.

Obviously, the system will involve both private and public stakeholders to provide that information. There is an existing system but with a view to making it more relevant and integrated, it is being re-assessed and proposals are forthcoming on how to enhance career counselling locally so that individuals could make more informed career choices.

Madam Speaker, one of the key incontrovertible realities that emerged from the last General Elections is the fantastic role played by the youth. It was a treat to see the extent to which the social media went berserk with the number of well thought through and educated comments and views that made the buzz and went viral. Young people expressed their expectations.

In December last, Madam Speaker, we saw democracy at work. Especially, we witnessed the powerful effect of the *vox populi* in deciding to give a new meaning and a new orientation to their lives - the lives of all people, irrespective of their race, religion or ethnicity.

It became the people’s wish to have the country fulfil its legitimate and forward-looking destiny by mandating the Government to achieve meaningful change. In this endeavour, the youth of this country contributed enormously to make this change a reality. We had seen, Madam Speaker, youth activism at its best. Let me reassure the House and through this House, the youth outside this Government has heard their voice. Can it be otherwise?

(Interruptions)

Most of them are the ones who are directly affected by the phenomenon of graduate unemployment, underemployment and employability. They are also the ones who find, despite their hard earned Masters and Doctoral and post-doctoral qualifications, that they are unwanted on the labour market because of the skills mismatch issue.

And above all, the young people aptly demonstrated their capacity for participatory politics. They wanted to see “clean” politics at work. They certainly rejected the diet of underhand immoral tactics that they had been fed upon for so long.

It is the youth who wanted to live in a country that successfully nurtures their needs and aspirations, despite the acceptance that there will be peaks and valleys.

Madam Speaker, this Government has got the thumps-up from the youth of this country and we are duty-bound to listen to their clarion call.

This is the way to give meaning to the political engagement of the youth and give back to politics its “*lettres de noblesse*”.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: I suspend for tea for half an hour.

At 4.49 pm, the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.33 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Bodha!

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Madam Speaker, in a few days, a very towering personality will stand by your side to address this august Assembly.

And he will appreciate, as it should, to see the Parliament of Mauritius chaired by a lady, the first one in our history. He is used to that, at the Lok Sabha. Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister of the greatest democracy in the world will grace our Parliament and our country.

In January, Narendra Modi welcomed, for the National Day of the Republic of India, the President of the United States of America, one of the greatest democracies.

We are blessed, Madam Speaker, *de jouer dans la cour des grands*, Washington, New Delhi, Port Louis. And we can proudly say as Shrimati Indira Gandhi said, we are a great little country.

Great because of our nation, because of our people, because of their resilience, their wisdom, their faith in our future and their democratic fibre. Great also, Madam Speaker, because of our leaders of today, their courage, their unflinching belief in goodness, Madam Speaker, and of course, great because of their uncommon integrity and great vision of one man, Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Madam Speaker, some believe that we are little. So little like the former Prime Minister that this country can belong to him and that he can hold this country in the palm of his hand.

Madam Speaker, we are 10 weeks into this new mandate. After 10 years of fascism, of terror touching the life of people every day, we turn the page, of course. We turned the page on the 10th of December and the verdict is clear.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius for all that we have endured, for all the resilience and the courage required to win this extraordinary election in December, for all the challenges that lie ahead, we know this that the shadow of Ramgoolam has passed, and our nation is more united than ever, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, what is the historic significance of the 10th of December? The historic significance is that our motherland has known two peaceful democratic revolutions: one in 1982 and one in 2014 and both were engineered by one man and one Leader, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. In 1982, there was a marked difference in history, because the writings were on the wall in 1982. It was the end of the cycle of prime ministership of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. We had the PSM which had been created, we had the alliance of the MMM/PSM for years. They went, they taught the island. So, the writings were on the wall when we had the 60-0 of 1982, but in 2014 the alliance was, in fact, engineered in only a few weeks. Therein lies the greatness of what happened in December, Madam Speaker.

This marvellous nation, defying all odds, has taken its own destiny in its own hands. And today there is a message that the people of ours are sending to the whole political class and we have to bow down to that message. What are our people saying to us? We, the people, yield ultimate power and secondly we can believe in you, but you have to deliver. You have to deliver on all the principles and the values we mentioned, Madam Speaker.

What are our people fighting for years? In front of us was the incarnation of fascism and tyranny, personalised by a very few, who held our entire nation to ransom, Madam Speaker.

The deep-rooted fascist regime of the previous government was sealed as instilling perpetual fear, hijacking all the democratic institutions of our country: the Police, ICAC, the MBC. And the fuel of that tyranny was greed. Hon. Minister Dookun-Luchoomun mentioned it; it was greed for more power and greed for wealth with a debauched appetite. The moral compass of our society had completely lost its bearings, Madam Speaker. A wrong signal was sent and a wrong signal was captured in the country. What did it say? To sit in the tower of power, everything could be put up for sale, everything had a price and everyone had a price.

Madam Speaker, the country was crawling under the burden of this tyranny. To worsen the prevailing calamity, all the watchdogs and the institutions became mistresses of this regime. Sociocultural leaders, instead of upholding the essential values of our society to sustain the social fabric of our society, became conniving allies for a plot of land, for facilities, for a permit, for their own interest...

(Interruptions)

...and where the wealth of our nation, the wealth of our people was being bartered to cling to power and to enjoy the fruits of an immoral Government. This is what we have been fighting, Madam Speaker. In the National Assembly, I have been here, we were sitting there, when we saw the then Prime Minister, he came like a peacock.

(Interruptions)

He would answer a PNQ, take the files and just leave and, when he was to take the floor, there was the recess, we had to wait for him and then he would have bell. The National Assembly was held at ransom, Madam Speaker.

There was this violation of the role of Parliament. For nine months, what were we doing? For nine months, we were there watching the body language. We were trying to capture the chemistry...

(Interruptions)

What did we do for nine months? We sat there. There were no laws. The country was at a standstill because of what was happening between two leaders and they were not leaders, one was the leader of the House the other was the Leader of the Opposition, Madam Speaker!

Then, in those days, few warriors of democracy dared to stand up and lead the people by waging a war. I remember my friend, hon. Jhugroo, putting questions to the Prime Minister. Madam Speaker, we were answering five questions at Prime Minister's Question Time for 30 minutes, 15 parliamentary questions for two hours, for most of them you never got a written answer! We never got a written answer. After the Prime Minister's Question Time

(Interruptions)

I remember when hon. Bhagwan was here, he was always asking questions in the interest of the House, of the people and the nation out there! How many of these questions were never answered, Madam Speaker?

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, let me say a word on the role of the MSM. What has not been said of the MSM! *Ti parti...*

(Interruptions)

Even in 2010 when we won the victory, we had six ministers. I think we had contributed to the victory of 2010. The MMM people will agree with this.

(Interruptions)

we were labelled as a *ti parti* and there were so many who said we were worth only 2% and they wanted this label to stay on our back, 2% and 2%...

(Interruptions)

But I am proud today to stand up as an MLA of the MSM, that we stood the test of time, we had the resilience to wage a war. When we turned our back in July 2011, when we had seen, *comme on dit dans le film de Bergman, l'œuf du serpent*, that is, we could see what were the fascism. When we said we were leaving, we never turned our back again.

When we see the dates, Madam Speaker, the famous night of Roches Noires was, I think, on 02 July and all the conflicts we had with the Prime Minister and the Labour Party was only a few days later. I am asking myself whether this was not a diversion, the whole saga of the MedPoint, Madam Speaker. We never turned our back again and we waged a relentless battle. We toured the country. We went everywhere. Our message was the same: we want this regime out of the country!

Then came the Remake and I am going to say a few words on this fatal day of Varusha Pirappu, 14 April, 2014. Do you remember the case of hon. Pravind Jugnauth, on that day the MedPoint case was heard and he had asked for an early trial? That was the excuse then - we have forgotten about it - to say that we can't continue with the Remake. There was something terrible which has happened.

(Interruptions)

On that day, supposedly hon. Pravind Jugnauth had not made a request for early trial. But we know what has happened. In fact, I was with the Leader of the Opposition at the Varusha Pirappu, at the IGIC, and the next day we sat in Parliament and all the parliamentarians of the MMM had a meeting. They cancelled the meeting on Wednesday, at Sir Anerood Jugnauth's residence, *pas capav, pas capav*. Then, it is always one thing: "if what we have heard about the MSM is true, then it is even worse." On that day, we forgot about this birthday cake. I was talking to Sir Anerood Jugnauth: "his birthday is coming again in Roches Noires".

So much has happened, Madam Speaker, that we do not believe that it is only one year! It is only one year and everybody has this photo...

(Interruptions)

Yes, it forms part of our political history. The hon. Leader of the Opposition wore an orange sweatshirt on that night and I asked him where he got it. Madam Speaker, what I am saying ...

(Interruptions)

On that day the Remake was shattered, Madam Speaker, and the MSM was left stranded, that was on 14 April, we were left stranded, the MSM was all alone and we were hearing in the far distance the chanting of a new mantra: *Paul pu vine premier ministre pou 5 ans dans 4 moins bans camarades* and the 60-0...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the MMM left for the uncharted seas of the mythical second Republic seen as the pinnacle of the militant dream.

Madam Speaker, whilst *le pêcheur de requins* had already thrown his bleeding bait, what did the MSM do? That was on 14th and 11 days later, on 25th we start the rally in Rivière du Rempart and that was the beginning – just as you have the Salt March, it was the march towards Parliament....

(Interruptions)

Yes, it was the beginning of our march to Parliament with a majority. Because two things had happened in the meantime, Madam Speaker, which heralded another battle, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and the MSM of Pravind Jugnauth showed their resilience and rallied a massive crowd at Rivière du Rempart on Friday 25 April. The second thing which happened ...

(Interruptions)

Yes, because we wanted to do something before the 01 May. I remember when we had this meeting, Sir Anerood Jugnauth had said: '*nou pu faire 01 mai ensemble, to bizin dire nou! Si nou pas pé faire 01 mai ensemble, au moins nou capave prend nou banne disposition*'. That was said in this meeting. Two things have happened. Sir Anerood Jugnauth and the MSM showed their resilience and the second thing was Ivan Collendavelloo started his crusade which had to cripple the huge machine of the MMM six months later.

This reminds me of something, Madam Speaker. In our Scriptures it is said: 'When you have a cycle of immorality, when the equilibrium of immorality has come to an end....

(Interruptions)

... Then God himself or democracy in the form of the people *vox pupuli* comes forward to save the country. This is what we did. Because our slogan of remake was '*Sauver le Pays*'. *Et nous voulons sauver le pays. Nous avons sauvé déjà beaucoup de choses et je vais y revenir tout à l'heure.*

(Interruptions)

Yes.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, our victory of December bears the mark and the workings of a divine spirit and the relentless lessons of history.

Let me say a few words of the mirage of the 2nd Republic. My friend told me after the break of the remake, we were told *nu pu dan désert*. And what was the reply of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, he said: '*même pas dan désert parski dans désert éna mirage*'. But the greatest mirage in the political history has been the 2nd Republic, Madam Speaker. It is a relief because the people had nothing to do with the 2nd Republic. Their daily lives have

nothing to do with the 2nd Republic. Can we imagine Navin Ramgoolam with seven years of immunity sitting in Réduit? Can we imagine what would have happened if the MMM within Government have been able to uncover whatever ...

(Interruptions)

...is happening in this country, there was only this alliance. There was only this leadership, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, Xavier-Luc Duval, Ivan Collendavelloo and Pravind Jugnauth. We are the only one who could have uncovered what we have uncovered so far and it is only the tip of the iceberg, Madam Speaker. Praise be our people. But there are two words which led to the blackout of all our sorrows and griefs and all our concerns. There are two words which led to that blackout. We forgot about –

- rampant poverty;
- chronic unemployment;
- the breakdown of law and order;
- the rape of democracy and paralysis of our institutions;
- there was a culture of cynical plundering of all our assets and public funds, and
- a fascist climate of fear.

There are two words which were supposed to obligate all this. What were those two words? *Réforme électorale! Réforme électorale* were the words the most popular, the most debated in every press conference. I am sure in every meeting of the politburo of the MMM, of the central committee of the MMM and of the *Assemblée des délégués* of the MMM, those two words were written in gold: *Réforme électorale*. This was the panacea, the solution to all the problems of our country.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Bodha: Madam Speaker, what has the electoral reform to do? There are so many details and I will not go on that. It was seven years of immunity to an autocratic President and a prime ministerial mandate in the namesake. And because of that parliamentary democracy was stifled. Greed for power, greed for more billions was the mantra of the day.

Today, history is testimony to one thing. The MMM has been in the National Assembly since 1976. This is the minority of all the cohorts of Parliamentarians. Never in the

history of Parliament has there been a lesser parliamentary group of nine members of the MMM. Never!

(Interruptions)

No, it is a reality. For the first time in history, we have only nine MMM Members. And for the first time in history as well we have only four Members of the Labour Party since 1976. What has happened? I think it is a subject to be discussed.

(Interruptions)

I read an article where hon. Mohamed said: in five years the Labour Party is going to be in power again. And he said in 1995, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was beaten 60-0 and he came to power. The only difference is Sir Anerood Jugnauth. The only difference is our Ferguson. That's the difference.

Madam Speaker, the former Leader of the Labour Party, the former Leader of this House, the former Prime Minister said that his life is an open book. And today we all know that his life was about close files and locked safe containing hundreds of millions of rupees and foreign currencies. The revelation of the on-going enquiry is as revealing as it is far-reaching. As far as Cyprus, Chicago, London, Switzerland, Venice, Singapore, such is the web, Madam Speaker.

The pillars of this House are based on truth and transparency, Madam Speaker. The former Prime Minister answered a PNQ here and had a press conference which was aired on the radios. He said that on the famous night of Roches Noires, he took his powerful car early at dawn without any security to rush to his bungalow because there had been a burglary of Rs20,000. And now, when we know what his fortune is worth! Madam Speaker, there is something you have to compare. He was rushing at 1 o'clock in the morning from Riverwalk to Roches Noires and you know what he does! And the same Prime Minister orders almost 70 policemen on the highway from Riverwalk to Plaisance whenever he is going to take the plane. How can you reconcile these two? And the same Prime Minister orders almost 70 policemen on the highway from Riverwalk to Plaisance whenever he is going to take the plane. How can you reconcile these two? When he has to take a plane on mission, you have 70 policemen waiting on the roundabouts and on the footbridges. And then, because of Rs20,000, he rushed in a powerful car without security and bodyguards; he went to Roches Noires. But, anyway, we will know. The enquiry is on, and we will know about the truth. But what did we see, Madam Speaker? We saw a cult of secrecy, we saw the cult of greed as

a political tool to hold power, we saw the culture of believing that everything could be bought; a vote, a seat, an election, a ministerial portfolio.

As I have said always, sometimes it takes you five years to move from the Opposition to come to Government. But when you cross the floor, it takes you one day. The way those who crossed the floor looked at us; as if we were fools! What are you doing there? Because we were sincere and loyal to a party, we were seen as being fools. Because crossing the floor became a model. And what have we seen? The arrogance, the insolence to believe that fear could be a formidable weapon.

Madam Speaker, we have also seen a mix of African presidential *grandeur* and a decadent Berlusconi. But on 10 December, above all, it is the victory of one man: Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

Madam Speaker, in 1970, in his forties, he chose to be a *compagnon d'armes* of a young Paul Bérenger *révolutionnaire* in the grips and in the prison cell of a country where you had a state of emergency and a blind censorship. He was 40. In 2000, he chose the youngest Minister of Youth and Sports, and in 2014 he choose the youngest Deputy Speaker of this Assembly.

(Interruptions)

This is the great path of history with its hallmarks of a man who has been a great leader for so many years, starting in 63. This is undeniably the greatest faith Sir Anerood Jugnauth has always had in the young generations every time, and his commitment to build a better Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, what must we do now? I have said it. *Il nous faut bétonner le changement*. Often, what happens? We come, we do the cleaning, we set up new institutions, the country is different - the way we have done it, 2000-2005. And then, what happens? In five months, you have the Labour Party regime, and everything is destroyed.

Comment peut-on bétonner le changement? Because the people are saying “never again.” There are certain things that the people of this country do not want anymore, never again, and we should do everything as regards to the institutions - the right man in the right place - so that never again our country falls prey to what we have seen: nepotism, dictatorship, tyranny, fascism. Never again. So, we have to work on it, and the Programme...

(Interruptions)

...that we have to build this nation, this Parliament, give it again its decorum, being the voice of the people out there. As regards the Constitution - I will not say much about the DPP - what I will say is that we have a majority, but we will not tamper with the Constitution. This is sacred. We can rely on the legalist spirit of the Prime Minister or we can also rely on this majority. We will not amend the Constitution, except if it has to be done in the best interest of our people, in the best interest of the future.

Let me come now to the Programme, Madam Speaker. We will do more to restore the link between hard work, meritocracy, effort, because these are the values which have brought Mauritius to where we are. Hard work! Not *maja karo* or ABC! Hard work! It is the only solution! All the nations that have achieved greatness is hard work! Hard work, meritocracy, growing opportunity for every Mauritian. We need to be a competitive economy where businesses want to locate, and we need to create new jobs. We have to do that, Madam Speaker. We need to have 21st century infrastructure, modernise the port, the airport, bridges, have safer roads and the fastest internet for what we want to do as regards to innovation, as regards to technology. 21st century businesses have to be given the opportunity, the bright business climate, and above all, we have to produce to export in the region and to Africa. That is the only way forward, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, change can be a blessing, as was the case of 10 December. It can also be a threat, as in the case of climate change. Nobody has addressed this issue. So, I want to say a few words on it. In both cases, it poses formidable challenges. 2014 was the planet's warmest year on record; the warmest year in history's record was 2014, and the warmest years on record have all fallen in the first 15 years of this century, which means that it is the warmest of the 15 years that we have a record. Our activities - economic, social, urban, agriculture - are changing the climate. We need to act because we will continue to see rising oceans.

The other day I was passing through Pointe aux Cannoniers, and I could see that the water had already flooded the beach. We will have rising oceans, longer, hotter heat waves; we will have dangerous droughts, floods and massive disruptions in our everyday life. We are seeing it, Madam Speaker! We had a subtropical climate over the years, that is, where we had hot days, and then you had rainy seasons; we were used to it. You know, the climate in Mauritius has changed dramatically, because now we are nearing an equatorial climate.

What do we see? We see hot days, high humidity, and in the afternoon sudden thunderstorms and heavy rain for a few hours. This is equatorial climate, what you see in Nairobi, what you see in Thailand, in Bangkok. We need to adapt to this, and we have had the vision to create a Ministry for Management of Disasters, and to protect forcefully our small islands, manage landslides, as we have the problem in Terre Rouge-Verdun. Flash floods and droughts!

As regards to the economy, Madam Speaker, we have to get the macroeconomic fundamentals right. We cannot become a high income earning country if we have a growth rate of 3%, which we have had for the last five years. Last year, 2014, there was not one single decision taken to promote businesses and business facilitation, to allow investors to take a decision to invest and to create jobs. Not one single decision was taken because we know what has happened last year. It was only a year of '*Kozer Kozer*'.

Madam Speaker, this country has had one terrible reality: the concentration of economic activities in the hands of a few. We have lived through history, through the slavery period, through the indentured labour period, through after independence, and one of the biggest challenges has always been what we have call the democratisation of the economy. We have not succeeded but the time has come, there is a paradigm shift and I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to be bold enough to say that the SMEs can be the backbone of our economic growth and create jobs, and he's going to put Rs10 billion to see to it that this happens. This is for the first time a real challenge to this concentration of economic activity and *ce qu'on appelle la vraie démocratisation*. We know what happened as regard to *la démocratisation de la fraude et de la corruption pendant les dernières années*.

Madam Speaker, there is this paradigm shift to the Small and Medium Enterprises. We had questions asked; you know how many businesses closed last year, per quarter? Thousands of them! How many shops closed? If we had not injected billions in the economy last year when we came with the pension, with the bonus, many more shops would have closed for good.

Madam Speaker, with the SME on *va promouvoir le génie mauricien*. We will promote the entrepreneurship spirit of our country and I would like to say, here, that I share the comments of the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development as regard the role of banks. We see in the papers that the banks have made Rs1.2 billion, Rs2.3 billion. So

much, why and how? They are making money out of our money. The banks have to thrive but the banks should play their role, because if you don't give the funds to the promoters, to the investors, we will not be able to do what we want to do as regard to investment and job creation.

Madam Speaker, for example, in the housing sector, you had to bring in 30% of the cost of the price of a property. But there has been a request to the Minister to see to it that we reduce this percentage to allow more people with a lesser deposit to become household owners.

Now, Madam Speaker, the fight against poverty. This is a mandate, this is a mission. We cannot have poor people in Mauritius today. We have this Government and that was one of our top priorities in all our speeches, in all our rallies. In fact, what was happening, people became poorer and poorer, while some were fumbling for coins in their pockets others were fumbling with freshly printed dollar notes. Whilst some were remembering their codes to get a few hundred rupees at the cash machine, others were playing with the code number of their safes worth millions. This is the Mauritius we have had for the last five years. We know the figures, we always said so many households are living with Rs7,000, so many households are living with Rs125,000. We put so many questions. We had the Minister for Social Integration, he never answered. The people got poorer and poorer and the regime got richer and richer. And you know why because, I think, there is a *machiavélique* thinking in the propaganda of the Labour Party: you make them the poorer to buy them better.

When the time comes, you remember, the elections was on 10 December, what were all of us hearing on 08 and 09, that people will come with millions to buy all the votes. Was not this something which was in our minds?

(Interruptions)

Yes, in Constituency No. 13! This goes with the culture that everything can be bought, a vote, an election. I will not reflect on what happened in Flacq, I will not reflect on the *macaroni*, I will not reflect on the by-election in Beau Bassin where Mrs Labelle was a candidate.

Madam Speaker, whilst some people are dreaming to have a house like a matchbox with a PEL account, some were buying villas in Venice and Lugano. This is the Mauritius that we have seen.

(Interruptions)

Lugano, yes! In Venice and Lugano, I have forgotten London.

(Interruptions)

So, whilst some people were dreaming to have a house like a matchbox of 400 square feet worth Rs400,000, others were thinking of buying villas in Venice and Lugano.

Madam Speaker, it is a complex battle, but we have to do it and I know that the Minister for Social Integration will do it. We have to do it, because I think that, as Sir Anerood Jugnauth said in 1982, first, we have to address the issue of unemployment and then, Sir Gaëtan Duval said: *'Le premier problème de Maurice c'est le chômage, le deuxième c'est le chômage, le troisième c'est le chômage.'*

We have to address this problem of poverty. It is a very complex issue. But, I think we will get there and the programme also provides, Madam Speaker, that we have a private television network, and we will stand to our word. We have also proposed a Freedom of Information Act and that will be a bid to promote good governance and transparency just like we have set up a Ministry. We have already done a lot, Madam Speaker. Never in the history of Mauritius, was so much done in so little time. In ten weeks! Our track record is amazing.

As regards law and order, we can rely on Sir Anerood Jugnauth's firm grip to see to it that it is restored and we are going to have a Commission of Enquiry on Drugs.

Madam Speaker, I am still in the dark alleys of the past, I have yet to come to the roads leading to our future, but time is running. As regards my Ministry, I will not say much. I am going to sum up our action and our commitment in very few words.

- We will have safer roads, better networks; we will have a national transport system which will reflect the sophistication of our nation.
- New buses, new bus shelters, new stations transformed.
- We will have a new town and country planning vision with satellite cities in Highlands, technoparks, a new urban design of our roads and streets to cater for all road users, *un nouveau cadre de vie moins moderne qui reflète le niveau de sophistication de notre société.*
- We will work to see to it that every cent, Madam Speaker, of public funds is well used in whatever projects we undertake. We can't have variations of billions; we can't waste public funds, Madam Speaker.

We want to build a new Mauritius which will be the beacon and the jewel of the Indian Ocean.

Madam Speaker, we have a dream. We have started our business of remaking Mauritius. The Remake 2000 is gone, but we are remaking Mauritius for 2020 and beyond, Madam Speaker. There is one essential pillar of our leadership, that is, example of our values and our principles, because political action has no sense if it is not based on values and principles, Madam Speaker, and if there is one person who embodies these values and principles, it is Sir Anerood Jugnauth at the head of the alliance.

(Interruptions)

As for the MSM, we have a profound commitment to loyalty. Madam Speaker, we cherish our values and principles, we respect our given word, that's how the hon. Leader of the Opposition became Prime Minister in 2003. We look to the future instead of the past and we strongly believe that good people of every community and every faith, share certain values which we cherished and which will make modern Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, we believe in the goodness and the optimistic. We believe in the generosity of our people and we believe also that out there, the people want us here to give the example and to behold those values and principles and to build a better Mauritius.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, the Deputy Speaker will now take the Chair.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(6.20 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mohamed!

Mr S. Mohamed (First Member of Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East): Thank you, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last year, before the nomination day preceding elections of December 2014, I never thought that I would be in Parliament in 2015.

(Interruptions)

I was not supposed to even be a candidate. I was not supposed to be a candidate in the elections of 10 December 2014 and if I am here today, some call me *le rescapé*.

(Interruptions)

Thank you for the compliment.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Mohamed: Some wonder in disbelief. Even members of the press, analysts, political gurus wonder in disbelief and so do I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I would never have thought that one day I would have been honoured - I must admit - to be in this august Assembly as the *le chef de file* of the Labour Party.

(Interruptions)

It is an honour. When I was listening to hon. Bodha, I couldn't help myself...

(Interruptions)

I was about to say that. Thank you, Sir! Now, you should stop reading my mind!

(Interruptions)

When I was looking at hon. Bodha, we were younger in those days, and so was Sir Anerood Jugnauth. That was the first time I had started my political address on TV and he was in the middle and we were on both sides. Now, we may be on opposing sides, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the hon. Prime Minister and his team, but it will indeed be a pleasure to cross swords because it will be done in only one interest; the interest of the nation and nothing else. That is my pledge that we will work together. We will criticise one another, but as long as it is constructive, this is going to be – what we in the Labour Party have promised to do and this is what you heard when each and every hon. Member of the Labour Party has addressed this august Assembly. This is what we have done. When I think about all of us here today, when I think about the speech of hon. Rutnah and how he described the meeting of two souls. The meeting of two souls who once met and decided one day, they would have someone who would be a candidate maybe and be in this august Assembly and here he is. Then, it takes me down memory lane. It reminds me of who I am because sometimes in life you do have to put questions to yourself. Where did we come from? We are all the same. We all come from various continents and we have all ended up in this little piece of rock in the middle of the Indian Ocean we are all one people. I think of my grandfather on my maternal side. The hon. Prime Minister knew him well, Mr Omar Ramjanaly, a habitant of Vacoas. I remember him. Humble beginnings! Working once upon a time in Uganda and *fier de le dire*, was a

driver; *un domestique*. And he is my maternal grandfather; on my mother's side coming from Uttar Pradesh, on my father's side coming from Calcutta. My paternal grand mother being a *mademoiselle Ducasse*. I think about today, being the proud father of three sons, three Mauritians and I think about my father-in-law. When he was aged ten, he was forced in Algeria to see his father naked on a chair being tortured and he was forced to see his father killed. *La guerre d'Algérie en 1954!*

When you have all those experiences, when you live through those lives, when you make such choices, choices of whom you go towards and whom you end up with; you learn from others. It shapes your future. It shapes your vision and it shapes what you want for this country. It does shape you.

Very often, some people accuse me for being *trop franc*. I say what I think. Some believe it is a defect, maybe it is. For those whom I have offended, I apologise to them. For those whom I will offend, I apologise now also.

(Interruptions)

It is never meant out of harm, but out of this democratic game; the nation first and nothing else.

Now that I am here before you, there is change and that is a new Government. But change, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is not only about change of regime. Oh no! Change is not only, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about the change of a Prime Minister or a change of backbenchers or a change of Ministers. This is not change! Change is when we realise what the people want, when we understand what the people want and when we understand how we are to give them what they want. This and only this will be real change.

(Interruptions)

Let me continue!

I had the opportunity when I was backbencher of standing up and I was known for that and the Hansard is there as testimony. I never hesitated even as a backbencher to stand up and put questions that had to be put to the Ministers of the day as backbencher. I never hesitated to even participate in debates and criticise the Government I belonged to because I believe in constructive criticism. I did it as Member of the Labour Party, as hon. Minister, proud to have served this nation. I said what I had to say whenever I had to say it. Now I listened hon. Bodha who talked about the last ten years. The last ten years, he said, has been

a scourge to this country. Am I to believe him, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The last ten years have been such a *déroute* to this nation. It has been rotting this nation to the bone. I don't believe it! I don't believe it! Because if what the hon. Minister says is true, then it is very, very sad indeed because people have a short memory. It reminds me of the time when I came as a new Member of Parliament in this august Assembly in 2005 and I also did that. Turnaround, the previous Government in front of me, now in the Opposition and criticised them and said that they were guilty of all the woes of the world.

They were responsible for all the worries of Mauritius. I did that. Was I right? Not really! I was not. Because if hon. Bodha is to be believed then the time when the MSM during those last 10 years was in Government, also forms part of the time when it was a scourge to this country. I will tell you something else I have learnt in politics in a minute.

The time that hon. Etienne Sinatambou was Minister of Cabinet from 2005 until a certain time, I cannot remember when was that a scourge? Did he form part of the Cabinet that was damaging to this country? Did hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, now Deputy Prime Minister, form part of that scourge for almost 10 years? Did hon. Henry form part of that scourge? All of the Members of the PMSD? Let us not now start saying: "Wait a minute, let us rewrite history. I did not form part of that Government." A colleague of mine will stand here and say: "10 years have gone down". And all the 10 years are wrong! Let us be serious! Not all the 10 years! If you tell me that they have been wrong, I will not tell you that we hold the monopoly of good. I am not saying we hold the monopoly of good.

I have had the opportunity, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of addressing some of my concerns to the former Prime Minister, when I was in Cabinet. I remember – let me talk about that - a time when I stood up and said to him: "Sir, I would like to see people, youngsters out there, in the north, the south, the east, the west, in the centre of the Island, from villages, from towns. We do not want to have many Mauritius. We do not have one in the north, one in the south, one in the east, one in the west, a village or a town. We have one Mauritius, we are one people. I would like to see them, their parents who have sacrificed years and years sending them to university, who have toiled the way and obtained an education, who can make Mauritius proud. I would like to see a bipartisan Parliamentary Committee interview those youths. I have said that to him. I would like to see them, the sons and daughters of Mauritius, be called upon *appel de candidature*. Let us have this bipartisan Parliamentary Committee interview them and send a report to the Ministers or the Prime Minister responsible *pour les corps paraétatiques* under his Ministry and let that Minister or the Prime Minister decide who

will be recruited. Now if the Prime Minister or Minister decides to recruit the best, he stands by that if he decides to recruit the worst based on the report, he also has to stand by it. This is what I suggested. My suggestions, my proposals fell on deaf ears. It was as though, what I was saying as a youngster, was not important, precisely, because I was too young; precisely, because when you are of a certain age, people do not take you seriously or they believe that you are *trop un rebelle*, too much of a revolutionary. But this is what I want for my country for things to change. Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, when we talk of change, this is what I mean by change, a fundamental change in the approach, in the way we embrace the future of this nation. This is what people out there want.

When they brought in Sir Anerood Jugnauth as Prime Minister of this country, they did it with hope; with hope that things would change. With hope that many issues would change, but let me stick to one of them. As far as employment would go, it would change. I read your electoral manifesto - beautifully written - of *l'Alliance Lepep*! Not only beautifully written, beautifully presented - I must admit, but do forgive me, I only read it after the elections. If only I had seen that before the elections, maybe I could have predicted the result. Now I read it, I have seen the Government Programme and it starts out even the same, and there, there is consistency, I must give that to the Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Note 9 page 5 –

“This implies:

A transparent and merit-based recruitment and appointment policy to ensure meritocracy;”

This is what I have just been talking about. Meritocracy, basically, that is the opposite of nepotism. Hon. Bodha was just talking about the word ‘nepotism’, wasn’t he?” And I just decided to go into my Ipad and see what exactly does that mean? It means a nephew of the pope, basically, favouring those who are close to us. That is nepotism! That is not meritocracy! And yes, the Labour Party also is guilty of having done that. Let me lay that to rest once and for all, I am not saying we hold the monopoly of having done good. When, we, the Labour Party have chosen certain people to sit on Boards as Members or Chairmen or CEOs of Boards, be it at the SIC or the STC or others where there was no *appel à candidature*, that was not meritocracy! When was it? And all Governments since Independence, most posts and appointments have been done in a such way. It is so much so,

it has become tradition and that is this whole change that I am talking about, the change that the people want to really embrace. But, have we gone there? Or is nepotism still going on?

I have sent a message, Mr Deputy Speaker, through the press and to the hon. Prime Minister, because I believe that the hon. Prime Minister is in a unique position that no other Prime Minister has been in the past. No other Prime Minister has been in the unique position he finds himself in. No one! Because he is, indeed, *un Premier ministre de transition*. He can afford, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to take decisions and take courageous and bold decisions in the interest of the nation, because he is not concerned about his own re-election. That is the truth! You have an hon. Minister of Finance who is in the same position as the hon. Prime Minister. They are, therefore, not concerned about being re-elected or not. In other words, they are not concerned and they can afford not to be concerned about pleasing a or b or c or d. They can, therefore, keep up with this courageous decision to change and to really mean what the word 'change' means, not simply words with beautiful speeches, not simply a beautiful brochure with a nice presentation, not simply nice colours put together, not simply photographs being photoshopped, not simply a nice print job at the printers, not simply a nice lighting done by a photographer, because those are just *du maquillage* and empty in words and meaning. Out there, you have students, professionals who have waited for the Labour Party to do it, but the Labour Party did not do it. Now you have the MSM and the others in power. They are waiting for you to do it.

(Interruptions)

Have you not started by doing it? Let me stop you there.

Recently, in this august Assembly, I have heard hon. Gayan talk. Hon. Gayan said Government has decided and when Government decides that is it. Government decides to appoint someone at the Cardiac Centre Trust Fund, Trust Fund for vulnerable disease. How was that appointment made? Was that appointment made on merit base? When you go to the definition of meritocracy – the very first page of your programme, the very paragraph nine - *la méritocratie, la transparence, la discipline. Voilà les mots que le gouvernement a choisi de mettre en avant*. Hon. Bodha said so rightly that the 100 days have not even gone by. There has already been a violation of that promise, there has already been a violation of that pledge to the nation. Must I really go through each and every Board because here the reason why I feel so strongly about it is because, precisely, we have an hon. Prime Minister who is in a unique position.

When will we have such a unique situation again, I know not! Because each and every Prime Minister that comes in thinks about getting re-elected and when you think about getting re-elected, there are vested interests. When you think about vested interests, you want to protect A, B and C and when you have that you do not have meritocracy, you have exactly the opposite, nepotism.

When we talk about the appointment of Mr Sherry Singh at the Mauritius Telecom, is this meritocracy? Are we saying that he is not good? I am not saying he is not good. Most probably, he is the best candidate there is. But the Labour Party failed to implement what I am saying and I am saying here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that there is a chance that we can embrace change for good. Let us embrace it, let us change. Let us really give the chance to all those out there. When you talk about those out there, they are the reasons why you are in power. Nothing else! Those out there, their children, are they not good enough? If the Labour Party did not even believe and have the courage to try to change, have that courage! Embrace it! You have been anointed by the people to do it. Do not fail even before the hundred days are over.

I am sorry, there is something called nepotism and there is something called meritocracy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You cannot choose to sit on the fence, you cannot start saying part of it is going to be meritocracy and part of it is going to be nepotism. That does not make sense because it spoils the whole barrel. What I am saying is there is a chance for it. I am not doing politics here. I am just being very honest and very candid. The Labour Party did not do it. I formed part of that Government, hon. Sinatambou formed part of that Government, hon. Xavier Duval formed part of that Government. Let us be honest about it and let us not try to pretend that those things did not happen.

(Interruptions)

What I am saying here is there is a chance to change.

(Interruptions)

That is the reason, because of such reactions that I fear for the future of this country. Words will be great. Maybe the good thing is that it is not necessary for everyone to understand what I am trying to say here. It is only enough for one man to understand it; that is the hon. Prime Minister. Only one man!

(Interruptions)

No!

(Interruptions)

Do we want to really participate in a political system that is just about revenge? Do we want to do that? Because everyone has done it, each and every time there has been a change of regime this is what we have seen.

Do you want to know what I am talking about? There is a lady in my constituency and that lady has obtained a job in a parastatal body some three years back. She lives in a tin shack in Roche Bois. Finally, she gets a job in a parastatal body. Actually, it was just over a year back she gets a job. Now, because she sends in a medical certificate to say that she is not well and the medical doctor of the hospital certifies that she needs rest and because she has not worked for more than a year, she is not confirmed in her position. On top of it, she is told: “we will put you on probation for another six months.”

(Interruptions)

That is not the law! I am talking about the parastatal body. Don't talk about something that does not apply! The Employment Rights Act and the Employment Relations Act do not apply.

The Deputy Speaker: Please address the Chair, hon. Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: That is not the law!

This lady is a victim precisely because she worked for me in the general elections.

(Interruptions)

If what I am saying is not right, then I challenge you, hon. Collendavelloo, have her appointed tomorrow morning!

(Interruptions)

I do not want to embarrass Ministers. I will give it to you.

(Interruptions)

No! In the meantime, then, what will happen?

(Interruptions)

Why choose the long route when there is a shorter route, justice?

(Interruptions)

There is another lady - is it a politics of revenge - who lives in Plaine Verte and that lady is past 60 years old, all of a sudden...

(Interruptions)

Really! Someone who took the moral high ground who has decided that he shall not go through what meritocracy is, does not have the real ability and the licence to talk about what is right for us or not. And, that is hon. Gayan, I mean it!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gayan: I think the hon. Member is out of order because if he goes on that track, we are going to speak about Gorah Issac and we are going to speak ...

Mr Mohamed: Speak!

Mr Gayan:... about the Bangladeshi workers and your...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Gayan, what is your point of order exactly?

Mr Gayan: That the hon. Member is out of order!

The Deputy Speaker: For what reason?

Mr Gayan: For the reason that he is attacking hon. Members of this House.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I have listened to the point of order. I will ask the hon. Member not to attack any Members here!

Mr Mohamed: Fair enough! As long as I am not interrupted by anyone, I will continue according to what the Deputy Speaker says.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member may continue!

Mr Mohamed: There is another lady who all of a sudden, out of the blue, for the first time in her life, has a visit from the ADSU, a whole team. She calls me in a panic, crying. I said what is going on? The ADSU officers have gone there, have searched and obviously there was nothing. They made her sign a document, there was nothing and while leaving an officer of that ADSU told her: "Oh! I see that you kiss Shakeel Mohamed on both sides of the cheek when you see him in front of the Labour Party office!" Then he left. What is this lady supposed to think? Obviously, I am not saying that there is anything sinister. Maybe they

were doing their duty. But when you have remarks of that nature, obviously, it puts the fear of God in your heart and says: wait a minute, what is going on?

When earlier today we heard that Police officers are saying *inne gagne l'ordre depi la haut*, it does not mean it is true. I am not saying it means it's true, that *la haut* means Government. But, it also means that sometimes you have Police officers who should be more responsible and not use names just in order to make themselves look more important. It gives a bad impression on Government. That is what I am saying. What I am trying to get at here is we need to embrace a politics where all of us unite as one people.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, hon. Jhugroo, do not interrupt!

Mr Mohamed: We need to unite as one people. We cannot keep on challenging one another, that one is wrong, that one is right.

(Interruptions)

As far as I am concerned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if everything in this Government Programme is achieved, then it will be great for the country.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, hon. Jhugroo, for the last time, do not interrupt!

Mr Mohamed: What I am trying to say here is very simple: wrong is wrong. It does not mean that when it is red it is wrong and when it is orange, it is not wrong. Any colour, if it is wrong, is wrong. That is what I am trying to say. There is wrong that all of us have to attack.

If I have taken the bold decision to be honest in this august Assembly with what the past has been and what we want to achieve in the future, it is precisely because I am someone who loves my country and I am sure that every single one of you here are people who are patriots. That is the reason why we joined politics because we want to work for our country. We can decide not to look at the truth *en face* like some. Then only, people will judge us at a later stage.

What I am trying to get at here is that I have heard many talk like the hon. Minister of Labour. The hon. Minister of Labour, I met him immediately after the elections and I decided to meet him.

It was indeed a pleasure to meet the person who was going to take over the office of Minister of Labour and Employment because I believe it was necessary *pour avoir le passage de témoin*. It was necessary because this is what is important in a democracy. Let us call it Mauritian type. Let us stop talking about that because European means the best! I am sorry. This is Mauritius as it should be. The way I see it. And we did it, *passage de témoin*. But there are important facts that should not go astray. We talk about unemployment. Obviously, it is a scourge that is affecting many countries, not only Mauritius. But when one talks about unemployment, let us really talk about facts and statistics. There is a lot to be done, but to come and tell me that you will create 15,000 jobs a year; 5,000 in civil service. If this, according to this Government, will sort out the problem of unemployment, then I humbly put it, that this is wrong. Because 15,000 jobs a year will never sort out the problem of unemployment. It will bring it to a stable level and keep it to a figure between 7.5% and 8%. Nothing more nothing less.

(Interruptions)

I am talking about 15,000 jobs a year. I am sorry. I am talking about statistics. Go to the Labour statistics. Go to the Employment statistics, for the past 10 years the jobs that have been created on a yearly basis, have been an average 13,000 to 14,000 to even sometimes 15,000 jobs a year. That has been the trend and those are the figures of the Central Statistical Office. Those are the figures that I, myself, was not aware of, but I had the honour and privilege to learn it from one Minister of Finance, who was hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. He showed me that is the number of jobs we are creating. He was right when he put it. We have to create more. Hon. Bodha was right, 3% is not enough, we have to go for more and even reach double-digit growth. That indeed will be a miracle. But, what I am saying here is that 15,000 jobs a year will not be sufficient because we are actually doing approximately that every year.

When I came into office in 2010, the unemployment figure was about 8.3%. When we came into power in 2005, the unemployment rate was 9.5%. When I left in December 2014, the hon. Minister of Labour, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, rightly said it and I use his own figure, it was only 7.8%. So, we've managed to bring it down from 8.3% to 7.8% and the third quarter of 2014 was 7.6%. But, we've brought it to an average of 7.8% for 2014 from 8.3% in 2010 by having created precisely 13,000 to 15,000 jobs a year. So, what I am trying to get at here, yes, there is the need to create jobs. Yes, there is a need to ensure that lots of our youngsters find jobs. Yes, there is a need to train people.

I am happy that under the now portfolio of the hon. Minister, you have the issue of training. I, now, make a prayer to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, forgive me it is another one. It is only in the interest of the country that not only must he be the Minister of Training - without *manquer de respecter à qui que ce soit* - he should not only be the Minister of training with HRDC not attached to him. He cannot be the Minister of Training, if he does not have MITD not attached with him. He has to be the Minister of Training with all the possibilities of training people who are unemployed. Because then he will be in a situation where he will identify those scarcity sectors, those are the people I will train under one umbrella. I will be able to ensure that everyone obtains the training that is required and we will be able to forecast what are the required skills for the next five years or ten years. That is a way which is a serious way of addressing the problem of unemployment. I did not have the possibility of having those portfolios. It was split. You had one with the Minister of Finance, you had one with the NEF, you had some with the Ministry of Education and that does not help. So, we, in the interest of the country, what I am saying here is to give the opportunity to this young, dynamic Minister of Labour.

What I am saying here is that we should be given the opportunity and whoever else is Minister of Labour, that he can connect. We use Singapore as an example. Let us use good examples. The Ministry of Manpower in Singapore, they don't call it Labour, they call it Manpower because it also has Training underneath it. So, that is what I am trying to get at.

The second issue is about unemployment because it is something that has to be addressed. I appreciate the honesty of the hon. Minister. He said in his address that we have to ensure that we are going with a lot of bilateral agreements with other countries. Bilateral agreements with other countries and just before he said that, we had another orator from the Government side, hon. Gobin who basically said: 'oh, well the hon. Minister Mohamed was sending people abroad and too many are being sent abroad to work'. We never sent people abroad to migrate. That is the difference. We sent people abroad for circular migration and circular migration is all about labour mobility. And, it is precisely what the now Minister of Labour is talking about; signing of agreements to ensure that the programme of circular migration and labour mobility continues. That is what he was talking about. This is exactly what I was doing and what he is talking about.

I had an opportunity of talking to the Minister of Finance, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo and he is totally in agreement that we should try to send people abroad and see how they could go and get more experience, earn more money in terms of foreign exchange, send more foreign

exchange to Mauritius, bring to Mauritius when they return their expertise and the skills that they have learnt. But when we talk in the Programme of 5,000 people being sent to work *sur les* cruise ships, that is not possible. I tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, why it is not possible. I'm being very honest. It is impossible for this country, as it is right now, to train 5,000 people to be qualified to go and work on a cruise ship in one year. Let alone 500. The Naval Academy of this country does not have the capacity to train more than 500 in a year. Let me go further, not even 300. They can train in three months: 50. And what is this figure? It's nothing.

In other words, what I do propose is, at least, to bring in people who are in the field, other countries like in Greece, for example, other countries where there are mariners, that are really strong in cruise ships businesses like in the Philippines where those people can train and get the right certification, British approved within a period of two weeks whereas in Mauritius some say we need three months. Either we want to ensure that our youngsters can obtain good jobs by giving them the right training, but unfortunately, once again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that trainee, the Naval Academy was under the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. Maybe now, it is under hon. Koonjoo. But if that is the case, it does not make sense in my humble view. If it is a Training Academy, it should be with the Minister that has the portfolio for training. That will, therefore, put more order in the whole process. Unemployment goes with training. It should go together.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when people want change as I have said - if everything is done right as far as this programme is concerned then there is an opportunity which does not come again for people at the level of the MHC, at the level of the Bank of Mauritius, at the level of the State Investment Corporation, at the level of the Road Development Authority, the MPCB, the DBM, MSC and all the other parastatals, it is to do exactly what is proposed at paragraph nine of the Programme. I am not inventing it, you suggested it. I said you are right in having made the suggestion. I said that your programme is excellent. But, it can only start working if you do not violate the very beginning of it.

All the rest will become a mess and the puzzle will not come together, if the beginning itself starts wrongly. So, there is an opportunity to correct all that at the very outset. You are at the beginning of your mandate. Try to correct it. When we talk about change ...

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

Mr Mohamed: Yes. So, what I am saying, is that they should change. There is something else which I say, and people also, we have not heard at all here. Hon. Bodha said that no one has talked about climate change. That is what he said just now in his speech. He said no one before him has talked about climate change, and that is quite sad, because obviously hon. Dayal has also addressed this august Assembly, and his colleague Minister has just said that no one has talked about climate change. Now, I have not had the pleasure of listening to hon. Dayal, but if that is the case, then, that is serious! - If the hon. Minister of Environment has not addressed climate change, or maybe hon. Bodha is wrong. I leave that to both Ministers to sort it out. And I'll leave it at that.

(Interruptions)

But I am trying to create order here!

Now, as far as another issue which was not addressed is the case of *Rezistans ek Alternativ*. No one has talked about that. No one has talked about the case of *Rezistans ek Alternativ*. The message of the people is clear. There will and shall not be any second Republic. Clear. But, we still have a situation we have to tackle, and the Rt. hon. Prime Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir will realise and agree that there was a ruling from experts saying 'either you change the system, and if you don't change the system and you keep the best loser system, then there is no other choice.' *C'est précisément de réactualiser* the census of 1972. This is precisely what the experts of the United Nations have said. Then, I believe that either we are a mature country enough *pour réactualiser le census*. Because what I found is that, when we talk about *réactualiser le census sur une base ethnique*, does it necessarily mean that we have to divide our country?

(Interruptions)

I have seen some countries where it is done. As the Rt. hon. Prime Minister is suggesting, maybe it could be done as an option. It is done, and in some countries when it is done, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is used as an economic planning tool to find out what exactly are the problems in certain ethnic groups, if at all, in order to bring corrective measures. So, that is the way. I know that the hon. Deputy Prime Minister also talked about that openly when he was in Government. I was the one who talked about the necessity for *un recensement de 1972* also. And I think it is important, because if we are a mature country, where there is no Mauritius for this community or another community, there is one Mauritius, then we have to

be able to, now in 2015, say ‘this is a *recensement*, we use it for the construction of the country and not the division of the country.’

There is also the need to talk about other issues that are extremely important when we talk about change. A better health care; what people want out there. Let’s simplify it. And here, I am not saying that we don’t have a Minister of Health and Quality of Life who hasn’t got the ability. I believe that the hon. Minister of Health and Quality of Life has all the ability to do an excellent job in his department. I’ve known him as a lawyer, and I admit the person has ability. But I also say things that are also true.

As far as his ability is concerned, I am sure that what people out there want is that they do not want to continue, even though we have improved a lot in the last years as far as health is concerned, hospitals are concerned; less waiting time, more beds available, less people dying in operation theatres, less women dying at child birth, less babies dying at child birth, complicated operations being carried out in Mauritius. This is what people want! To know that when their loved ones have a problem, they have a solution. *Ils sont reçus* as patients, they are taken care of, and not taken away as cattle and livestock. This is what people want, and this is what we would like to judge a Government at the end of their mandate on. Better education! Why is it that, in certain villages, the schools are not as good as the schools in towns? Why is it that some of the teachers in towns are better than the teachers in villages? Why is it ...

(Interruptions)

... and I am here not talking about your government! That’s what is talked about honesty, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is being honest. Maybe the hon. gentleman should get used to that. I am being very candid. What I am saying here is that those issues must be addressed because education is not as though you are having a switch and you put it on and off. What I am saying here is that those are issues that must be addressed, and this is how we judge a government at the end of their mandate; this is how the people judge.

What about the open sky policy? I asked the question to the hon. Minister; unfortunately, he was not here. Hon. Collendavelloo tried to answer, and he was right. Maybe I should come with a substantive question. But the open sky policy is as such. I was in Abu Dhabi. I met with the hon. Ministers of Labour, I met in Qatar with the Emir, and he said: ‘Hon. Minister - I was Minister then - why should I come to Mauritius? Why should I come to Mauritius and take a flight from Qatar, Doha, to go to Dubai?’ The people from Abu

Dhabi said: ‘Why should we go to Dubai to come to Mauritius, when the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates is Etihad and not Emirates? So, what is open sky?’

In other words, do we give an opportunity to another company to monopolise the situation and have the prices they wish, or do we increase the number of flights? That is the question! Yes, I belonged to a government that, in my humble view, should have brought in people from Abu Dhabi - Etihad. We should have allowed people from Qatar to come in, because I have transmitted letters, and this is an opportunity here.

When I read the speeches of hon. Members of Government, I read the speeches of Ministers of this Government, I see there is a will and a wish to open up. There is a wish not to restrict competition, there is a wish not to create monopolies. And if that is the wish, then my prayer - another - is that we open our skies, that we create competition. A difficult choice we will have to make is whether we are to go for Air Mauritius as being our priority or Mauritius. That is a harsh decision we have to make. Either Air Mauritius follows suit, but Mauritius cannot sink because of Air Mauritius.

We have more hotels that have to be built. We have more tourists that have to come in. We have more foreign exchange that has to be spent in Mauritius. But that does not mean we should restrict the number of flights that come in. The Minister of Labour of Abu Dhabi said to me: ‘Why should I come to Mauritius? I can’t see Mauritius because Seychelles is blocking the view.’ What I said to him is: ‘Hon. Minister, if you could simply just stand up, then you would see Mauritius on the other side.’ He does not want to have to take a car and go there to Dubai, and then fly down to Mauritius. So, those are issues which I invite the Rt. hon. Prime Minister and this Government to look into.

The cost of living. Let me say one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. You go to any hypermarket in this country right now, and you buy any make of yoghurt. I give an example: Activia. Activia is a yoghurt that is imported from France. It is also made in Reunion Island. In Reunion Island, six pots of Activia are sold for 1.40 euro. In France, they are sold for 1.10 euro. In Mauritius, they are sold for 10 euros. I’ve carried out the experience that when one looks at the cost of living in Mauritius as far as milk, as far chicken, as far the *denrées alimentaires* are concerned - your monthly bill - it is cheaper to live in France than it is in Mauritius. That is true! So, what am I saying here, is those are stark realities. Maybe the Competition Commission should do something. Now you have someone else there. I am not agreeable with the method in which he was appointed, but if that is the case, so be it! But

let's get working, let get cracking. People have to see the change has come because for now they are still waiting.

Something else which I would like to address is the minimum wage. For the first time in history, I have gone to the ILO, I've spoken to Professor Eraut, I have met with the Director-General, I've got the experts to come to Mauritius; there is now a huge report on minimum wage.

Now, I received the report when I was Minister on 11 September 2014; the report is there, it has been taken to Cabinet. So, my humble request is that, - yes, I see it in the Government Programme, I see it in the political manifesto - we should, as soon as possible, implement the good parts of this report in the humble view of Cabinet, in your discretion, whatever is recommended there by experts, those are people who have no interest of their own to serve, but this is the first time that there is a complete report on the national minimum wage. And I am proud to say that I have managed to contribute by bringing this report to Mauritius, and making it available with the help of excellent experts, and excellent officers of the Ministry of Employment who have contributed for this report to be written. So, use it and make sure to implement it.

I have spoken long enough, but let me say something which is very important, there are certain issues that are urgent. Yes, you have the Government Programme, but you also have the political manifesto, that nice shiny document that I read, and in that document I read something very important, *les douze priorités des trois premiers mois au gouvernement*. That did not talk about five years, that did not talk about one year or six months, it talked about three months. You have done the first one: *augmenter la pension de vieillesse*. You have not introduced a minimum salary *pour les travailleurs au bas de l'échelle*. This was in there, *les douze priorités des trois premiers mois*.

(Interruptions)

Les trois premiers mois! Almost two weeks are gone. It's impossible for you to do it in the first three months; let's be serious.

(Interruptions)

I am saying what's in here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I am only trying to remind my hon. friends that there is an urgency to comply with the promises they made to their electorate. And, I am not saying that they will not, there is an urgency.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, do not interrupt!

Mr Mohamed: As far as the Commission of Enquiry on Drugs is concerned, I congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for that, maybe we should have it as soon as possible, because that also was something that should have been done in the first three months.

As far as the reorganisation of the MBC is concerned, that was also what should have been done in the first three months but, once again, we cannot talk about reorganisation of MBC if the person that is nominated there - I say it in all humility, maybe he's the best, but the method of nomination does not comply with paragraph 9 of your Programme. So, having said that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,...

(Interruptions)

When I listened to the hon. Members on the other side, it reminds me of 2005 when we came to power, and it reminds me of the MMM who were just in Government on the other side, and everything they said, even though it was not all wrong, even though it was in the interest of the country, just because we were in power we thought that they were wrong. But, that is basically where I have to admit, I have learned because the lessons that the people sent on 10 December was not only for the Labour Party or the MMM, it was for all of us. And, what I am saying here is that I will not make the same mistakes of criticising another's view because, very often, the person opposite us maybe is right, and I just have to learn to listen, and I have learned how to listen. This is what I'm saying. I am saying that a lot of your views in your Programme are excellent measures and I only pray that you will implement them. And, I will also say...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence!

Mr Mohamed: I will also say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the track record of the hon. Prime Minister has been explained in a lot of details. Yes, we cannot deny that the hon. Prime Minister is, indeed, the one who was the architect *de la révolution industrielle* and the boom *économique*.

(Interruptions)

We cannot deny that hon. Sir Gaëtan Duval, as he was then, was the architect of the tourism industry in this country.

(Interruptions)

We cannot also deny that hon. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, as he was then, has done a lot for this country, and those are the words used by the very Prime Minister we have before us. He has also said that Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam has done a lot for this country and has brought us out from the colonial rule into an independent Mauritius. He has brought free education, that is also a fact. What is also a fact, is that the former Prime Minister - I will not judge what I have just seen on TV like many of you, I will not get into that because there is a case pending, but what I will say is that, to come and tell me that for the past ten years the Labour Party has done nothing is unfair.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, silence!

Mr Mohamed: And, that is why...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please!

Mr Mohamed: That is why I say, I remember the days when hon. Jhugroo...

(Interruptions)

You were not there!

(Interruptions)

I remember hon. Jhugroo talking on Monday at Parliamentary meetings, talking to the hon. former Prime Minister and basically congratulating him on many issues.

(Interruptions)

I remember hon. Xavier-Luc Duval sitting in Cabinet - and that is not disclosing secrecy - next to the former Prime Minister and basically talking about how things are moving in the right direction according to his vision, the same vision of two leaders. I remember the time that hon. Pravind Jugnauth in this august Assembly, sitting where hon. Baloomoody is sitting, and I remember the time when hon. Bérenger was sitting there and how hon. Jugnauth was criticising hon. Bérenger, and saying that the vision of the Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

I remember all that. So, that is true, but basically what I am saying is that those are stark realities, and if that is the case, let us, at least, say if there is change - and I'll come back to that - let there be a real change. Because we are in 2015, the world had changed; no one owes us a living and that is a fact. The world has changed. Now, if we do not embrace change as it should be, and if you don't bring real change, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, things will catch up on us and we will really be caught and this country will suffer.

So, what I would like to say here is that everything is not simply about winning and losing an election, because I was not supposed to be a candidate and let me finish on that. I was already ready for civilian life. I was already ready to go back to my profession and go and stop with politics. I was supposed to have stopped, but then, now, it makes me think that everything is not about being elected or not, everything is not about winning an election or not, it is about what do you do with the win. What do you do with the prize? Because, you have not got the prize yet, because the country deserves to win and it is not us that is important, it is the people that matter, and until we will realise that as one people, as one nation, it is only then that we will be able to live in peace, justice and liberty, because right now the division that is behind us, around us is not doing us good.

(Interruptions)

The division that is going on is not doing us good! What I am asking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the hon. Prime Minister, there is a rift in the country, unite it. There is a rift in the country, bring the people together. As I have said, we can sit *vis à vis* one another, but as long as there is no decision that will do harm to the country, I am all for it, and I will help even your Government, even from here. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister!

(7.19 p.m.)

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am sorry to disappoint you. I am not going to be as lyrical as my friend, hon. Mohamed and I am not going to be poetic. I am going to speak plain common sense.

(Interruptions)

Because the electorate, at the last elections, acted in a simple common sense without fiery language, without passion, without rhetoric, but calmly and silently they did their job, just as we are doing now since we have been in Government.

(Interruptions)

Let me come straight to the matter in hand. I shall start by quoting paragraphs 62 and 63 of the Government Programme.

- “ 62. Government will adopt a responsible and environmentally sustainable policy regarding energy production, waste management and physical infrastructural development.
63. Fiscal incentives will be provided to encourage renewable energy production.”

Not much has been said about this. This comes under the section devoted to the environment. Under the section devoted to my Ministry, the Ministry of Public Utilities, we read –

“Energy is an important sector, considered as the engine for economic development (...).”

There we are. We start with that basic fundamental problem. We have got our economic development to look after and our policy on energy will determine our future economic development, but, at the same time, we have our environment to look after. Whatever we do on the energy front and on the development front, must cater for the environment. This is why we had from the hon. Leader of the Opposition that vexed question on Sarako.

Sarako, an eyesore from the air as the hon. Leader of the Opposition put it and we grant it, that is, for development’s sake. But then if we want to have the environment safe and this is what I have said: “we can have MCB which from the air is as beautiful as any building we see in Dubai”. And that is what we want to achieve altogether. I shall be working hand in hand with my colleague, the hon. Minister for Environment. Dynamic, as he said, active, proactive and reactive!

(Interruptions)

I think the two of us, we can do a marvellous job on this front. In the last 15 years, there has been a dramatic and drastic evolution on the environmental aspects of energy production. Fifteen years ago, when the current Prime Minister was Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance and then, the Leader of the Opposition became

Prime Minister and, if I am not mistaken, hon. Ganoo was in charge of energy, a plan was started. The emphasis was on the economics of the matter. And they were right at that time because we had to see how to secure energy production for the future and they were planning for twenty years. This is why a huge programme was started by Sir Anerood Jugnauth with the support of his Minister of Finance for the boosting of coal-fired power plants and coal bagasse power plants. Our sugarcane, bagasse became the fuel of our economy and I am not making a play on words when I say ‘fuel’.

The idea was to ensure constant production and the fear was the blackout. Then, came 2005! However much my good friend, hon. Mohamed may speak of the ten years of the Labour Party, they may have been successful on many fronts whether it be on the west coast or on the east coast, but there is one thing where they failed. It is in the field of energy. That is what I call the ‘Navin era’.

(Interruptions)

Utterly they failed! What had been started under Bérenger, Jugnauth, Ganoo, whatever our political differences may be today, Navin Ramgoolam halted this. He made energy with a new dimension. It became a political issue. It became a racial issue. Independent power producers became a target just because of the colour of their skin and nobody dared to challenge this. This is one of the many harms caused by the Ramgoolam era. There was no logic.

(Interruptions)

Navin Ramgoolam era! I call it the Navin era. There was no logic except to make of energy an emotional issue and he succeeded because it halted what had been started in 2000. Then, everybody was scared because whatever they would do, then they would be labelled as being allies of the white population, etc., etc. And he came up was a concept. That is how it started. It started as independent power producers and it came up with a concept: ‘*nous bizin démocratiser l’économie.*’ Democratisation of the economy! This was just a pretext for the worst that this country has known; the Woochits and the Sungkurs and all the lot of them, including their Soornacks and whatever.

(Interruptions)

Special democracy!

(Interruptions)

Upside down democracy!

(Interruptions)

It was just a way of making money by putting up the name 'democracy'. Even the duty-free shop where they sell whisky, this also, democratisation! Today, we know Dufry and Frydu.

(Interruptions)

Synonymous of democracy! Millions of rupees syphoned out of this country. Stolen! They were daylight robbers. That's what they were and today I hear criticisms.

(Interruptions)

Plunderers!

(Interruptions)

Thank you, hon. Prime Minister. Carry on, give me words!

(Interruptions)

This is what they were. Today, I heard the Private Notice Question of the Leader of the Opposition, as if we were the ones the culprits, because we are trying to unearth what they had been doing for 10 years. How do you call that? Plunderers! And this becomes the subject of a Private Notice Question. Is it wrong for our friends, our Ministers to try and investigate? And what is the problem that it is at 2 o'clock in the morning? At least, they were not in Roches Noires! That is the issue. And whether they like it or not, we obtained the evidence, Mr what? Obadia! I never heard of that. My enquiry showed me that, apparently, he was on the payroll of our Embassy in France. This has got to be checked. This is what I heard today. And apparently, it is not the only one, there is another one, Augusto. I do not know what is Augusto? I never heard of these. But it was unearthed by our friends, our colleague Ministers who, today, are being criticised, because they are investigating perhaps the biggest crime that has been committed against our country. But let me say one thing, Mr Deputy Speaker. I have come back into the world of politics when I did not intend to do this, but I will be by your side. We will hunt them, we will look for them, we will stalk them. No ocean will be too deep for them to hide! No mountain too high for them to climb! No desert too big, too hot for them! We will get them and they will have to return this money to Mauritius, including these Directors of the AML, who blindly followed instructions of whoever it was, instead of doing their jobs as Directors; they will have to pay and I urge the Minister responsible for AML to try and enter civil proceedings under the Companies Act now so that for the future all public

officers may know that they are in danger by following blindly illegal and unlawful orders that they receive, and even some civil servants. If we remain quiet, our sons and daughters will reproach us of this for ever and ever, and then my time would have been wasted. I am sorry, I digress from my paper. I have got to go back to it.

(Interruptions)

Matters of corruption and all that are important, but what is important is that it was in the name, insofar as my Ministry is concerned, it was in that heavily charged political context of democratisation of the economy that CT Power appeared. We know, we have heard lots of things about CT Power. As I have said, in answer to the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition, I have not seen such evidence on my files and in my records and I am not going to stand up and say things which are unverified. One day perhaps, somebody will come to see me at one o'clock in the morning and give me documents and then I will be accused of having met people at one o'clock at night in my house.

(Interruptions)

With the *campement pas dire narien!* But if you want I can go to *campement* as well.

(Interruptions)

And I will take you along with me in the *campement*.

(Interruptions)

Insofar as I am concerned, on CT Power I remain focused on the contractual issues, and here we must face facts. Whether we like it or not, the Labour Party Government directed the CEB to sign the contracts. This is what we are faced with, we cannot do otherwise. We have this contract. But CT Power had insisted that Government concludes an implementation agreement. I am mentioning this, because it has become the subject of parliamentary questions and it is good that I speak of this in my speech. Implementation agreement in essence means that Government was to guarantee the payments to be made by CEB. The matter landed on the desk of my hon. colleague. I am supposed to address you. How do I call him your hon. father or your hon. Minister, I do not know.

Mr Deputy Speaker: Please address him as...

Mr Collendavelloo: The Deputy Prime Minister. It landed in his desk when he was my Minister of Finance and he refused to give that guarantee, this as much is what I know. And then when we got into power, we said: "We cannot give that guarantee unless you show

us your financial capabilities. We cannot guarantee that we will pay you if you are not worth what you say that you are worth". And we said: "Give us a letter from a reputable bank to show that we can be comforted and this is what we call a Letter of Comfort to give you this guarantee. And, of course, this could not come from anybody. That was in January last. It is good to know that one condition of the EIA Licence was that CT Power should provide proof of its financial capabilities to the satisfaction of the Ministry of Finance. When I answered the PNQ on Tuesday, I had not received the document nor had my colleague the Minister of Finance received that document, but yesterday, at 14.36 hrs, I received a document which I have tabled before you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is a document which comes from a company called Avendus Capital (UK) Private Limited. It is a long document, but I just shall read a few extracts –

"This letter is provided to you with the consent of the company - that is CT Power - for information only in relation to your due diligence"

In other words, you have to go and look for the information because we are providing only - and what information do they provide? They say that they confirm that, to the best of their knowledge and belief, CT Power has the financial capabilities to allow it to meet the equity contributions of the project company, that is, of the company which is going to do CT Power. They give all sorts of phrases to limit the scope of their letter and then they say –

"We have acted for the company and for no one else in connection with the transaction. On your instructions we have provided this letter."

That is not true. The hon. Minister of Finance never instructed Avendus to provide this letter. I have to say it because of the legal implications.

(Interruptions)

Yes, a certificate! It further says –

"We have provided this letter for information purposes only and accordingly we accept no legal liability to you or any other person in relation to the confirmation set out above. This letter is not a substitute for persons interested in the transaction performing their own due diligence (...)."

In other words, you go and find out whether what we are saying is true –

"(...) in respect of and reaching their own conclusion with regard to the company, the transaction and the documents."

Then, they say –

“We are authorised and regulated by and are subject to the applicable rules of conduct of business of the Financial Conduct Authority of the UK.”

Then there is another part of the letter where it says that they want confidentiality –

“Save for a disclosure to the Prime Minister or Cabinet of Ministers of the Government of Mauritius, this letter may not be disclosed to any person or referred to or quoted in any other context.”

Who do they think they are? We went to look for information on this Avendus and we have received the information. If they act as financial advisers, they are not licensed to act as a bank; they are not entitled to hold clients’ money. They are people who act as financial advisers, and that is what they are.

Therefore, I am saying that up to now CT Power not having proved its financial capabilities, and on this we insist because the only business which we know the people are involved in is that of being printers. They print posters, T-shirts, but they have nothing to do with power unless they show us the contrary.

(Interruptions)

Even posters of the Prime Minister they can do, if you want posters of politicians and all this.

(Interruptions)

Yes, *mal imprimer tout...*

(Interruptions)

Non, 2005!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross talking, please!

Mr Collendavelloo: Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is nothing in this letter that will cause me to change my opinion which I gave and I am going to recommend to Cabinet that we definitely shelve the CT Power project on sheer...

(Interruptions)

... contractual and legal grounds. There are, of course, other grounds like environmental and the harm that it will do. The coal-fired power plants are being disapproved of by funding

agencies. I have met *Agence française de développement* and all the reputable funding agencies are telling us that they will not subsidise coal-fired power plants contrary to what it was 15 years ago. 15 years ago, that was the way for our energy independence. Why? I have got the paper now, Avendus. Because it does not hold any banking licence; there is no publicly available information on their balance sheet or financial statements and they are registered with the US, UK and Indian regulators as a financial advisory firm. You will understand that I cannot take that very seriously.

(Interruptions)

What do we do? What is our philosophy? First of all, it is to remove all partisan politics out of the energy situation. If we are going to be serious about the future of Mauritius, we have got to put our heads together on that issue. Secondly, we have got to understand the danger which we are facing and I am so happy that hon. Bodha devoted a part of his speech to this. We are a small island State. We are subject to climatic change. Have you realised that cyclones now start in the West and work towards the East? Since when do cyclones go into that direction?

(Interruptions)

The rains? What we are seeing is equatorial, droughts, floods...

(Interruptions)

But the sun will never set! We are an economy which relies a lot on tourism and tourists are high consumers of water and energy, ten times more than the average Mauritian. All this is the fate of many small islands like Seychelles, Vanuatu, Samoa and we are all in the same boat. On top of that, we have a lot of municipal wastes from tourists and Mauritians. What do we do with it? We take it, we dig a hole and we put all the wastes in it and all this goes to pollute our leaching fields, that is the harm that is caused to small islands. And, we, Mauritius, do not contribute to climate change, we are innocent victims in this matter. We are surrounded by Australia, Indonesia, China, India and even South Africa. They are the largest contributors to the climate change and we suffer the consequences of this. We must, therefore, take the lead.

In 2000, hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, again started with the idea of the Small Island Developing States together with the hon. Leader of the Opposition and we were the proud host of the first SIDS conference in Mauritius in 2004. Even today, that is called the Mauritius Strategy and it is the basics of all environment protection international rules for

Small Island Developing States. Ten years later, we are lagging behind! What we started in 2004 was shelved into 2005 for sheer political reason, just because it was Jugnauth/Bérenger. They just put it aside and did not attend to any conference on Small Island Developing States just because people were going to say hon. Bérenger was Prime Minister when SIDS started. That is the only reason! The third SIDS conference was held in Samoa in September 2014. It was an important conference on climate change for small islands. Do you realise the Prime Minister had booked his ticket and all for Samoa and then, finally, he decided to go to Europe? Now, we know why! He sent Dr. Boolell to Samoa. When all these countries had high-level delegations, we had low-level delegations. The result is that Seychelles has overtaken us, Samoa is in the lead, Vanuatu and all these countries are ahead of us.

I will just read an extract of the SAMOA Pathway –

“We reaffirm that small island developing States remain a special case for sustainable development in view of their unique and particular vulnerabilities, and we acknowledge that climate change and sea-level rise continue to pose a significant risk to small island developing States and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and, for some, represent the gravest threat to their survival and viability”.

We, in Mauritius have not gained big consciousness of that threat to our physical existence.

(Interruptions)

If you want me to stop. I will. So, it's time. It's alright!

This is why we must take the lead again in 2015. Mauritius must again come back to what it was in 2004; the leader of the Small Island Developing States in the struggle. How do we do it? In December 2015, in a few months, there will be UN Climate Talks in Paris. These talks are supposed to produce a global agreement to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Two things can happen –

- (i) they don't agree, and
- (ii) the agreement will be between the large countries of the world.

And they will forget the small islands that we are unless we put up a united front of small islands and Mauritius must be in the lead. I have talked to my hon. colleague of Environment. I have told him that we must go together; energy and environment together to lead that fight. I have started it. I have gone to Abu Dhabi and Paris for that purpose. Mauritius has lost a lot of self-respect, a lot of its reputation, but we have to work back on this so that we get back

our reputation and we can go to COP 21 - this is the name of that conference - with confidence.

Now, we have 18% of our electricity from renewable sources. This is bagasse, water and solar photovoltaic. We've got to increase it. The target of my predecessor was 35% in 2025, we've got to meet it. But, we've got to try and achieve 50%. For this, it's easy. We have to go and see in Reunion what is happening and get the expertise. Arena which is a United Nations Organisation, which sits in Abu Dhabi is ready to help us. We've got to change our structures. Our CEB Act dates back to 1939. Each time there has been an attempt to change the CEB Act, we've had resistance. Resistance from all quarters, but we are going to fight the resistance because we need to change the structure. We need to put a regulator. We need to do all the structural and legal changes, whether it be at the CEB, the Independent Power Producers or what have you, we've got to put order in the House because today what is happening? I want to do a solar photovoltaic in Bambous, if I am on good terms with the Prime Minister and I make my son change from MSM to Labour Party, I negotiate, and I get a good deal and I do solar photovoltaic. It is private negotiation with confidential agreement. I must say that the Directors of Sarako agreed to my tabling the contract before the Assembly. I am thankful to them because or else I would not have been able to do so. It is now on the Table of the Assembly for anyone to read it. It is not a good contract, it is not a bad contract, either. But we've got to learn from these experiences and see what we have to do.

CEB, we will issue expressions of interest to call for future projects. Bagasse, we have almost reached our top capacity because sugar cane plantation is decreasing. The experts tell us seriously that what we were laughing at 10 years ago, that is, *fatak* and *bambous*, now are being used for energy production. So, what used to be a romantic exercise, a flight of fancy, today is an economic reality. We've got to go about it. Waste to energy. There is in Mauritius a *projet pilote* which has worked very well, our good friend hon. Jahangeer who is much more of an expert in these matters than I am, he knows how to take waste and do turn it into electricity. It's almost magic. But they do it and we should do it as well.

I must also talk about CWA, water. People can live without electricity, but people cannot live without water. This is a sad situation indeed. We have suffered from years and years of incompetence. I have met the cadres of CWA individually, they are bright, they are energetic and they want to do things. But as soon as you put three of them together,

everything collapses. There is no leadership. There is no sense of the future. We have to restructure the whole thing and this is probably my prior objective. There are, of course, the changes in the water pipes. I've got the figures with me, but I don't think at this time of the night, we want to go into metre cubes. We'll go about it as I am sure one of my good friends of the Opposition will, one day, ask the question which will enable me to provide the figures.

We've got a mandate to do this. What is more, we have the money and we've always had the money to do that work for the water pipes. That money was stashed away because you know, if you do that sort of job, there is very little room for commissions. So, it was not an interesting project. I have today...

(Interruptions)

Not interesting! I have today invited to be in the VIP's gallery, the person who used to be the Chairman of the Central Water Authority, Mr Saddul. He has been of good help to me, in spite of me having asked him to step down as Chairman of the Central Water Authority. He is a good man. He knows these things. I am getting help from many people to help me to resolve that water crisis. Because you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not an engineer, I am not a technician and everything that I have done in my life is only law. So, I need expert advice and I am going to put experts and not politicians at the Head of the CEB and the CWA. I am not going to do *appel international* and all that. We wasted a lot of time trying to identify the right person. I did my own headhunting and I think now I have reached the target. They will be on board within the next seven or ten days and with instructions to go full steam ahead.

Let me say one last word on Wastewater Management because it is also important. Again, I have asked the Director to be present today in the House while I do the speech. I am sorry I am not going to say all that is suggested, I should say. But it is good to know that there are projects because wastewater is important, we need to continue with the project which was started in 2000.

Again I think it was hon. Ganoo who started it at the Waste Management. At a certain time, it became political. In 2005, it was the subject of a political issue, but now it has gone down, we can carry on with our work. That is as much as I wanted to say on my Ministry. No, it is not as much as I wanted to say. I wanted to say much, much more, but I am sure I would be facing an almost empty House if I continue on that vein.

I think it is important that I answer one or two points. The first point is what I have heard about the Director of Public Prosecutions. With the utmost respect to many of my learned friends at the Bar, I have never heard so much nonsense being said in so little time as I have heard on the DPP. For years and years and decades, the DPP has always functioned administratively within the Attorney General's Office. We have in this House four who have worked in the State Law Office, anciently the Crown Law Office. Had we lost our independence when they were dealing with the file? Was there any attempt to remove our powers? On the contrary, we were junior State Law Officers, Crown Law Officers; even the DPP respected our independence, and nobody would have dared, and nobody will dare even today. This is ...

(Interruptions)

What the present DPP does not say, and what our learned friends do not know, is that well before the decision was taken, the Attorney General had consulted the DPP over this matter, in presence of the Minister of Financial Services. He had voiced his disagreement, but he cannot say he had not been consulted. Government is here to govern, and provided we do everything within the Constitution, we are entitled to do it. Let me remind ourselves what is that Office of the DPP. Who is that DPP? Section 72 tells us –

“There shall be a Director of Public Prosecutions whose Office shall be a public Office, and who shall be appointed by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission.”

We have not changed this! The Director of Public Prosecutions shall have power. What are his powers? It is good that we remind ourselves of that question. What are his powers?

“To institute and undertake criminal proceedings,”

Have we eroded this power?

“To take over and continue any such criminal proceedings.”

Have we eroded this power? Have we even questioned this?

“To discontinue at any stage before the judgement is delivered.”

I am tempted to ask, like the Leader of the Opposition: “*Ki ena dans so la tête?*” What is there in his mind? Then...

(Interruptions)

...there are the powers of the Director of Public Prosecutions, and that is the most important part.

“In the exercise of the powers conferred upon him by this section, the Director of Public Prosecutions shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other persons or authority.”

In other words, is not under the control or authority of any person when he is exercising the powers. But when he is buying a pencil, doesn't he need to account whether he is buying a pencil in gold? What type of pencil? If he wants to put furniture costing Rs45 m.! Can he just buy, and then say 'Oh! My powers are being eroded'? But, then, what is worse is that when he came, he did not talk...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, let me interrupt you here. Please, don't comment on the conduct of the DPP as such. I will allow you to comment on the Office of the DPP ...

Mr Collendavelloo: Of course!

The Deputy Speaker: But not on his conduct.

Mr Collendavelloo: But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is the debate which has been brought before the House!

The Deputy Speaker: But, then, I will draw your attention...

Mr Collendavelloo: The fact is that hon. Baloomoody and hon. Uteem have said - and we know what is the debate, that is, we are a *république bananière!* Who said that?

(Interruptions)

No! The hon. Member never said that. I know. Although the hon. Member was in favour of the second Republic. But he never said that we were a *république bananière.*

(Interruptions)

Therefore, to close on this chapter, we just have to remind ourselves that the Bar Council has met, and they summoned the Attorney General. They called him and asked him for his explanations, and now they have said they are satisfied with the explanations of the Attorney General.

(Interruptions)

Oh, yes, yes! The Bar Association will come with all the State Law Officers working at the DPP's Office! Of course, they will do all that! We are used to that coming from him! I am sorry, but I have got to say that because it retorts to the comment. The Bar Council is the body which is in charge of looking after these matters. I have been Chairman of the Bar Council; the DPP's wife has also been Chairman of the Bar Council. Today, we have Mr Domingue who is the Chairman of the Bar Council. All previous Chairmen know the responsibilities of the Council, and my friend hon. Gayan has been Chairman of the Bar Council. My hon. friend Gayan is right to send me little piece of paper. The DPP exercises his powers, but that Office of the DPP spends more time - the Office now!

(Interruptions)

You can sit back and relax ...

(Interruptions)

The Office of the DPP. What do they do? Advisers sitting on Boards of SICOM, parastatal bodies! Is that exercise of their powers under the Constitution, and we can't put it right? We are going to put all this right!

(Interruptions)

I think I have said enough on this.

I want to say one last thing. I am sorry if I abuse for a few minutes before your dinner time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am stunned by admiration for my hon. and good friend Mohamed. It has taken him ten years, but finally he has come to realise with whom he had been working all this time. Finally, I am very, very happy to have heard from him the recognition which he has given to Sir Anerood Jugnauth as being a contributor of the country. I say this because I must, in all fairness, say that from the beginning of this Assembly, our friend hon. Mohamed as well as his colleagues, especially the young colleagues of the Labour Party have been extremely fair in their comments although they have acted, of course, as Opposition. And, that is an extremely good statement. I don't agree with many things that the hon. Member has said, but then if we are all to agree with everything that the hon. Prime Minister says, well then, we don't need to come.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but what I cannot agree is when my good friend hon. Mohamed talks of people losing their jobs and that sort of thing under this regime. Has anyone heard of that sort of complaint?

But, on the other hand, what I know, during the electoral campaign they were scrutinising the photographs which appeared in newspapers and they were identifying who had gone to the meetings of *l'Alliance Lepep*, and the next day they were out of their jobs, they were sacked.

(Interruptions)

This is what happened! And the threats: 'After elections, we will take care of you!' Do you remember this: '*Zot a conner are nous*, after elections!'

(Interruptions)

The workers at the public meeting of 07 December! I was not there, of course, at Place Du Quai, but somebody told me...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, no cross-talking! Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Collendavelloo: Somebody told me that, at that meeting, hon. Bérenger made a nice joke with his famous words '*Ou conner ou*', and then nobody clapped, and nobody laughed. Why? Because, they had put 500 Bangladeshi workers in front!

(Interruptions)

And, these poor workers did not understand a word of what was happening! But what was most unfair during the campaign, and I personally think that this was what the determining factor was. We were explaining our case, we started from zero and MSM had a long start, but we, *ML*, nobody had heard of us. But then, the sort of language we heard on our women candidates, I am sorry, we have been together for 35 years, I have never heard MMM talking in this way. '*Frottement à Ramgoolam*', this contaminated the minds of the MMM, I am sorry to say! The language used on our female candidates, not only female candidates, the wives of candidates, Mr Sinatambou's wife, hon. Jugnauth's wife! Not only wives, their daughters, became subject of a campaign, and you know when they came out with this talk, they did not come with the cassette in Rose Hill, they came with the talk on 05 December.

(Interruptions)

Yes, granted! I grant you.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Allow the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to continue! Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Members, I am on my feet! Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, please continue!

Mr Collendavelloo: Thank you. What I am just saying is, I know that in Rose Hill it cost a lot of votes to the MMM. This was unacceptable. They put up posters in Rose Hill near the market, but when I looked at that, I said: ‘this can’t have been put up without the blessing of the candidates. How can it be?’ I was so shocked. We looked at that and we said, ‘*Ine perdi la tête!*’. I understand Labour Party doing it, not this Labour Party, I can understand that, but I could not understand the MMM going in this bandwagon of the Labour Party to that extent.

Let me conclude with *Muvman Liberator*.

(Interruptions)

I grant you, I am not pinpointing anyone.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, please, address the Chair! We have made the point clear.

Mr Collendavelloo: I grant this to the hon. Member, I am not saying that such and such persons actually put up the posters, because I did not know. I was not there, but it was clearly part of that campaign.

Now, let me finish with two minutes on *Muvman Liberator*. On 16 April after I had heard that the remake was off and I was of the opinion that it was on very flimsy grounds indeed, and then, I heard the talk of the Alliance, the Second Republic and I looked at my friends of the political bureau of the MMM, my good friend hon. Ganoo made his statement about the future of the MMM together with Navin Ramgoolam, I felt that I could not be part of it. It was my personal decision and I resigned from the MMM. And then,...

(Interruptions)

I had been ten years out of active politics, but then, certain people came to me and said we need to come together and we formed that Party. Among the first ones was Ravi Rutnah, now hon. Rutnah.

(Interruptions)

What sorts of insults were not said about him! As he reminded us, even his hairstyle became the subject of mockery. He was called all sorts of names; pressure was put on the people of

Rivière du Rempart, '*Attention zot laisse Ivan faire reunion!*' This is what we had to face. Finally we had a meeting almost in a sugarcane field, in a garage which reminded me of the days which I did not know, but which I have read of the first days of the MMM. That is how we were in Rivière du Rempart. We went to Riambel, four 4 x 4 travelling in front of the meeting, but then there were so many people, they could not do anything. In fact, one of these drivers is now part of *ML* and he has told me all about it.

So, that was the sort of things we had to face up with. Eddy Boissezon, Anil Gayan, there were four of us, we said we had to do something. We clamoured for the unity of the Opposition, we said something dangerous is going to happen. I could not agree that the Opposition and Government pooled together, this was a hijacking of the State! Let alone seven years immunity to Ramgoolam, do you know what it would have meant? In seven years' time no coffer would have been big enough to put his wealth. He would have been owning HSBC! This is what would have happened and, we, Mauritians, would have ended up in poverty and slavery and starvation. This is what was awaiting us. The people of Mauritius woke up and for the first time in the history of Mauritius the electorate won the elections. There was no lobby, no *communal*, no racist, no argument which could stop the flood of the Mauritian people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are going to carry out the work which we have said we are going to do and we are going to succeed and I hope that the Opposition is able to *refaire les morceaux* because we need a strong Opposition. We don't need to use our three-quarters majority. We don't want this. This is not our purpose. We don't want any 60-0s. We want democracy to continue to flourish in this country.

(Interruptions)

So, that's all right!

(Interruptions)

Let me end by something, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have heard many of my young friends, my young colleagues - I am from another generation - I must say that I will not single hon. Members out because it is unfair, but some of the speeches I have heard, whether it is on this side or whether it is on the other side from these young new hon. Members, are extremely promising for the country. I have heard high-value speeches. I was in Parliament for the first time in 1983. I still believe the best Parliament was 2000 to 2005 and I still believe this was the best Government. I still believe that if we had done the Remake, this would have been a

wonderful Government for Mauritius. It is unfortunate that my voice could not be heard. But, nevermind, what I have heard from our young friends means that Mauritius is a very lucky country indeed.

Let me congratulate you at the end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, for having been so patient with me...

(Interruptions)

...and for having allowed me sometimes to go astray and I am sorry about this, but this happens when we talk. Let me ask you to transmit to Madam Speaker my personal congratulations as everybody has done. Let me congratulate all the young hon. Members, once again, those who have come with maiden speeches, for the wonderful speeches which they have done in this House.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I now suspend the sitting to break for dinner. We shall resume in one hour.

At 8.21 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 9.31 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

MATTER OF PRIVILEGE

‘LE MAURICIEN’ NEWSPAPER –

05 MARCH 2015 – PRIVILEGE COMPLAINT

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I wish to inform the House that I have today received a privilege complaint from the hon. Attorney General relating to an article which appeared in today’s edition of the newspaper ‘*Le Mauricien*’ under the caption -

‘ASSEMBLEE NATIONALE/Private Notice Question

L’affidavit accablant confirmé par SAJ’

I have had a look at the article and I am of the view that the contents of the article may constitute an offence under section 6(1), paragraph (o) of the National Assembly (Privileges, Immunities and Powers) Act.

Mr Yerrigadoo: Madam Speaker, in the light of your ruling, I beg to move as follows

“This Assembly is of the opinion that the article which appeared in today’s edition of the newspaper ‘*Le Mauricien*’ under the caption, I quote –

‘ASSEMBLEE NATIONALE/Private Notice Question

L’affidavit accablant confirmé par SAJ’

be referred to the Director of Public Prosecutions for such action as he may deem appropriate.”

Mr Jhugroo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Wong Yen Cheong!

(9.34 p.m.)

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr A. Wong Yen Cheong): Madam Speaker, at the very outset, I would like to express my congratulations to Madam Speaker for her election as the first lady to chair our National Assembly and hon. Adrien Duval for his election as Deputy Speaker.

C’est un grand honneur pour moi de m’adresser pour la première fois devant cette auguste Assemblée. J’ai eu le privilège d’écouter les différents honorables membres de cette Chambre et j’ai bien compris que nous sommes tous, ici, pour le même but, qui est celui de bâtir une nation saine et solide. Tout comme a été la précédente Assemblée d’après les discours qui ont été prononcés, la différence entre la précédente et l’actuelle Assemblée est sans équivoque. Nous avons présentement un gouvernement solide, incarné par une Alliance Lepep homogène avec au centre un pilier inébranlable en la personne de Sir Anerood Jugnauth, consolidé par des bases solides: Xavier-Luc Duval, Ivan Collendavello, Showkutally Soodhun, Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo et d’autres, comme mon collègue.

Par contre, j’en passe des commentaires à propos de l’administration de l’ancien régime gouvernemental, le précédent Premier ministre, qui s’autoproclamait ‘Le Roi Lion’. Je savais qu’un vrai lion pouvait s’accoupler 20 fois par jour mais sans viagra. Il a su jeter la

poudre aux yeux de tous avec des développements cosmétiques à la pelle en faisant payer cher au peuple d'aujourd'hui: ring road, autoroute Verdun-Terre Rouge, j'en passe, ou sinon un dernier et pas des moindres - un poisson *sounouk* maquillé se faisant passer pour une sirène.

Madam Speaker, this country does not belong to us, we are only tenants. It belongs to the future generations. We, therefore, need to prepare a healthier future for our children.

C'est une certitude que la terre que nous labourons aujourd'hui et les semences que nous mettons en terre ne sont pas destinées à remplir nos assiettes mais celles de nos enfants et de nos petits-enfants. Il ne faut pas que les futures générations aient honte de nous. Le travail, qui n'a pu être accompli par nos prédécesseurs, sera aujourd'hui notre tâche. Pour atteindre nos objectifs, il faut des hommes et des femmes de valeur pour atteindre le but que nous nous sommes fixés. Nous n'abdiquerons pas devant nos responsabilités et nos engagements. L'heure est à l'action et celle-ci demande la participation de tout un chacun. Il y a des deux côtés de cet hémicycle des hommes et des femmes de valeur. Travaillons donc, main dans la main, pour construire ensemble cette île Maurice que nous voulons tous pour nos enfants.

Madame la présidente, je voudrais féliciter mes amis, les honorables Jean Claude Barbier, Georges Lesjongard, Raffick Sorefan, pour leur courage d'avoir exprimé leur position afin d'aider à la reconstruction du pays. Comme le disait si bien Albert Einstein: le monde ne sera pas détruit par ceux qui font le mal, mais par ceux qui le regardent sans rien faire. Mieux vaut tard que jamais, chers amis!

Pendant notre campagne durant les portes à portes, nous avons pu constater comment le précédent gouvernement avait abdiqué devant ses responsabilités. Pratiquement, toutes les administrations publiques ont été abandonnées, dilapidées. Pour reconstruire, la tâche est énorme sinon titanesque. Le peuple a faim, un appétit gargantuesque! Cela se comprend! Le peuple est impatient de voir nos promesses se concrétiser. Nous, nous ne sommes ni Dieu ni magicien. Nous ne sommes que des hommes et des pécheurs devant l'Éternel. Il faut comprendre que Rome ne s'est pas construit en un jour. Quand on agit dans la précipitation, c'est toujours avec des actions et des solutions cosmétiques. Il faut donc penser à long terme. Et je peux vous rassurer que la réalisation de nos promesses ne sera pas renvoyée *sine die*. Comme on l'a souvent vu dans le passé, nous ferons tout ce qui est nécessaire pour bâtir une nation mauricienne, saine, heureuse et prospère. Au bout de notre mandat, quand nous aurons

accompli notre mission et réalisé nos promesses, il faudra alors rendre à César ce qui appartient à César. Nous œuvrons en symbiose avec la population car nous ne voulons pas non plus d'un peuple d'assisté. Nous devons tirer des enseignements de cette citation de Confucius qui a dit –

Donne un poisson à un homme et il mourra de faim

Donne une canne et il pourra nourrir sa famille.

Le faux lion s'est lourdement trompé concernant la définition de valeur car il pensait que valeur était synonyme de coffres remplis de billets de banque.

La valeur, la méritocratie, l'honnêteté sera notre leitmotiv. Nous avons de la chance d'être issu de métissage asiatique qui a le sens inné de l'hospitalité et de servir, cultivons avec fierté cet avantage opportun. Je pense ainsi à Saint François Xavier qui a dit : « c'est en donnant qu'on reçoit. » Faire de la politique n'est pas synonyme d'améliorer sa situation personnelle. Il ne s'agit pas de se servir, mais de servir le peuple.

Madame la présidente, nous avons un gouvernement qui a compris qu'une nation en bonne santé est une nation prospère. Je félicite l'honorable Sawmynaden, ministre de la Jeunesse et des sports pour sa vision d'ensemble et son initiative de mettre un accent particulier sur le potentiel d'encourager la pratique des sports dès le plus jeune âge. Comme on dit, les bonnes habitudes s'apprennent dès le début. Le ministre l'a si bien résumé : « *Mens sana in corpore sano* - un esprit sain dans un corps sain. »

Madame la présidente, j'ai grand espoir dans l'avenir de notre nation quand je constate le travail, la conviction et la vision de chaque collègue ministre pour leur ministère respectif. Nous avançons tous ensemble sous le leadership de notre légende vivante, l'honorable Sir Anerood Jugnauth. Je tiens à remercier le conseil de mes aînés et pour leur confiance placée en moi.

Madame la présidente, le tourisme est sans nul doute un des piliers de notre économie et nous pouvons faire confiance à mon ami et leader l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval et pour cela, nous sommes heureux de pouvoir compter sur l'ensemble du Cabinet et des parlementaires présents.

Par exemple l'environnement, la mer, l'administration régionale, l'agriculture, notre histoire à travers la culture et la force des travailleurs de ce pays, sont tous des atouts *sine*

qua non et l'engagement a déjà été pris par ces différents ministères pour contribuer à l'épanouissement des différents secteurs.

C'est certain. Nous retrouverons nos plages blanches quand nos récifs et nos barrières de corail retrouveront leur santé. Nous avons de la chance d'avoir un vrai soldat, un homme de terrain et d'action qui a compris que le mal ne peut être guéri à la légère car il doit être attaqué à la racine pour aller au cœur du problème. Nos forêts seront de nouveau verdoyantes une fois que nos rivières et cours d'eau ne seront plus pollués et obstrués. Pour cela, il nous faut des actions courageuses. Le plastique, des bouteilles et des canettes, il faut peut-être les bannir.

Madame la présidente, le PMSD a subi beaucoup de critiques, notamment de la part de certains membres de cette Assemblée, pour avoir été aux côtés du Parti travailliste lors de ces neuf dernières années. Sur ceci, je peux vous témoigner qu'avec mon ami et leader l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval c'est à vélo et à la force de nos jambes en pédalant qu'on sillonne l'île régulièrement pour être au plus près de la réalité locale. Je peux vous affirmer que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, de par ses discours à l'époque à l'encontre des décisions du leader du Parti travailliste depuis fin 2010 début 2011, je savais que notre union avec le Parti travailliste était usée. Mais comme dans toute union, un divorce ou une séparation n'est pas une décision facile à prendre. J'en suis heureux qu'il ait eu le courage de prendre la bonne décision au bon moment. Nous pouvons être fiers que nous ne nous sommes pas séparés parce que nous avons pris un autre partenaire, c'est plutôt le leader du Parti travailliste qui avait décidé de commettre l'adultère. On ne peut blâmer le PMSD pour sa prise de position par rapport au Parti travailliste, car au lendemain même des élections de 2014, la dulcinée de Navin Ramgoolam lui imputait toute la faute de la cinglante défaite du décembre 2014. Avec le PMSD ça a toujours été le leitmotiv: l'île Maurice avant tout.

Madam Speaker, the rapid transformation of a country into a modern nation state is leading to major societal changes. Furthermore, better education and growing affluence is leading to greater needs and demands for quality public goods and services within a reduced response time. Although the public service has undergone substantial reform over the past decades, there is growing perception that due to the upholding of highly bureaucratic principles, the Civil Service has not been able to keep pace with developments in an extremely dynamic and challenging environment.

Madam Speaker, in the face of new and emerging challenges, there is no doubt that the Civil Service has to be an effective vehicle for sustainable growth. We have, therefore, no option but to move ahead to a more strategic and transformational mode of operation so that the public service can contribute effectively in the change process and become an engine of growth for creating the new economic miracle for our country.

The Civil Service, in fact, forms an integral part and plays a crucial role in any modern democratic Government. As the backbone of the whole administration set up in a democracy, it operates within an increasingly dynamic, complex and demanding environment. The transformation process of the organisational landscape of the civil service has, therefore, to continue geared towards modernisation so as not only to better respond to the changing needs and aspirations of the citizens and stakeholders but to also enable it to effectively support the economic agenda of this Government within a dynamic global environment.

In this context, my Ministry is committed to build a responsible and responsive civil service. A series of cutting-edge measures will be implemented to bring about a transformational change in the civil service with focus on human capital development, streamlining of processes and optimisation of information and communication technologies.

Madam Speaker, as one of the major reform initiative, the Performance Management System has formally been implemented in the Civil Service for some time now in replacement of the former opaque annual confidential reporting system. Today, PMS is recognised as a sole performance evaluation tool in the Civil Service. While sustaining its implementation in the correct manner, we will also ensure that the whole public service is adequately covered under the system by taking on board parastatal bodies, top civil servants, supervising officers and contract officers with clear objectives and measurable management targets.

Beyond individual performance, the system will also lead towards institutional capacity building for enhancement of the performance of public organisations as well. In that regard, we are going to work out and put in place the necessary mechanism to better manage and monitor organisational performance in collaboration with other stakeholders.

Another major reform that will undoubtedly become a reality as from this year itself relates to the establishment and operation of HRMIS project. The system will not be only about setting up an online human resource database for the Civil Service, but will in parallel

be a valuable tool for officers of the human resource and financial operation cadres to better perform their respective duties using re-engineered business process within a modern environment. Strategic human resource management will indeed become a reality in the Civil Service thanks to the capability of the system to deal automatically with routine tasks thus, relieving senior members of staff of the Civil Service from basic operational activities to strategy ones. The HRMIS will thus contribute considerably towards eliminating unnecessary waste in the use of scarce resources, both human and financial. The country will benefit both from efficiency gains and enhanced delivery of services across the Civil Service through a judicious utilisation of human resources.

The long-awaited Public Sector Re-engineering Bureau will, for sure, take off the ground and made operational under the purview of my Ministry as a dedicated unit to provide real time and continuous advisory services regarding organisational reviews and restructuring exercises. In addition to facilitating coordination within the Government machinery and ensuring an effective implementation of reform strategies, it will work in tandem with, *inter alia*, the Ministry of Technology, Communication and Innovation to drive, implement and monitor e-Government strategies.

I must say that a Public Service Bill has been drafted by the previous Government, but it never proceeded beyond infancy stage. However, in view of this Government's firm intention to take the public service to a new level of commitment, we will step forward boldly by introducing a 'Public Service Bill' in the National Assembly in the weeks to come. As an unprecedented step towards strengthening the capability of the civil service on the part of a Government which means business, this Bill will clarify and secure the boundaries between the Executive and Administration and it will be a major instrument in enhancing and reinforcing transparency, accountability and integrity.

Madam Speaker, with all the reform initiatives mentioned above, my Ministry is taking the pledge to give a new dimension and orientation to the human resource function with a paradigm shift from transactional HR to Transformational HR to be in tune with our modernisation programme and achievement of meaningful change in the civil service. There is need to ensure that at all levels, the human resource development strategy is aligned with broader strategic imperatives of the Government and that lot of emphasis is placed on the human resource development function. In this context, emphasis will be placed on a Strategic Human Resource and Talent Development as this will be a key contributor to

ensuring organisational effectiveness and the maximum return from their most important asset: the people in the organisation.

Madam Speaker let me here recall a famous Chinese proverb -

“If you want one year prosperity grow rice;

If you want ten years prosperity grow trees;

If you want hundred years prosperity grow people”.

In fact, people and talented development will remain one of the main pillars of my Ministry.

Madam Speaker, the Civil Service College, Mauritius is a long-awaited project dating back to the late nineties and for the last decade, the Government in power had shown no sign of commitment to set up the college. This Government will leave no stone unturned to crystallize this highly laudable project. We are going to give a more meaningful dimension to Training and staff development in the Civil Service by the setting up of the Civil Service College which will set the foundation and framework for the institutional support towards capacity building and Human Resource Development through lifelong learning, training in ICT, e-learning and also multi-skilling.

Madam Speaker, this Government, as a caring employer, is committed to the creation of a safety and health culture in the Civil Service through my Ministry. It is our firm conviction that a healthy and safe work environment is conducive to motivation, productivity and higher performance. In this connection, Government places safety and health high in its development agenda.

This Government will continue to implement the enhancement of the work environment projects so that officers operate in an entourage which is conducive to good health, well-being and work efficiency. Furthermore, in order to promote a culture of safety and health, my Ministry will ensure sustainable prevention and greater participatory efforts within the Civil Service.

Madam Speaker, we are also proposing the setting up of a Public Service Call Centre to act as a one stop shop and information centre to help track applications made by citizens and provide quick information on Government services.

Madam Speaker, our civil service is considered as a model by many African countries. I should also add that countries like South Africa and Senegal are looking forward

for the help and collaboration of Mauritius in view of upgrading the organisation and service delivery in their respective civil service.

Madame la présidente, ce gouvernement est à l'écoute de la population qui attend beaucoup de nous. Nous sommes déterminés à honorer nos engagements. D'ailleurs, on peut le constater, dès le début de notre mandat, beaucoup de nos adversaires parlaient d'effet d'annonce. Nous, au niveau de l'Alliance Lepep, nous avons promis un vrai changement. Qui pourrait dire le contraire ? À chaque lever du soleil, au chant du coq c'est 'carré carré' que le changement est visible quotidiennement. La bonne gouvernance est au centre de toutes nos actions indistinctement. C'est l'évidence même que nous respectons nos engagements.

Nos compatriotes de Rodrigues n'ont pas été oubliés notamment avec la baisse du prix du transport aérien sans oublier que bientôt nous pourrions compter sur de nouveaux moyens de transport maritime pour une meilleure fréquence reliant nos familles de Rodrigues et d'Agalega. De par l'intermédiaire de notre ministre des Affaires Etrangères, l'honorable Etienne Sinatambou, nous continuerons à nous battre pour l'archipel des Chagos et les autres territoires appartenant à l'île Maurice et sans lesquels notre République ne sera pas complète. Rodrigues recevra le soutien obligatoire et nécessaire pour redevenir ce qu'elle fut jadis, comme étant le grenier de l'île Maurice. Aujourd'hui c'est un réservoir de matière brut pour la collecte de nos futures moissons de médailles aux différentes disciplines sportives. L'amélioration concernant la bande passante pour la connectivité à internet sera une réalité.

Madame la présidente, et pour tous les changements annoncés, indistinctement chaque membre de la fonction publique sera mis à contribution pour que ce secteur connaisse un nouvel essor et agisse comme un des moteurs pour la nouvelle île Maurice que ce gouvernement propose. Je réitère mon appel à tous les parlementaires de bonne volonté que nous devons œuvrer main dans la main comme un seul homme pour le futur de nos enfants.

Madame la Présidente, je ne peux m'empêcher d'évoquer ma Circonscription, Grande Rivière Nord-Ouest/Port-Louis Ouest. Depuis que le pouvoir du peuple nous a confié les commandes, les choses évoluent positivement. Les exemples sont multiples. Surtout depuis mardi, tout récemment suite à la réponse donnée dans cette Assemblée par mon collègue Ivan Collendavelloo lors de la PNQ, les habitants du No.1, surtout ceux de Pointe-aux-Sables, Kensington Place, Morcellement Rey et des alentours et même leurs voisins d'Albion et Petite Rivière sont plus que ravis et retrouvent l'espoir que le projet CT Power n'aille pas de l'avant. J'accueille favorablement cette déclaration de l'honorable Collendavelloo, qui

contemple la possibilité de recommander au Conseil des ministres de ne pas aller de l'avant avec ce projet. Dans le passé, il y a eu tant d'arguments disant que cette centrale à charbon est indispensable pour éviter un 'black-out', quitte à ce que cela affecte la santé de milliers de personnes, mais la position adoptée par le ministre Collendavelloo démontre le réel agenda de ceux qui affirmaient mordicus que ce projet est plus que nécessaire et qui le défendaient bec et ongles.

Il faut aussi saluer la vision de ce gouvernement d'apporter un soulagement concernant l'embouteillage monstre au quotidien au niveau de Terasson, Grande Rivière Nord Ouest, Canal Dayot jusqu'à Port-Louis. Cela en mettant en place un système de transport maritime pour relier Pointe-aux-Sables à Port-Louis.

Madame la présidente, il y a deux choses qui m'interpellent. Tout d'abord j'avais promis à mes collègues de la gent féminine de ce Parlement qu'il y a quelque chose qui m'est arrivé particulièrement. Et je pense surtout à la gent féminine ici dans ce Parlement, avec le travail, l'heure tardive à laquelle elle rentre à la maison. Il y a certaines qui ont encouru des difficultés concernant la sécurité. Et je souhaite que ce Parlement vienne de l'avant afin de formuler quelque chose pour assurer leur sécurité quand elles rentrent chez elles.

(Interruptions)

Merci. Et ceci, bien sûr, afin d'encourager plus de femmes à accéder au Parlement.

Il y a autre chose que je voudrais ajouter. Je suis heureux d'avoir entendu l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed faire son *mea culpa* sur le Parti travailliste et de ce qu'il a vécu. Il y a cette phrase que j'ai déjà entendu «Faîtes ce que je vous demande de faire et ne faîtes pas ce que je fais». Je demande à l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed d'avoir le courage de répéter ce même discours au Square Guy Rozemont. Je crois que le pays fera un grand pas en avant en mettant définitivement hors service les gens qui ne sont plus compétents dans ce pays.

Madame la présidente, il y a tant de choses que je voudrais dire mais je sais qu'il est tard. Je suis certain qu'avec le budget qui sera très prochainement présenté, les choses vont s'améliorer davantage.

Tout ce que je peux souhaiter, c'est que Dieu bénisse notre République et Vive l'île Maurice.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

(9.59 p.m.)

Mr J. F. François (First Member for Rodrigues): Madame la présidente, mesdames et messieurs les honorables membres, la volonté du peuple nous engage tous ici à des actions collectives envers notre pays qui a besoin de nous sur le chemin du changement, qui appelle à dépasser les clivages idéologiques afin de servir notre pays et bâtir une nation. La nation c'est notre responsabilité.

Madame la présidente, tout d'abord, je veux remercier le peuple de Rodrigues, mon parti l'OPR, son leader Serge Clair, et mes collègues politiciens, ainsi que mon colistier l'honorable Buisson Léopold, pour la confiance placée en moi pour être la voix de Rodrigues au sein de cette auguste Assemblée.

Je tiens aussi à remercier ma famille qui m'accompagne et me soutient dans ma mission de servir le peuple. Je voudrais vous féliciter, Madame la présidente, aussi bien que le vice-président pour votre nomination pour diriger cette Assemblée. Vous, en tant que la gente féminine, et notre ami, l'honorable Adrien Duval, le plus jeune vice-président de cette Assemblée. Je félicite les députés des deux côtés de la Chambre et leur souhaite bon succès. J'apporte aussi les salutations fraternelles et les félicitations du peuple de Rodrigues à toute de la République de Maurice.

Madame la présidente, c'est véritablement un honneur pour moi, en ce début de mon deuxième mandat, en tant que député national, de prendre la parole ici pour remercier son honneur, son Excellence le président de la République, Kailash Purryag, d'avoir prononcé le discours 2015-2019, et l'honorable Madame Selvon pour sa motion, à qui j'adresse mes félicitations.

Mon intervention se situe dans une perspective bien précise, celle de renforcer le symbolisme de notre engagement politique pour le bien-être de la nation en tant qu'élus au nom du peuple, par le peuple et pour le peuple. Je vais citer Edgar Morin qui disait, je cite –

« La politique c'est de s'occuper de l'urgence, alors que l'urgent est de s'occuper de l'essentiel. »

Madame la présidente, l'avenir et l'urgence de la République pour donner du sens au progrès –

- a) c'est cette volonté d'un changement profond vers une nouvelle société et une nouvelle culture d'action politique;

- b) c'est une nouvelle direction face aux défis tels que le changement climatique, l'économie, la géopolitique, entre autres, et
- c) c'est de mettre l'homme au centre du développement.

De ce fait, je m'associe à la phrase du discours qui parle d'un développement à visage humain et des chances égales pour tous. Notre responsabilité aussi c'est d'accentuer la confiance et l'optimisme dans ce peuple, pour que nos enfants puissent voir et avoir confiance dans l'avenir du pays. Madame la présidente, nous, les dirigeants en ces temps modernes, ont cette responsabilité de renforcer notre démocratie et être à l'écoute continue de nos citoyens pour mieux comprendre ses besoins, attentes et aspirations.

Je suis ravi que le Premier ministre nous ait bien fait comprendre sa vision dans ce sens, surtout nous, les PPS, dans notre rôle de politique de proximité avec le peuple, et notre rôle au service de la population, à ce que leurs problèmes quotidiens qui relèvent des responsabilités de l'État soient résolus avec rapidité et dans la transparence. Notre République a besoin d'un regard visionnaire et une orientation responsable et durable vers le futur dans un espace démocratique et réinventé.

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi, maintenant de me référer à quelques domaines spécifiques du programme gouvernemental 2015-2019. L'éducation, Madame la présidente ; notre système d'éducation mérite une réflexion profonde et une révolution. Quel type d'éducation pour les 20 ans à venir? Un aspect fondamental pour l'éducation est l'accès aux finances pour les études tertiaires. Le taux des intérêts bancaires varie entre sept à 14 %, et c'est trop cher. Est-ce que le gouvernement révisera aussi les montants des bourses d'études et démocratisera les prêts des études tertiaires pour nos jeunes?

La fraude et la corruption, Madame la présidente; la course vers l'argent domine et ouvre la porte de la corruption et des comportements inacceptables. Là, je soutiens l'innovation du Premier ministre pour porter une attention considérable à la bonne gouvernance avec la création du nouveau ministère de *Financial Services, Good Governance and Institutional Reforms*, pour combattre la fraude et la corruption. D'où l'importance aussi d'un *Freedom of Information Bill* pour la transparence.

Je viens d'écouter mon ami, l'honorable Wong Yen Cheong. La fonction publique, Madame la présidente. Un seul qualificatif pour la fonction publique : c'est la réforme, l'efficience, l'efficacité des services possibles, une bonne qualité, et plus de productivité. Notre fonction publique a besoin d'une nouvelle culture de la gestion des affaires publiques,

et doit aussi se diriger vers une nouvelle étape de modernisation comme préconisée par l'honorable ministre Wong Yen Cheong.

Des modifications ou assouplissements de la loi sur la fonction publique doivent être apportés en vue de moderniser son fonctionnement.

La santé, Madame la présidente. Notre République a une lourde tâche dans la lutte contre les maladies telles que le cancer, le sida et l'Alzheimer. Je m'attarde sur la maladie d'Alzheimer qui touche beaucoup de personnes à Maurice et à Rodrigues. Le gouvernement doit concrétiser un plan national d'Alzheimer. Et je plaide aussi pour une révision à la hausse des *carers allowance* pour ces parents qui souffrent – je crois que l'honorable ministre est très d'accord avec moi. Madame la présidente, nos aînés ont été entendus par le présent gouvernement, et l'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse à R 5000 a été favorablement accueillie à Rodrigues.

Maintenant, c'est un cri du cœur depuis janvier 2013 venant des femmes rodriguaises qui demandent la présence d'un gynécologue pour une plus longue période à Rodrigues. Actuellement, une femme enceinte est prise en charge par neuf à dix gynécologues pendant sa grossesse de neuf mois. Un gynécologue est posté à Rodrigues sur une base mensuelle ou pour une quinzaine de jours. En 2014, on a connu 20 gynécologues en 12 mois. Vous imaginez-vous ! Et neuf mois de grossesse ! J'espère de tout cœur que le nouveau ministre de la Santé va remédier à cette situation en partenariat avec l'Assemblée régionale de Rodrigues, et c'est urgent.

Madame la présidente, la terre est un patrimoine national. Le gouvernement doit faire preuve de leadership dans la gestion des terres. Mais, le souci du point de vue technique aujourd'hui c'est la planification, et la République de Maurice a besoin d'un nouvel urbanisme moderne afin de mieux contrôler l'urbanisation rapide en cours. Je saisis de cette opportunité pour que le projet LAVIMS soit étendu aussi à Rodrigues.

Le sport, Madame la présidente. Nos sportifs sont aussi des rassembleurs pour le pays. Les performances de nos sportifs comme Linley Perrine, Kennedy St-Pierre et Christiane Legentil continuent à contribuer au patrimoine sportif de notre République.

Je plaide pour une meilleure reconnaissance de nos sportifs qui servent et ont servi avec honneur le pays.

J'ai en tête l'ex-Judokate et Haltérophile, la championne Glorieuse Guillaume avec une remarquable réalisation sportive, médaillée d'or lors des Jeux des Iles de Madagascar,

Seychelles, championne d'Afrique intercontinentale, et championne nationale sur plusieurs années. Aujourd'hui, elle souffre de l'*osteoarthritis*, maladie liée à son passé sportif.

Madame la présidente, vous imaginez que cette demoiselle, aujourd'hui handicapée, ne peut plus travailler et vit juste avec une *Basic Invalidity Pension*, et risque même de perdre sa maison *NHDC* et de se trouver sans toit. Qu'en est-il d'une assurance spéciale sport pour nos athlètes?

J'apprécie la démarche du ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports, l'honorable Sawmynaden, qui a rassuré, lors du *Gala Sport Night*, qu'il fera tout pour une meilleure reconnaissance à nos ambassadeurs, nos sportifs.

Rodrigues est cité comme une pépinière d'athlètes pour la République.

La communauté sportive Rodriguaise souhaite avoir plus de moyens et une instance moderne qui cadre avec l'autonomie de Rodrigues.

La classe sportive Rodriguaise souhaite mettre en place un Comité Régional Olympique Sportif à Rodrigues (un CROS), comme une branche du Comité Olympique de Maurice. Cela leur permettra d'avoir des ouvertures vers l'extérieur avec d'autres organisations ou bailleurs de fonds sportifs. Une démarche mal comprise par certains dirigeants sportifs nationaux, alors que c'est dans l'intérêt suprême des sportifs de la République. Toute la population est témoin de l'ampleur des compétitions internationales comme le judo, le volley-ball et la boxe organisées à Rodrigues. En passant, le 22 mars courant, Rodrigues organise sa seconde édition du tournoi d'international de judo, et c'est garanti vous allez voir un gymnase rempli à craquer.

Je fais un appel au ministre de la Jeunesse et des Sports à rencontrer les différents représentants sportifs de Rodrigues pour une discussion approfondie dans le respect sur ce sujet.

Je plaide aussi pour une rupture avec les discriminations et les dysfonctionnements relevant de certaines fédérations sportives nationales face aux athlètes élités de Rodrigues. On a eu le cas de la lutteuse, Joyce Milazar, qui a subi une discrimination et l'exclusion. Aujourd'hui, ce sont d'autres sportifs comme Fackson Perrine notre boxeur national, Kevin Larose volleyeur. D'autres disciplines en souffrent et il importe de tout faire pour éviter que cela ne se reproduise chez d'autres athlètes. J'en passe, Madame la présidente.

Lutte contre la pauvreté - logement

Madame la présidente, réduire la pauvreté nécessite un effort collectif de la part de tout le monde. Esther Du Flo, Conseillère de Barack Obama, a une phrase redoutable dans son livre « Repenser la Pauvreté ». Et je cite –

« On ne croit aux valeurs de la République que quand on a le ventre plein ».

Cette phrase m’a incité à réfléchir davantage sur ce sujet.

Maurice ou la République, on a besoin d’un Grand Colloque National sur la lutte contre la Pauvreté extrême.

Il nous faut une conscience commune pour le problème des squatters, sortir les SDF de la rue et abriter tous les pauvres, sans distinction. Le problème de la misère urbaine pose des défis qui doivent être relevés et nous devrions nous préoccuper davantage de ces lieux de pauvreté.

Le programme gouvernemental préconise un Plan Marshall contre la pauvreté. C’est bien. Je crois que nous avons besoin d’un Plan d’Education et d’*Empowerment* bien défini, ensemble avec le concours des ONG. A Rodrigues je vois que le gouvernement régional est venu avec deux plans dans ce sens, un Plan de Prestation Transitoire et un *Employment Relief Programme* sur une base pilote dans ce souci de combattre la pauvreté et de permettre à ceux qui reçoivent des allocations sociales de travailler sur une base pilote.

Agriculture

Brièvement, sur l’agriculture. La sécurité alimentaire est une priorité pour l’avenir. Avec la vision de faire de la République une nation d’entrepreneur, l’agri business reste un pilier important du développement agricole et de l’économie rurale.

Madam Speaker, hon. Seeruttun said it well, which is being substantiated by what Kanayos Nwanze, the President of IFAD said and summarises well, and I quote -

“We need to dramatically change the way we look at agriculture. Smallholder farming is a significant economic activity, a business enterprise and is a dignified profession that feeds people and guarantees wealth.”

Madame la présidente, le respect de la force de l’ordre nous concerne tous. Nos policiers ont le besoin de participer sur ce qui touche à sa vie professionnelle, mais la

possibilité que la Police soit syndiquée m'interpelle. Pourquoi? Je reste sur un point fondamental à ce que notre sécurité ne soit pas compromise, vu le système centralisateur et hiérarchique de notre Police. C'est très important ce que j'ai dit, centralisateur et hiérarchique. *There is point to ponder about this.*

La SSU, la SMF et la Police régulière sont tous sous la commande du Commissaire de Police. Contrairement à d'autres pays, vous avez la Police régulière et vous avez l'armée à côté. Séparées ! Je souhaiterais un projet de loi novatrice dans ce sens. La Police reste un service essentiel pour le pays. Il faut continuer le recrutement des jeunes et donner des moyens logistiques pour un meilleur service.

Madame la présidente, le changement climatique nous interpelle tous quotidiennement, comme l'honorable Dayal et l'honorable Ivan Collendavelloo l'ont si bien souligné. On dispose des exemples de l'intensification de la fluctuation du climat et la multiplication de phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes, les *flash floods* à Port Louis, et les récentes inondations des radiers à Rodrigues.

Il est prévu que les inondations, qui normalement ont lieu tous les 100 ans, auront désormais lieu tous les 5 à 25 ans à travers le monde. La vigilance est donc de mise et la résilience doit devenir le maître mot pour nous tous.

Autonomie de Rodrigues

Madame la présidente, permettez-moi maintenant de dire brièvement quelques mots sur Rodrigues, ce beau pays que j'aime. Premièrement, son autonomie ; deuxièmement, l'élection 2014, et troisièmement son développement économique et social. Permettez-moi de parler sur Rodrigues. *I have to. This is very important.*

Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui, face au destin et l'histoire, après le discours éloquent de l'honorable Bodha ce matin sur Sir Anerood Jugnauth, je voudrais profiter pour réitérer au Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, ce que j'avais mentionné dans mon discours inaugural en 2010, que: « Tout le peuple de Rodrigues est reconnaissant envers la décision majeure que Sir Anerood Jugnauth avait prise en 2001 comme Premier ministre, ensemble avec l'honorable Paul Bérenger, pour accorder à Rodrigues son statut d'île autonome. »

En passant, je voudrais saluer l'humilité et la sagesse de Sir Anerood Jugnauth. J'ai vu qu'il reste parmi nous jusqu'à fort tard pour écouter chacun de nous. C'est extraordinaire ; c'est un honneur.

Madame la présidente, il est bon de souligner que Sir Anerood Jugnauth et son partenaire d'alors, l'honorable Bérenger ont su entendre et comprendre les besoins de Rodrigues en tant que société.

J'ai déjà dit et je le redis, le plus beau cadeau que la République a offert à Rodrigues et au peuple de Rodrigues, c'est son maximum autonomie après un long combat de 25 ans par mon parti, l'Organisation du Peuple de Rodrigues, (l'OPR) sous le *leadership* de Serge Clair.

Je me souviens encore de l'effet de la parole de l'honorable Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, accompagné de l'honorable Joe Lesjongard en 2000 à Rivière Coco à Rodrigues, en annonçant que : « *Nou pou donne Rodrigues so maximum l'autonomie* »

En 2001, le projet de loi de l'autonomie de Rodrigues a été voté à l'unanimité dans cette auguste assemblée. C'était un grand pas pour la démocratie mauricienne. L'image de cette avancée démocratique et institutionnelle est aujourd'hui en chantier continu à Rodrigues. Après treize ans de notre autonomie, des amendements à la loi de l'autonomie sont nécessaires. Madame la présidente, l'autonomie c'est l'aspiration du peuple de Rodrigues vers son destin. Rodrigues est non seulement une région autonome avec son destin en main au sein de la République de Maurice mais une entité géographique et stratégique dans cette région de l'Océan Indien avec le projet d'extension de la zone économique exclusive autour de Rodrigues et des nouvelles dynamiques de mondialisation sur l'axe Chine-Inde-Afrique.

Le peuple de Rodrigues est bien conscient de cette valeur et richesse au sein de la République. Il convient de souligner que Rodrigues aujourd'hui a besoin d'égalité de chance et de justice sociale pour relever les défis qui nous guettent au sein de la République et l'honorable Lutmeenaraidoo, le ministre des finances l'a bien compris et l'a exprimé lors de sa visite à Rodrigues en annonçant des mesures exceptionnelles sur le plan économique pour Rodrigues et nous sommes très reconnaissants.

(Interruptions)

Permettez-moi, Madame la présidente – je dois parler sur cette autonomie, l'honorable Jhugroo - de citer un extrait de ce que disait Sir Anerood Jugnauth en 2001, par rapport à cette autonomie de Rodrigues et c'est très important, surtout pour les nouveaux députés dans

cette Chambre, cette autonomie de Rodrigues que nous devons tous comprendre et respecter et je cite –

“The Rodrigues Regional Assembly Bill constitutes...

This is what hon. Jugnauth said in 2001.

...a landmark in the history of our country. The objective is to give the island of Rodrigues the opportunity to shape its own destiny through a decentralised system of Government. Neither the unity nor the indivisibility of our State will in any way be affected by this development. However, for the first time, decisions regarding the political, economic and social development of Rodrigues will be taken on the island itself.”

For many Rodriguans this is a dream coming true.

The hon. Prime Minister also clearly spelt out that –

“The tasks of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly will be immense. It will have to provide leadership, direction and guidance to the people of Rodrigues. I am confident that the political forces in Rodrigues will assume fully their responsibilities and rise to the occasion. If they fail to do so, the people of Rodrigues will not forgive them”.

And that’s absolutely correct and this is what is going on right now.

Madame la présidente, Rodrigues aujourd’hui sous la direction de l’OPR et le *leadership* de Serge Clair, Chef Commissaire de Rodrigues et toute la collégialité d’une équipe des jeunes politiciens, nous sommes engagés à réussir et à faire de cette autonomie un exemple pour la République.

Je voudrais appeler toute la République de respecter cette avancée démocratique qu’est l’autonomie de Rodrigues. Vous avez pu constater certaines décisions prises parfois impopulaires, mais importantes pour l’avenir, à l’exemple du bannissement de l’utilisation de sacs en plastique et la fermeture de la pêche à l’ourite en lien avec une vision écologique pour Rodrigues.

Madame la présidente, la République, ‘*kapav conte lor le serieux de l’OPR pour l’avancement de Rodrigues*’ et j’en suis sûr qu’avec son grand retour, Sir Anerood Jugnauth poussera encore plus loin et plus haut cette autonomie de Rodrigues.

Je ne pourrais continuer sans parler de l'élection nationale de 2014 dans la Circonscription numéro 21 à Rodrigues. Le grand changement et le choix d'une rupture avec la politique dégradante et déshonorante d'un parti politique local ont commencé depuis février 2012.

La qualité des résultats des élections a été particulièrement importante pour Rodrigues et l'OPR qui est aujourd'hui un parti important au sein de la République. La victoire historique, écrasante et sans précédent de l'OPR le 11 décembre 2014, restera dans les annales politiques de Rodrigues, sous notre slogan : « *Ensam dan Enn Sel Vision, Enn Sel La Voix* ».

Mon colistier, l'honorable Buisson Leopold et moi-même – écoutez bien l'honorable Jhugroo...

(Interruptions)

... ont mis à terre par K.O. et Ippon, trois leaders des partis politiques, « *C'était enn bâte condiré enn baté bef : 3-0* »

(Interruptions)

2-0 ! You are listening ! Pourquoi une telle victoire ? C'est parce que l'opposition Rodriguaise menaçait la stabilité politique dans le pays en voulant, je cite –

« *Gouvernement Régional OPR ek Serge Clair pou bisin démissionné si zot gagne élection nationale* » dixit d'un ex-ministre et Leader d'un parti politique local. Ce même politicien que je dirai a boycotté Rodrigues pendant son mandat. A l'exemple du *statement* de l'honorable Soodhun sur les règlements l'arpentage à Rodrigues. Le peuple a été plus intelligent et responsable. Le peuple les a envoyés dans '*caro pikanloulou*'.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, Abraham Lincoln disait, je cite -

«Un bulletin de vote est plus fort qu'une balle de fusil ».

Dans le cas des élections à Rodrigues, les bulletins de vote étaient des 'coups de canon et bazooka' du peuple. Une observation importante est que notre élection ne s'est pas faite avec de grands moyens logistiques ou financiers, mais reposait sur la volonté, la maturité et l'intelligence du peuple. Certains partis politiques misaient sur leurs millions

mais l'OPR on a misé sur notre vision, «*Nou Napa Million*». Dieu seul sait comment ils ont reçu ces millions. On a été témoin des épisodes '*donne botine, donne bagaz, donne ti-poule, donne du vin*' pour acheter la conscience des électeurs.

Madame la présidente, notre fierté aussi est que les jeunes de Rodrigues se sont mobilisés et ralliés massivement derrière l'OPR. Je leur félicite et remercie chaleureusement. Rodrigues est appelé à diriger par des hommes et des femmes Rodriguais sérieux, responsables et capables. C'est pourquoi le 11 décembre 2014, l'OPR a fait le grand nettoyage politique et nous travaillerons pour que le bon sens politique prévale à Rodrigues.

Ceux qui ont sali l'image de Rodrigues, à l'exemple de ce politicien condamné à trois mois de prison et qui a fait appel, ceux qui ont dilapidé les terres de l'État, ou abuser des biens publics ou pouvoirs publics par de multiples façons, qu'ils payent le prix nécessaire. Nous souhaitons que l'ICAC et le nouveau ministère de la bonne gouvernance fassent un travail dans ce sens.

J'avais demandé entre 2010 et 2012 une commission d'enquête sur la gestion de Rodrigues par le gouvernement MR sur certains dossiers concernant des abus de pouvoir et de gaspillage de fonds publics à Rodrigues par l'*Office of Good Governance*, mais cela n'a pas été abouti.

Je reviendrai à la charge pour l'ouverture d'une commission d'enquête sur certains dossiers à Rodrigues. Madame la présidente, Rodrigues fait un bond en avant dans sa quête de développement. Rodrigues veut être partie prenante dans cette vision de deuxième miracle économique.

(Interruptions)

L'honorable ministre des finances a annoncé la création d'une institution financière pour démocratiser l'accès aux finances et un meilleur accès au marché pour les entrepreneurs Rodriguais. Un partenariat sérieux s'installe entre le nouveau gouvernement central et le gouvernement régional pour le progrès de Rodrigues en termes de développement social et économique.

Le gouvernement régional OPR a de belles pistes pour ses actions gouvernementales sous son programme quinquennal 2012-2017 : faire de Rodrigues une île écologique, développer une culture entrepreneuriat favorisant une économie émergente et durable dans le secteur de l'informatique, l'agriculture, les petites et moyennes entreprises, combattre la

pauvreté, favoriser un développement infrastructurel prioritaire comme le port, l'aéroport et la câble optique, les secteurs de l'eau et un regard particulier pour la jeunesse Rodriguaise.

Le développement de Rodrigues passe aussi par une vision de connectivité vers le modernisme, dont le développement de l'aéroport avec l'ouverture de l'espace aérien bientôt vers la Réunion, la baisse des prix des billets d'avion de R7,186 à R 5,430; le remplacement du bateau *Mauritius Pride*. Le développement du port reste aussi très important pour le développement économique en terme de sécurité de la ville de Port Mathurin. On a perdu six ans avec l'ex-gouvernement régional MR. L'incendie du *filling station* le 23 février dernier devrait nous inciter à réorganiser l'urbanisation de Port Mathurin.

Le secteur de l'informatique à Rodrigues est appelé à devenir le prochain pilier du développement de Rodrigues. L'arrivée bientôt du câble optique: Rodrigues répondra à une attente grandissante de la jeunesse rodriguaise. Le projet câble optique sera le moteur d'une croissance économique nouvelle et de la création d'emplois pour l'île. La construction des infrastructures modernes comme un *Rodrigues Intelligent Building* sera un *landmark decision*.

Le secteur de la pêche est un secteur porteur pour l'avenir avec des projets de développement de la pêche hauturière, de la pêche des crabes de fonds et de la culture d'algues.

Madame la présidente, le zoning dans le lagon de Rodrigues, entré en vigueur en 2006 par le ministère de la Pêche pour contrôler le *Bad Weather Allowance*, n'a plus sa raison d'être avec les différents parcs et réserves marins dans nos lagons.

Je voudrais demander au nouveau ministre de la Pêche, l'honorable Koonjoo, d'enlever ces quatre zones et de les uniformiser en une seule zone vu la petite taille de l'île Rodrigues dans l'intérêt de nos pêcheurs.

Pour permettre le développement du secteur de la pêche à Rodrigues, on a besoin d'une école de pêche professionnelle et d'une école navale pour préparer les jeunes à intégrer le secteur porteur.

La NDU, sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, prend une nouvelle orientation, surtout par rapport à la sécurité et le bien-être des citoyens. Dans le cas de Rodrigues, les projets sous la NDU seront surtout pour pallier aux problèmes d'inondations pour assurer la connectivité des villages en rehaussant les radiers ou en construisant des ponts ou des drains tout autour de l'île.

C'est une grande première après ma nomination comme PPS pour laquelle, d'ailleurs, je remercie chaleureusement le Premier ministre pour la confiance placée en moi et Rodrigues.

Pour terminer, Madame la présidente, nos frères et sœurs d'Agaléga, méritent une attention particulière pour une approche renouvelée de leur développement. Au-delà du développement des infrastructures, l'accompagnement social du peuple Agaléen mérite un approfondissement surtout par rapport à la question de la démographie.

Madame la présidente, je termine en disant ceci: avec une politique réaliste, nous sommes appelés à réussir la promesse de développement de notre république, l'heure est donc à l'engagement, la responsabilité et l'action. Sur ce, je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Mrs Monty!

(10.33 p.m.)

Mrs M. C. Monty (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Madame la présidente, permettez-moi tout d'abord, d'exprimer ma joie, mon honneur et ma fierté de m'adresser pour la première fois à cette auguste Assemblée que vous présidez en tant que première femme *Speaker* de l'Assemblée Nationale, laquelle nomination fait honneur à la femme mauricienne et pour laquelle je vous présente, Madame la présidente, mes plus vives félicitations.

Permettez aussi, Madame la présidente, que j'adresse mes plus vives félicitations au plus jeune membre de l'Assemblée Nationale, l'honorable Adrien Duval, pour sa nomination en tant que *Deputy Speaker*, qui fait la fierté du vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval et qui fait honneur à feu Sir Gaëtan Duval.

Madame la présidente, mes félicitations vont aussi au Premier ministre, Sir Anerood Jugnauth; au vice-Premier ministre, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval et à tous les *Leaders* de l'Alliance Lepep pour leur brillante victoire et pour avoir su inspirer le peuple de l'île Maurice; aussi pour avoir si habilement convaincu la population quant au danger qui la guettait.

On a eu la chance, Madame la présidente, d'avoir des *Leaders* habités par l'humilité. Notre Premier ministre n'a pas hésité une seule seconde à quitter son fauteuil présidentiel pour reprendre le poste de Premier ministre et servir son peuple et son pays.

Le vice-Premier Ministre Xavier-Luc Duval, le vice-Premier ministre constitutionnel a su aussi montrer à la nation qu'à n'importe quel ministère qui lui était confié, il pouvait être performant et rester humble et simple.

Permettez aussi, Madame la présidente, que je présente mes félicitations et mes souhaits à tous mes collègues, honorables ministres, députés, aussi à l'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition, Paul Raymond Bérenger et à tous les honorables députés de l'autre côté de la Chambre.

Cependant, il n'en demeure pas moins, Madame la présidente, qu'une question me taraude. Comment l'incontestable et l'incontesté *Leader* du MMM, vrai *Leader* historique de ce parti ait pu se laisser prendre au filet de ce grand pêcheur à la tête du gouvernement d'alors? Mais je préfère me faire une raison, car vous conviendrez, Madame la présidente, que le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.

Madam Speaker, I firmly believe that the era of change has come. The heroes of change are at the command of this country, and nothing but meaningful change can really happen. The Leaders of *l'Alliance Lepep* have united the best team ever and with the dedicated work of one and all, we are bound to pave the way to success and wipe away all that stuck filthiness. Our journey has, indeed, well started at the service of the nation and we all will stand to our mission and translate our vision in bringing our country on the path of newness and innovation.

Madam Speaker, my election in Constituency No. 4 is but the fruit of hard and continuous work supported by my campaign manager, my two other fellow candidates and having as motivating force the faith the Leader of the House had placed in me. I had to strive hard against highly experienced women politicians. The newness of my name in the political arena was one of the main obstacles during that campaign, but by and by I stride my way through in winning the hearts and minds of people. I intend to serve my years as deputy with a profound spirit of service *en étant une députée de proximité* with the inhabitants of Constituency No. 4, which I have had the pleasure to discover in all its urban and rural particularities and with all its warmhearted people whom I heartily thank for my election.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to be among the rare few women called upon to humbly serve the people of our beautiful country. I cannot help having words of thanks for my humble and most generous parents who have spared no effort to help me grow into a determined woman of heart.

Madame la présidente, un peuple bafoué, leurré et meurtri a besoin de retrouver ses repères et de se sentir pris en charge. Le programme proposé par le gouvernement vient combler ce manque et je me sens parfaitement à l'aise quant au principe fondateur de son plan d'action. Je réitère ici mon engagement à servir la nation en ma capacité de députée. Enthousiaste et déterminée, je suis prête à participer à la réalisation des projets de ce programme gouvernemental de l'Alliance Lepep.

Chose promise, chose due, nous avons déjà commencé à honorer nos promesses envers les aînés, les veuves et les orphelins, donc, Madame la présidente, les plus vulnérables. L'augmentation de la pension de vieillesse a été faite aussitôt que le gouvernement a été mis en place, à la satisfaction de nos aînés méritant notre respect et notre reconnaissance.

Madame la présidente, la jeunesse est l'avenir du pays et pour offrir des opportunités et un bel avenir à nos jeunes, nous leur devons une éducation de qualité leur permettant un épanouissement dans un encadrement digne de ce nom. Il ne suffit pas de leur offrir des bâtiments ressemblant à des hôtels cinq étoiles et où l'infrastructure au coût souvent trop onéreux aura permis aux promoteurs de construction de s'enrichir. Il convient de leur offrir un environnement adéquat pouvant assurer leur formation et leur sécurité tout en leur offrant des matières répondant à leur compétence et respectant les besoins du marché du travail.

L'éducation, Madame la présidente, est la clé du succès et le début d'un avenir meilleur pour nos jeunes. Je parle en tant qu'enseignante de carrière et en tant que directrice de collège, dotée d'une longue expérience dans le domaine de l'éducation. Il est grand temps qu'on inscrive les valeurs humaines comme matière obligatoire non-examinable dans le cursus scolaire de nos jeunes. Les avancées technologiques en dépit de tous les avantages y relatifs, font de nos enfants des êtres pouvant de moins en moins communiquer, ne sachant pas respecter l'autre, faute d'interaction, de manque d'exposition directe à la culture d'autrui. Nous avons besoin, Madame la présidente, des êtres *fully human and fully alive*, des êtres capables de faire des compromis et pardessus tout d'aimer et de créer la paix autour d'eux. Si le sport tiendra toujours une place prépondérante aidant au développement du corps sain.

L'éventail proposé pourrait être élargi. Il n'y a pas que des athlètes ou des sportifs de haut niveau n'ayant pour but que de rafler des médailles mais il y a aussi d'autres formes d'exercice plus appropriées pour ceux qui ne sont pas à l'aise avec l'effort soutenu en plein air.

Madame la présidente, nous connaissons tous l'importance de la cellule familiale dans l'équilibre psychologique des enfants, et bien souvent ce n'est pas par manque de volonté que beaucoup de parents démissionnent. Ils ne savent souvent pas comment s'y prendre. Donc, un partenariat soutenu est de mise. L'école des parents viendrait parfaire ce qui se fait déjà et conscientiserait mieux ces derniers quant à leur rôle dans le développement intégral de leur progéniture.

Madame la présidente, le plan d'offrir un repas chaud à tous nos petits du primaire est une initiative fort louable de notre programme gouvernemental. Mais toujours est-il qu'on pourrait aussi penser à ceux qui, encore de nos jours, arrivent au collège sans avoir rien à se mettre sous les dents et qui viennent principalement des régions défavorisées. Une étude de cas aiderait dans une large mesure ceux qui s'absentent continuellement, faute de nourriture.

Madame la présidente, s'il y a un fait marquant de ma circonscription que j'aimerais partager avec les membres de cette Assemblée c'est bien ces conditions les plus inimaginables dans lesquelles un groupe d'enfants font leurs devoirs à la lumière d'une bougie suspendue à un arbre et qui plus, est avec la lumière empruntée à un voisin.

Madame la présidente, les mesures annoncées pour le secteur éducatif sont nombreuses. *The 9-Year Schooling will allow the slow learner to grow at his own pace and not to be considered as a wreck at 10 years old. Moreover, the relief of parents will be great without exams fees even though serious conditions should be attached to this measure so as to discourage une mentalité d'assistés chez certains and encourage parental participation in a way or the other.*

Madam Speaker, if the hand that rocks the cradle governs the world, I wish to the head that leads education much success in planning to bring up our youth within schools that should not be mere buildings but true institutions infused with values and not only walls to harbour young people.

Madame la présidente, dans notre programme, les femmes ne sont pas en reste. Des facilités de formation seront mises à leur disposition afin de leur permettre de monter leur propre business. Par ailleurs, la violence envers les femmes interpelle plus d'un et il est nécessaire qu'elles puissent être protégées.

Madame la présidente, nous prônons l'égalité des chances. En combattant la corruption, nous aspirons à une société plus juste. On se rend bien compte, Madame la présidente, que ce gouvernement entend bien remplacer le noubanisme par la méritocratie. Le

terme ‘noubanisme’ a été utilisé des centaines de fois pour qualifier les actions du précédent régime. Mais la victoire écrasante de l’*Alliance Lepep* vient mettre fin à cette pratique discriminatoire en faisant autant d’appels de candidatures que nécessaire afin de déceler les précieuses compétences des mauriciens d’ici ou de l’étranger et qui sont disposés à servir le pays mais en particulier dans des domaines comme celui de l’éducation et des universités. Ces appels de candidatures déjà en place, comme CEO, ou comme membre de conseil donneraient aux concitoyens et au pays cette conviction essentielle que nul n’est, au départ, exclu.

Madam Speaker, I refer now to item 52 on sustainable and eco-friendly development and to item 68 on environmental awareness. Since 1975, environmental awareness has been introduced in lower secondary and eventually in the primary education curricula, especially with the introduction of environmental studies as a full subject in the primary. The result has been an astounding increase in the environmental awareness of our youth. But much remains to be done. The Government will do its utmost to develop E.S.D. programmes adapted and suitable for schools, responding to the main environmental needs of the country namely, self-sufficiency in food and energy, renewable energy use, freshwater resources and its rational use for domestic and agricultural use.

Madam Speaker, this Government has grit, that is, the willingness to commit itself to long-term goals and persist in the face of difficulty. As a dedicated and responsible Government, we intend to focus on getting better rather than just being good. We will, in togetherness like a dedicated and committed whole, unite our strength to combat corruption and adversity.

Pour ne pas tenir en haleine l’Assemblée, Madame la présidente, je vais vite arriver vers la conclusion pour dire que je suis honorée. *I am honoured to be associated to add my humble contribution to the reconstruction of an injured nation.* Je souhaite, Madame la présidente, que nos honorables membres de l’autre côté de la Chambre ne tombent pas dans la malhonnêteté intellectuelle ou dans la démagogie. En fins intellectuels, on devrait pouvoir reconnaître le travail quand il est bien fait, être honnêtes dans nos critiques si acerbes soient-elles et porter notre regard sur le bien-être des concitoyens et le progrès de notre pays.

Nous devrions, Madame la présidente, nous laisser porter sur nos chemins par ce soleil déjà levé si haut car nul ne peut cacher ni diriger ses rayons. Si le coq chante toujours

au matin, le cœur ne peut que se réjouir du nouveau jour qui se lève et qui annonce des lendemains meilleurs même si d'un autre côté, la clé est bel et bien rangée sous le paillason.

(Interruptions)

Before concluding, my plea to this Assembly, Madam Speaker, is to keep our hands clean, as they are meant to serve, to keep our minds focused on our mission, to unite forces and to work relentlessly for the needy, to combat poverty at all levels and to raise our people to dignity.

On these words, Madam Speaker, I beg to leave the floor and wish to thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Ganoo!

(10.48 p.m.)

Mr A. Ganoo (First Member for Savanne & Black River): Madame la présidente, nous voilà à l'aube d'un nouveau quinquennat. Le vent de l'histoire a soufflé de nouveau. Conformément à notre riche tradition parlementaire, permettez-moi de vous adresser mes félicitations pour votre élection en tant que première dame *Speaker* de la Chambre et mes félicitations s'étendent aussi au jeune *Deputy Speaker*.

J'ai dans le passé, moi-même, servi en tant que *Speaker* de cette Chambre en 1982 sous le premier mandat de Sir Anerood Jugnauth en tant que Premier ministre. L'honorable Bodha nous rappelait que dans quelques jours, vous aurez l'honneur et cette Chambre aura également l'honneur d'accueillir le grand homme politique qu'est Monsieur Modi. En 1982, moi aussi, quelques semaines après mon élection comme président de la Chambre, j'avais eu l'insigne honneur d'accueillir Madame Indira Gandhi qui nous avait rendu visite quelques semaines après les élections de 1982. Madame la présidente, le *Speaker* constitue le pivot de la démocratie parlementaire et comme on le dit très souvent '*The Speaker mars or makes parliamentary democracy*'.

L'essence de votre fonction a été bien résumée dans ce qu'avait dit feu Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru et je cite -

“The Speaker represents the House, the dignity of the House, the freedom of the House and because the House represents the nation in a particular way the Speaker becomes the symbol of the nation's will, the nation's freedom and the nation's liberty.”

The Speaker, donc Madame la présidente, incarne la volonté d'un peuple et symbolise ses aspirations et sa liberté. C'est pourquoi de ce côté de la Chambre nous comptons sur vous pour promouvoir la démocratie au sein de cet hémicycle et pour donner une chance égale à tous les membres de cette Chambre, quels qu'ils soient, pour s'exprimer librement dans le cadre de nos *Standing Orders* et dans le cadre de notre jeu démocratique.

Je salue également, Madame la présidente, les nouveaux membres fraîchement élus des deux côtés de la Chambre. Et je félicite l'honorable Mme Monty pour son *maiden speech* et à tous ces nouveaux membres nouvellement élus. *It is the start of a new journey*. Et je leur souhaite tous mes vœux de bonheur dans leur engagement si noble, si exaltant, si gratifiant bien que quelquefois ingrat. La politique est en vérité un sacerdoce qui exige de la passion, de la patience, de l'humilité et de la résilience.

Permettez-moi aussi, Madame la présidente, d'adresser mes sincères félicitations au *Leader* de la Chambre après la victoire de l'alliance qu'il a dirigée et je tiens donc à lui souhaiter bonne chance, à lui, et à son équipe.

Je voudrais, en dernier lieu, Madame la présidente, remercier l'électorat de ma circonscription qui compte, comme vous le savez, le plus grand nombre d'électeurs du pays. Elle est aussi la plus grande circonscription en termes de superficie. Je remercie cette circonscription qui m'a fait confiance pour la huitième fois. Et elle est aussi, vous conviendrez, une des plus belles régions de notre pays.

Madame la présidente, les clameurs de la dernière campagne électorale s'étant définitivement tues, c'est donc avec une grande lucidité, que je m'adresse à la Chambre cet après-midi. Le parti auquel j'appartiens - pour des raisons qui lui sont propres - avait élaboré une stratégie électorale en vue des dernières élections et le *Leader* de mon parti avait alors jugé apte de me confier une mission considérée par certains comme ingrate pour la mise en œuvre de cette stratégie.

Certains se sont évertués à me faire porter le chapeau de notre défaite électorale lors de ces législatives. Cette campagne de dénigrement, si injuste soit-elle, n'a aucunement entamé mon ardeur pour continuer à œuvrer pour des lendemains pour mes mandants et aussi pour mon pays.

Je ne m'attarderai pas sur cette campagne inique à mon égard. Mais il est utile de se rappeler que pour nous, au MMM, la réforme électorale qui était considérée par certains comme un appât, était avant tout, une réforme nécessaire et urgente, non seulement pour se

conformer aux recommandations de la commission des droits de l'homme des Nations Unies, mais surtout pour approfondir et élargir le champ démocratique de notre république. Nous y avons cru et nous y croyons toujours. Nous souhaitons donc ardemment que le présent gouvernement tienne ses promesses à cet effet.

The more so, Madame la présidente, parce que nous savons tous que le gouvernement de l'Alliance Lepep si *overwhelming* sa victoire était, contrôle aujourd'hui plus de ¾ des sièges à cette Chambre, mais elle a recueilli seulement 50% des suffrages. En fait, seulement 37% de la population ont accordé leur soutien au gouvernement lors des dernières élections.

(Interruptions)

Je viens au programme, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

50% de 74% des suffrages.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Member, could you address the Chair, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: J'ai dit 37% de la population.

Madam Speaker: Please, address yourself to the Chair! No cross-talking!

Mr Ganoo: Yes, Madam Speaker. I am sorry I have been interrupted. I am sorry. As already indicated by my colleagues on this side of the House, Madam Speaker - because I have come now to the programme - most of the propositions in the programme are in line with the core of our own aspirations for the country. In fact, the DNA of this present Government Programme matches exactly with that of the remake MMM/MSM. I am happy to see that the Government has included social inclusion as one of its first priorities. The fight against poverty is high on the agenda of the Government as far as we can see from this Government Programme. I quote –

“A medium to long-term Marshall Plan will be elaborated to combat poverty and social exclusion. The National Empowerment Foundation (NEF) will be restructured to render it more productive and improve service delivery to the poor.”

Indeed, Madam Speaker, overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity.

I am quoting Nelson Mandela –

“It is an act of justice. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and to decent life. As long as poverty persists, there is no true freedom.”

I will not go into the theoretical definition of poverty or focus on the theoretical aspect of the matter, Madam Speaker, but suffice it to say that there has been widespread acceptance now that poverty is not a social phenomenon that can be measured solely by income. It has to be conceptualised and defined within its own specific context.

The debates around the definition of poverty, in fact, have allowed us to define and understand this problem and this is how the distinction between relative and absolute poverty has been shaped in the course of years.

Madam Speaker, we cannot deny that during the last decade also, we have seen the impoverishment of the middle class and the lower middle class in our country, the notable increase in the Gini coefficient. It is hoped that the new Government does not confuse measures to eradicate absolute poverty with measures to alleviate relative poverty.

Madam Speaker, I note that most of the measures that have been announced in this Programme are intended to alleviate the burden of mostly the lower middle income households indiscriminately of their needs. For example, increasing social aids, increasing pension and this is most unlikely to eradicate absolute poverty. But it will certainly contribute to alleviate the burden of the lower middle income households.

We will see that under the item of ‘Social Inclusion’ most of the Government measures are targeted towards the lower middle income citizens of this country. This, of course, is a necessary measure during the difficult economic period we are in. We definitely need a thriving middle class which will be spending for economic growth and to reboot our economy. But we are in 2015. Since eight or nine years ago, the Mauritian State had committed itself to halve the 1990s extreme poverty on our territory by 2015. We are far from the target, but Government can live up to this pledge if it has the will. This is why I will plead to this new Government to make a conscious effort to eradicate poverty in the 229 poverty pockets, which touches directly about 7,000 families. These are the figures of UNDP Mauritius.

Madam Speaker, the increase in pension payments, as I said, will surely contribute to the increase in the standard of living of these families, but it won’t take them out of absolute poverty. I am insisting on absolute poverty, Madam, because recent studies have shown how

poverty passes from generation to generation. Indeed, stress, trauma linked to poverty is responsible for damaging the working capacity of poor children. Stress shrinks the volume of the prefrontal cortex and the hippocampus, which is the part of the brain most closely associated with the working memory. This is the scientific basis of how poverty induces stress to the poor children of this country and hinders the development of their brain. In a book entitled “The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better”, the author adduces probative evidence how in countries where there is a big gap between the incomes of the rich and the poor, mental illness, drug, alcohol abuse, obesity, teenage pregnancy are more rampant. The homicide rate is higher year, life expectancy is shorter, and children’s educational performance is seriously jeopardised.

At this point, I would like to highlight that if the Government intends to come up with a Marshall Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion, it has also to update the relevant figures. The last publicly available report on poverty at the CSO dates back to 2006/2007.

The Government Programme also mentions that it intends to restructure the NEF to efficiently provide the adequate services to the poor. The eradication of absolute poverty requires that the NEF work closely with those 7,157 families who are too often marginalised from our socioeconomic development. I hope, Madam Speaker, that the restructuring of the NEF will provide space also for working hand in hand, in consultation with the NGOs who are the frontliners in the combat against absolute poverty, and can be said to be the closest representatives of marginalised groups.

Madam Speaker, I would also suggest that the Ministry of Social Integration is given all the means necessary to empower NGOs as development partners, and in the same breath, I suggest that the CSR Fund be transferred under this Ministry to enable it to implement its ambitious programme of a Marshall Plan to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Madam Speaker, since I am on the subject of social inclusion, I would like to say a few words on social housing, which is directly related to the matter. Year in and year out during the past eight or nine years, the different budgets which were presented to this House regularly and consistently mentionned the construction of social housing for those at the bottom of the ladder. On this score also, Madam Speaker, the results have been catastrophic, so much so that, today, when we look at the figures available at the NHDC, we are flabbergasted.

I put a PQ to the hon. Minister Soodhun this week, and I must say, although the question was not reached, the hon. minister gracefully circulated the answer, which is very enlightening and at the same time depressing.

Let me, for the interest of the House, read the answer which was given to me –

“Madam Speaker, since 2006 to 2014 - that is, during the past nine years - you would be surprised to know how many housing units have been constructed across the island.”

“For the past nine years ...”

According to the answer given by the hon. Minister –

“... 1,923 housing units have been constructed...”

Which means that, for the nine years, on an average, 214 units have been built per year. When I asked also about the number of households who have registered themselves at the NHDC, the figure, as at now, is 39,573; nearly 40,000 households have registered for a housing unit. And when we look at the breakdown of the monthly households, which I asked also - I asked another question to categorise the house seekers on the NHDC list - the answer I was given, Madam Speaker, is that...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order please!

Mr Ganoo: ... - when I computed the percentage - 66% of those household seekers draw a monthly salary of less than Rs6,000; 87% draw a monthly household income of less than Rs15,000, which means that out of these 40,000 house seekers - if I round up the figure - 87% are in the category of those earning less than Rs15,000. I asked also a question about my own constituency, Madam Speaker. I was informed by the hon. Minister that, during the period of 2006-2014, the NHDC has, in fact, constructed only 78 units in the constituency. For a period of nearly nine years, only 78 units have been constructed in my constituency, Savanne/Riviere Noire, and there are about 1,700 families in that constituency who have applied to the NHDC for a housing unit.

So, Madam Speaker, I, therefore, was right, I think, in saying that the situation on the housing front is really urgent in view of the number of house seekers at the NHDC. This Government has pledged to build 10,000 housing units. I hope *parole donnée* will be *parole sacrée*, and we can find a solution to this thorny problem, that is, the housing problem.

Madam Speaker, this new Government has taken the initiative of creating a Ministry of Good Governance, and good governance has a bearing on the struggle to alleviate poverty. In the past years, just like in many countries governance in Mauritius has been characterised by, in fact, a lack of good governance, a lack of transparency and meritocracy. It is relevant to assess the impact of such governance, if we wish to move towards a poverty free Mauritius. The successive high profile scandal and corruption events like the STC hedging, the Air Mauritius hedging, the shady deals that we have heard between the State and foreign corporate bodies, the recurrent wastage/mismanagement of public funds detailed by the annual audit report, the growing culture of political patronage and cronyism sometimes causing our best brains to migrate to other countries; the suspicious stimulus packages which we heard of give us an idea of the massive amount of money that went on waste, and which could have been spent in a more judicious manner to solve many of the problems faced by the 7,000 families to be living below the poverty line and how many more welfare projects which could have been set up. That money could have been easily distributed to empower those individuals to move out of the poverty line. And what, Madam Speaker, about all those stimulus packages granted to undeserving cronies, the Special Funds for which no accountability mechanism existed. How often did the Director of Audit highlight the huge amount of public funds invested in private companies where Government has a stake but which have yielded no dividends?

The nexus between corruption and poverty is well illustrated in the multiple examples which we heard during those past years. For example, the distribution of building materials by the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups or the misdistribution of building materials by the Trust Fund for Vulnerable Groups, the misallocation of housing units designed for the poor, but which landed with relatives of the staff of Government institutions, the number of successful appeals before the Independent Review Panel in cases of public procurement.

Madam Speaker, good governance calls for improvements that are related to all aspects of public sector from institutions that regulate economic and political interaction, agencies that manage the administrative system to human resources that staff our civil service and the officials of our political and bureaucratic arenas.

Indeed, for good governance to be a vital and a necessary ingredient to reduce poverty, we should endeavour to free our institutions from their weakness and lethargy. Our public service should be better trained and motivated. There must be a genuine commitment to deep reforms and administrative change, unlike previously, where a lack of political will

was blatant. Hence, the urgency of a governance agenda and commitment for more intense anti-corruption measures and a more sophisticated public expenditure management.

Commitments to fight corruption should mean a more independent and autonomous anti-corruption agency insulated of any kind of political influence and relentlessly bent on inculcating a culture of integrity and probity in the public administration with special consideration to our procurement bodies.

Madam Speaker, our long experience teaches us that, as long as segments of citizens are excluded from the public services, or given inequitable treatment, as long as we fail to do away with so much wastage, as long as corruption and lack of accountability rear their ugly heads, as long as the data for the number of poor people wishing to gain access to service deliveries is still elusive, as long as due to clientelism political elites managed to trade access to jobs or other resources for their own political support, good governance will be a nebulous concept. This is why this country needs a good governance agenda and firm commitment with what has to be achieved to respond to those commitments because, at the end of the day, good governance is about strengthening our watchdog institutions.

Let me say a few words on a problem deeply affecting our youth today, Madam Speaker. The Youth Unemployment Programme (YEP) was launched in 2013. This Programme's objective was to enable the unemployed youth to obtain training/placement in private enterprises for an initial period of one year, with the possibility of permanent employment.

We can see that a budget of Rs330 m. was earmarked for the year 2013. The 2014 YEP report shows that, out of 11,097 youngsters registered and eligible to the YEP, only 4,178 were successfully given a placement. From this report, it is unclear as to why such a large amount of applicants to the YEP were not able to secure a placement. We can guess, Madam Speaker, that given the current economic climate the private sector was reluctant to invest in labour training. That's why we should come up with innovative measures to give the opportunity to our young unemployed to have placements, short-term jobs and apprentices in a working environment to help them acquire the skills which is required in jobs. This measure not only will alleviate the unemployment burden of those unemployed young people, but will also help us to improve the quality of the labour supply.

The Government has announced in this programme that the YEP will be extended to a two-year basis in the Programme. But, the question I would like to make is: did Government

consider extending such types of Programmes to the African continent and the surrounding islands? For several years the Mauritian Government has had the ambition of positioning the country as a Centre of Excellence in the African region. Earlier on, I heard hon. Reza Uteem commenting a lot and making a lot of suggestions on our ambition to position ourselves *vis à vis* the African regions.

Our young graduates, Madam Speaker, our young professionals are the best testimonies of the quality of our education and service sector. While the problem of unemployed graduates is on the rise, we have to acknowledge that the main problem is the increasing supply of these graduates and the supply is exceeding the demand day by day.

Therefore, this Government could have promoted temporary circular migration to the African continent through overseas youth programmes for young graduates, whereby young Mauritians are sent on the African continent where they can put in practice their knowledge.

This measure will not only allow for brain circulation and, therefore, give an opportunity for our young graduates to grow by learning to apply their knowledge in a different context, but also build networks which can promote stronger ties between Mauritius and the African continent.

The aim is to empower our young intellectuals to tap in the endless opportunities that the African market offers and, at the same time, make the quality of education in Mauritius known on the continent. One example is the current shortage of health workers, including nurses and doctors on the continent. Sending our young medical and nursing graduates is a means of promoting our local medical and nursing schools.

Youth unemployment has deep roots which are a threat to our society. Combating it, Madam Speaker, requires from us to challenge conventional wisdom.

I will just say a few words on the Tertiary Education Commission, Madam Speaker. This week has been very interesting for the TEC sector in this House. There were two Parliamentary Questions. We have witnessed the hurried and long awaited departure of Professor Bakshi, the Executive Director and we also read about a question which was put about one cadre with dubious intellectual integrity whom the House has been querying for an even long period of time.

We just read from ION News, I think, that Mr Bakshi has been arrested at the airport a few hours ago. To come back to what I was saying - with these two offices in the limelight, the subject matter of these two PQs - we have some extra visibility about the sector. We note

that in almost every round hole in the TEC, there is a square peg. This situation has satisfied two conditions. The dubious private universities were given a longer lease of life and the then Minister whose involvement in the mushrooming of some institutions is unquestionable, which explains, Madam Speaker, the 'diplomatic immunity' of those officers and the ongoing complicity of the then Board of Investment, which adopted roles that are not its own.

These two officers have been associated with many of the different problems encountered in this sector. After the usual problem faced by the École de Médecine Louis Pasteur, the infamous D.Y. Patil Medical College issue, the no better situation that had besieged JSS Academy, the opaqueness surrounding the registration of Wolverhampton and Aberystwyth universities, the bigger picture has become a bit clearer.

Unfortunately - the hon. Minister of Education is not present - this is indeed still the main problem at the TEC. Square pegs still in round holes! Many of the people who are occupying the current positions should not have been there in the first place. They are either not qualified or experienced at the level that they should have been. Saturday last, we heard during a Saturday radio show, how poor research by one particular department of the TEC has led to the mismatch between the country's employability needs and the required training and education options. On the eve of elections, Madam Speaker, two persons highly connected with individuals operating within the DBM and the STC have been employed at the TEC whose Chairman, we know, was accidentally, equally Chairman of the STC at that time. In this regard, we need not be surprised about the current state of affairs, the square peg in the round hole.

Currently, unfortunately, we find that this new Government has stepped into the shoes of the other. Who is there now in the absence of the Executive Director, as the Officer-in-Charge? Beyond seniority, is this person in any way qualified to answer queries? Is this officer expert in regulatory matters, which is the core of the TEC business?

The pace at which Government is proceeding is very disappointing, especially as we remember how a few hon. Members of the previous House, now hon. Members of the present Cabinet very consistently and forcefully, every Tuesday, monitored the situation at the TEC and pinned down the then Minister Jeetah. But we would have thought that this Cabinet would have been prepared since it had so much time when it was in the Opposition, but, unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we still ask so many questions.

Recently, a Court judgment required the illegal nomination of one officer to be quashed because of the faulty procedures of our appointment. Do you know, Madam Speaker, that the then Chairperson substituted himself for a Supreme Court Judge, disregarded the Court judgment, maintained this officer as well as, at least two others in their positions that they are illegally occupying.

With the new Government Programme, we are surprised to find a very tepid interest in the TEC sector. It is not clear how only a Higher Education Bill will change the present scenario. In fact, nothing has been heard again about the Internal Audit that should have been carried out at the TEC.

Madam Speaker, it is worrisome and sad that the ex-Prime Minister should have put Mr Jeetah as the Minister of Tertiary Education. Worrisome, because Mr Jeetah the then Minister of Tertiary Education, had been bristling with conflicts of interest in this sector and sad because he has nastily tinkered with the lives of so many youngsters leading to a serious rising youth unemployment. Indeed, Mr Jeetah has bumbled his way through history as the most incompetent Minister riddled with fatal flaws. With the fatal Jeetah touch, he has compromised all the sectors he had touched upon: industry, health, leaving higher education as a gaping.

It is only hoped that the new Government will overcome its induction flippancy and move into this sector with the seriousness that it had treated the Higher Education during the time it had been in the Opposition.

Madam Speaker, I would like to say a few words on another issue that appears in the Government Programme: the funding of political parties. We know that in the wake of recent events involving the previous Prime Minister and the amount of substantial money found, there has been a unanimous outcry in the country for regulating the financing of political parties. Indeed, Madam Speaker, as we all know, political finance can undermine democratic values or lack of control of political finance can undermine democratic values and good governance. And even resources can distort electoral processes and may improperly influence decisions taken by elected representatives.

The issue relating to controlling private donations to political parties and whether the State should fund political parties and electoral campaigns has already been canvassed, I think, in this House. We remember that the Sachs Commission itself addressed this issue and made very pertinent and concrete recommendations which I will not go into, but suffice it to

say, Madam Speaker, that in a last survey which was organised by Afrobarometer, we read that: “90% of Mauritians interviewed did not agree that Government should fund political parties with taxpayers’ money.” They expressed a preference for additional powers to be given to the ESC especially for the control and sanction of electoral fund and also the control of fraud and corruption as well as control over political funding and abuse of position of power.

Therefore, this issue is a live issue and will remain a live issue for a long time to come, Madam Speaker. This is why I would have thought that Government should have come with a motion in this House and proposed that a Select Committee be set up to look into the matter and make new recommendation regarding the funding of political parties, taking into consideration the aspirations, the wishes of our electorate as indicated in the survey, that is, 90% of Mauritians did not agree that Government funds political parties. But the crux of the matter is that, I think, the Leader of the House should urgently come up with a motion before this House with a view to set up a Select Committee to look into or to propose recommendations regarding the funding of political parties. I think this is what the people of this country are expecting and I think all of us, politicians and whatever side of the House we are, we have a duty to show to the nation that we take this matter seriously and we should respond to the wishes of our people, once for all, to settle this question of control of funding of political parties.

Of course, this Select Committee should also be mandated to come up its report within a timeframe. I should have thought, Madam Speaker. I don’t think anything prevents the House to resolve that the report of the Select Committee should be ready and tabled on the Table of the Assembly within a definite time frame. Interestingly enough, in this same Afrobarometer Survey, Madam Speaker, a question was also asked to those who were surveyed concerning the limit of two mandates for the Prime Minister, for any next Prime Minister. In that survey, therefore, the issue of whether the mandate of the Prime Minister should be limited to two terms was also on the Table. 68% of Mauritians believe so. They answered that, according to them, the mandate of the Prime Minister should be limited to two terms. Of course, it cannot be retroactive so it means it will apply to anybody, I suppose. So, I think this is a proposal that all political parties should seriously consider, Madam Speaker, because I think it is another proposal which can enhance democracy in our country.

Madame la présidente, j’avais parlé de la campagne des dernières élections au début de mon discours. Je voudrais terminer mon discours en disant aussi que les leçons de cette

récente campagne, nous devons tous en tirer, pas seulement les partis d'opposition et je peux vous confirmer, Madame la présidente que nous avons certainement beaucoup appris de nos déboires. L'électorat nous a envoyé un signal et nous saurons l'interpréter pour effectuer des changements là où il le faut. Toute la classe politique, à commencer par les ministres du gouvernement doivent aussi savoir décoder le message de l'électorat et tirer les leçons nécessaires. Une d'entre elles, d'après moi, a été manifestement l'excès de confiance et l'arrogance dont ont fait preuve certains dirigeants et responsables pendant la campagne. Madame la présidente, le bon fonctionnement de toute organisation, y compris un gouvernement ou un parti politique, exige de l'autorité suprême deux caractères distincts. Le premier, d'après moi, à mon avis, est l'humilité et le droit de reconnaître l'erreur. Ce qui paraît de soi est tout sauf évident. Nous saurions probablement mieux gouverner et diriger s'il était plus facile au politique d'admettre des erreurs pour les corriger alors, que seule la sacralisation pousse à la prétention d'infaillibilité. Or, après une décision malheureuse pour faire amende honorable, réagir vite et entraîner l'adhésion, il faut assumer clairement l'erreur.

Le deuxième caractère pour toute autorité politique est la collégialité de l'intelligence. La décision même d'un chef ne doit être solitaire, mais beaucoup de nos dirigeants suprêmes, faute de consultation, de dialogue et de partage, sombrent très souvent dans un isolement mégalomane et ombrageux.

Madame la présidente, l'arrogance dont a fait preuve aussi certains membres du gouvernement sortant, l'institutionnalisation de la politique de petits copains et de petites copines, les abus répétés du pouvoir, l'affairisme des courtisans et des partisans, et les scandales à répétition avaient fini par gangrener le régime d'avant. L'électorat à travers son vote a certainement condamné ces pratiques et s'est prononcé pour un vrai changement de cap et non pour un changement d'acteur incarnant les mêmes rôles. Je dois vous dire, Madame la présidente que certaines décisions et nominations de ce gouvernement ont été accueillies comme une douche froide par la population. Je ne cherche certainement pas à faire la leçon au gouvernement nouvellement installé mais, au contraire, je me permets simplement d'adresser une opinion contre de telles pratiques qui finiront inévitablement à provoquer les mêmes conséquences. Le changement promis *must not only be done, but seen to be done*. Déjà certains échos, qui nous sommes parvenus, ne sont guère rassurants. C'est certes une pratique courante qu'un nouveau gouvernement installe une nouvelle équipe pour mener à bien son programme, mais de là instaurer une politique revancharde, de terroriser les cadres par le biais d'une nouvelle version de l'opération 'lev paket aller', il y a des pas qu'il ne

faudrait franchir. Il est également hors de question qu'on passe sous silence certaines dérives qu'on a constatées lors de la campagne électorale. Nous condamnons sévèrement ces pratiques, tout comme nous dénonçons les atteintes inacceptables à la vie privée des hommes politiques et leur famille. Les attaques à la vie privée sont l'apanage des faibles.

(Interruptions)

Une république qui se prétend moderne.

(Interruptions)

Laisse mo kozer!

Madame Speaker: Order!

Mr Ganoo: Une république qui se prétend moderne ne peut et ne doit tolérer de tels écarts. Nous souhaitons vivement que dans le cadre de la réforme électorale promise, des changements soient apportés afin de garantir des campagnes électorales plus saines et plus centrées sur les vrais enjeux.

Madame la présidente, pour conclure, les élections générales sont maintenant derrière nous, une page de notre histoire est tournée. Quant à nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, nous serons une opposition constructive - tous ceux de ce côté de la Chambre - constructive et patriotique. Nous ne ferons pas de politique de terre-brulée. Autant que l'opposition doit être constructive et patriotique, le gouvernement doit faire montre d'ouverture, de transparence et d'humilité, précisément.

La roue de l'histoire tourne Madame la présidente, et vite et ce gouvernement aussi fort qu'il soit n'a pas lieu de pavoiser pour deux raisons. Primo, ce gouvernement n'a recueilli l'adhésion que de 37% de l'électorat, 50% de 74%...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order, please!

Mr Ganoo: revient à....

(Interruptions)

Vous êtes le gouvernement, vous dirigez le pays, vous parlez d'un *overwhelming victory*. Donc, je vous rappelle que 60% de mauriciens ont voté contre ou se sont abstenus.

Je disais, Madame la présidente, qu'il n'y a aucun lieu pour le gouvernement de pavoiser ou d'être euphorique. La deuxième raison, depuis 1969, depuis l'indépendance, tous les gouvernements qui ont dirigé notre pays ont été des gouvernements d'alliance. Il y a eu 10 gouvernements, 8 parmi ces 10 gouvernements n'ont pas duré, ils ont explosé en cours de route.

Only two party coalitions have survived the full five-year term of office in their original form for a complexity of factors; the longevity of party coalitions in Mauritius is known, Madam Speaker and the collapse of party coalitions also. *It is an integral part of Mauritian culture. This is a historical fact.* Donc, ce gouvernement a 80% de chance de ne pas terminer son mandat...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Order! Order, please! It is already late, order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ganoo: ...parce que l'histoire nous démontre que sur dix gouvernements depuis l'indépendance, huit ont explosé en cours de route.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, il me reste que cinq lignes...

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, le verdict de la main invisible du destin est sans appel, ...

(Interruptions)

Je le reconnais, écoutez-moi! Le verdict de la main invisible du destin est sans appel. L'univers de la politique ressemble cruellement à un bateau ivre naviguant une mer démontée, Madame la présidente. C'est vrai, les forces de la nature nous ballottent d'un bord à l'autre.

(Interruptions)

Heureux, ceux qui, comme le PMSD, ont su braver les caprices de la nature et restent toujours au pouvoir, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Cette défaite historique pour le MMM - vous l'avez dit vous-même, c'est vrai, Madame la présidente, nous le reconnaissons - a suscité un grand désespoir à notre électorat, j'en conviens. Nous avons fait notre autocritique. Mais à Maurice, Madame la présidente, les partis politiques ne disparaissent pas. Les chefs politiques, même s'ils n'ont pas la même épaisseur que SAJ, sont toujours renés de leurs cendres comme le Phénix. On a vu, Madame la présidente, des partis politiques broyés à 60-0 sont revenus au pouvoir plusieurs fois dans l'histoire de notre pays. Donc, à notre électorat qui nous a soutenu inlassablement, nous de ce côté de la Chambre...

(Interruptions)

Je terminerai en leur disant, Madame la présidente, je citerai un grand érudit Soufi qui a dit ceci –

«Dans la profondeur de la nuit la plus ténébreuse se cache l'aube la plus radieuse. »

Merci.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

(11.42 p.m.)

Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Madam Speaker, in the name of God, most gracious and most merciful, I will like to extend my heartiest congratulation to you for your election as the Speaker of this august House. I had, during the last electoral campaign, the privilege to be with you on the same podium once in Chemin Grenier during a public meeting and I just could appreciate your strong character. Congratulations! I congratulate also the Deputy Speaker, hon. Adrien Duval, *le jeune coq combatant* for his new position and who is an icon to aspiring politicians of his generation.

Madam Speaker, in 1995, after spending 21 years in the Middle East specifically in Kuwait, coming back home I was invited to join the MSM by my good friend, late Mr Shariff Surfally, who used to be close to the Jugnauth family. He introduced me to the hon. Prime Minister, Sir, Anerood Jugnauth, for the first time and it was on the eve of the general election and I did join the party. I still remember the phrase from Sir Anerood Jugnauth who said: “you want to join and you know the odds are against us” and I joined. Today, I am proud to be under his command. I sincerely thank the Rt. hon. Prime Minister for his trust and

I extend my gratitude and thanks also to our leader, hon. Minister Pravind Jugnauth who believe in me. No doubt, he is our next Prime Minister!

I would also like to congratulate the hon. leader of the PMSD, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval and the hon. Leader of the *Mouvement Libérateur*, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo. My congratulation also goes to all the Members of the House. Finally, I am indebted to the people of Constituency No. 13 for their trust and to whom I am accountable for the next five years. They also helped us to *coupe laké sat* which was not an easy task. We did it.

Madam Speaker, I have scrutinized the ambitious but realistic Government Programme and I saw no nonsense in it. All the hon. Members here have expressed their views on the Programme for and against but still, I see not much to say more. We, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, are a team of knowledgeable professionals. Our hon. Members know that to fly from Mauritius to Zimbabwe we don't need to go to London first, contrary to our ex-Prime Minister.

Madam Speaker, I would like now to make two humble requests to complement the Government Programme. We are in 2015 yet we still have asbestos houses in Mauritius. This is unacceptable! In 1977, the use of asbestos in construction was banned internationally. In my constituency, specifically at Batimarais, we still have around 40 of these houses. Asbestos is a mineral fibre which, when you breathe in, can cause cancer. Asbestos is used in houses for separation of walls. Once a piece of the wall is broken, the fibre flies and the people inside the houses breathe in and that causes lung cancer.

Thus, I appeal to hon. Ministers concerned to have concerted effort to eradicate these houses the soonest possible because the World Health Organisation has strict rules against these existing houses now. At present, one of our main agents is suffering from cancer and I hope that it is not due to this because it is like sitting on a time bomb if these houses are not eradicated as soon as possible.

Madam Speaker, we, in *l'Alliance Lepep*, we have a vision and can anticipate future problems. I would like to address the issue of drones. Drone is that minicomputer equipped with a camera which flew over Vacoas and Quatre Bornes on 26 October, took some pictures of both public meetings and gave an upset stomach to the ex-Prime Minister, it also *dresse moustache requin* on that day because of the crowd existing there.

Madam Speaker, drones, commonly known as unmanned aerial vehicles have two uses; one is the military drones which are used by the US military in Syria, Pakistan,

Afghanistan etc. and then, there are commercial drones which are used for land surveying, crop scouting in agriculture and in the energy sector to have preventive maintenance of high rise pylons, electrical poles etc.

But when we are talking about drones - it will be a social chaos, if we do not have a proper legislation right now. For example, it is being used by DHL. It is used by Amazon to deliver books in the USA. My concern is the commercial drone. This year, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) of USA, released some commercial permits, which mean more people will be allowed to manufacture and commercialise drones. Drones are being manufactured in countries like Israel, India, South Africa, USA, China, Switzerland and many others. Their presence in the sky can cause social chaos. Imagine, you wake up or you see on your balcony, a mechanical object looking at you.

(Interruptions)

Exactly!

Therefore, I kindly appeal to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister to come up with some kind of legislation to control the influx in Mauritius. Imagine those businessmen or hawkers going to China and buy one of these drones and put it in their luggage. If ever they are stopped at the custom, they will say that it is a toy. So, it will come in. Indeed, no one can stop them. Once, we have so many of them in the country, it will be very, very difficult to control. Imagine one owner of the drone - he has one - which flies over the fuel tanks in the quay and drops a bomb on it. There are so many bad things that can be done with a drone. It can be personal attack, so we have to take legislation right now. We don't want it to happen too late. It is the right time now because in year 2015, there are many countries that are allowing these drones to be manufactured.

(Interruptions)

Exactly!

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I hope you will convey to the Rt. hon. Prime Minister my appeal to consider this issue seriously before it is too late.

Madam Speaker, during the electoral campaign, much was said regarding the necessity of the construction of a desalination plant. Thus, I would like to appeal to the hon. Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, hon. Ivan Collendavelloo for such project to be included in his long-term water policy. Why? Because we cannot remain at the whims and

caprices of nature or El Niño effect. If we do not have rain for a long time what will happen to us? We need a source where we can get the water. Desalination plant is being constructed or already existing in South Africa, Australia or even in Africa, in Senegal and even in Europe and in the Middle East.

(Interruptions)

Yes, in Rodrigues.

But on a large scale, we need one in Mauritius to cater for future lack of water.

Madam Speaker, on our road trip driving to reach the goal set in our Government Programme, it might be possible that one of us might fall asleep. Luckily, we have good co-drivers from the Opposition to give us a wakeup call.

(Interruptions)

Welcome!

Madam Speaker, I would like to conclude by referring to my favourite dictum from Mr René Descartes, a well-known French philosopher and mathematician of the 17th century and I quote –

“Cogito ergo sum”

I think, therefore, I am. Well, we, under the leadership of Sir Anerood Jugnauth, l’Alliance Lepep, we think, therefore we are the hope of this beloved nation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr Oree: Madam Speaker, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mrs Monty rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities (Mr I. Collendavelloo): Madam Speaker, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 10 March 2015 at 11.30 a.m.

Mr Bodha rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Madam Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

*At 11.54 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 10 March 2015
at 11.30 a.m.*