



SIXTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 18 JUNE 2018

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(Formed by Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth)

Hon. Pravind Kumar Jugnauth	Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs, External Communications and National Development Unit, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Ivan Leslie Collendavelloo, GCSK, SC	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Sir Anerood Jugnauth, GCSK, KCMG, QC	Minister Mentor, Minister of Defence, Minister for Rodrigues
Hon. Mrs Fazila Jeewa-Daureeawoo	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Seetanah Lutchmeenaraidoo, GCSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
Hon. Yogida Sawmynaden	Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation
Hon. Nandcoomar Bodha, GCSK	Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport
Hon. Mrs Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun	Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
Hon. Anil Kumarsingh Gayan, SC	Minister of Tourism
Dr. the Hon. Mohammad Anwar Husnoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Prithvirajsing Roopun	Minister of Arts and Culture
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Hon. Jean Christophe Stephan Toussaint	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Soomilduth Bholah	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives

Hon. Marie Roland Alain Wong Yen Cheong, MSK	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Premdut Koonjoo	Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping
Hon. Soodesh Satkam Callichurn	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training
Hon. Purmanund Jhugroo	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Marie Cyril Eddy Boissézon	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms
Hon. Dharmendar Sesungkur	Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance
Hon. Mrs Roubina Jadoo-Jaunbocus	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

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MAURITIUS

Sixth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 11 of 2018

Sitting of Monday 18 June 2018

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis at 11.30 a.m.

The National Anthem was played

(Madam Speaker in the Chair)

ANNOUNCEMENT

OBITUARY – POMPON, MR ANDRÉ

The Prime Minister: Madam Speaker, it is with deep regret that we have learnt of the demise of Mr André Pompon on Tuesday 29 May 2018, former Clerk of the National Assembly, at the age of 75. Mr Pompon was born on 11 July 1942 at Mahebourg. He attended the Baramia Government School of Rose Belle for his primary education and the Windsor College of Rose Belle for his secondary education.

At the age of 18, Mr Pompon joined the Civil Service as Clerical Officer and was posted at the District Court of Mahebourg. He was later promoted District Clerk, and afterwards as Secretary to Judge, where he had the opportunity to serve different Judges of the Supreme Court. In parallel, Mr Pompon pursued his tertiary education in Law at the University of Mauritius.

In 1971, Mr Pompon was transferred to the then Crown Law Office where he was successively Senior Law Clerk and Assistant Crown Attorney. In 1975, Mr Pompon qualified as Attorney-at-Law. He was appointed Assistant Legal Secretary in 1976. His career at the Crown Law Office culminated in his appointment as Legal Secretary. Mr Pompon was also a part-time Lecturer at the Department of Law of the University of Mauritius. At the Law Revision Unit of the Crown Law Office, Mr Pompon was extensively involved in the compilation of the Mauritius Laws.

Madam Speaker, Mr Pompon was subsequently appointed Clerk of the National Assembly on 17 September 1991. Mr Pompon served the House for 13 years with rigour and with a deep sense of professionalism, which had made him earn the respect of Members from both sides of the House. Mr Pompon was instrumental to the drafting of the Standing Orders and Rules of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and had also been closely involved in the design of the premises of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

Mr Pompon retired as Clerk of the National Assembly in September 2004. From 2004 to 2007, the House had the continued pleasure of benefitting from the wise counsel of Mr Pompon in his capacity as Adviser. Although he had severed all formal ties with the Assembly, Mr Pompon generously put his experience at the service of the Assembly whenever he was solicited to do so.

On 12 March 2005, Mr Pompon was elevated to the rank of the Officer of the Order of the Star and Key of the Indian Ocean for his commendable services in the Public Service. Madam Speaker, Mr André Pompon has served in turn the Executive and the Legislature with devotion. He will be always remembered for his kind-heartedness, generosity and for his readiness to help those in need.

Madam Speaker, may I request you to convey the deep condolences of the Assembly to his spouse Bernadette, and his two daughters Nathalie and Nadine and their respective families.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, I associate myself fully to the hon. Prime Minister's tribute to Mr André Pompon. As he stated, Mr Pompon served our country at the level of the State Law Office and at the National Assembly as Clerk. I think we will all agree that he served with devotion, great sense of duty and above all impartiality. It is with great regret that I learnt to his demise. May I request you, Madam Speaker, to convey my sincere condolences to the bereaved family.

Thank you.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, I associate myself to the tribute paid to late Mr André Pompon by the hon. Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the condolences of the Assembly.

PAPERS LAID

A Prime Minister's Office

- (a) Certificate of Urgency in respect of the Supplementary Appropriation (2017-2018) Bill 2018 (No. VIII of 2018). (In Original)
- (b) The Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure (2017-2018) of 2018.
- (c) The Finance and Audit (Rodrigues Subsidy Account) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 60 of 2018)
- (d) The Civil Aviation (Hadj 2018 Pilgrims) (Exemption) Order 2018. (Government Notice No. 61 of 2018)
- (e) The Annual Reports of the Civil Status Division for the years 2012 to 2015.
- (f) Digest of Energy and Water Statistics 2016.
- (g) Digest of Crime, Justice and Security Statistics 2016.

- (h) The Banking (Processing and Licence Fees) (Amendment) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 66 of 2018)
- (i) The audited accounts of the Prime Minister's Cyclone Relief Fund for the year ended 30 June 2017. (In Original)
- (j) Digest of Agricultural Statistics 2016.

B Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands

- (a) The Municipal Town Council of Beau Bassin/Rose Hill (Markets and Fairs) (Amendment) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 64 of 2018)
- (b) The Beau Bassin Rose Hill (Disposal of Refuse) (Amendment) Regulations 2018 (Government Notice No. 65 of 2018)

C Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport

- (a) The Road Traffic (Crop Season) Regulations 2018.
(Government Notice No. 62 of 2018)
- (b) The Annual Report of the Road Development Authority for the financial year 2015.

D Ministry of Arts and Culture

- (a) The Annual Report of the Bhojpuri Speaking Union for period 01 January 2016 to 30 June 2017.
- (b) The Annual Reports of the Mauritius Marathi Cultural Centre Trust for the periods January 2014 to December 2014 and January 2015 to December 2015.

E Ministry of Agro – Industry and Food Security

The Annual Report and financial statement of the Mauritius Meat Authority for the year ended 31 December 2015.

F Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection

- (a) The Consumer Protection (Price and Supplies Control) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 58 of 2018)
- (b) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 16) Regulations 2018.
(Government Notice No. 59 of 2018)
- (c) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations 2018.
(Government Notice No. 63 of 2018)
- (d) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations 2018.

- (Government Notice No. 69 of 2018)
(e) The Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations 2018.

(Government Notice No. 70 of 2018)

G **Ministry of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping**

- (a) The Merchant Shipping (International Safety Management) (ISM Code) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 67 of 2018)
(b) The Merchant Shipping (Certificate of Competency and Certificate of Proficiency) Regulations 2018. (Government Notice No. 68 of 2018)

H **Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms**

The Annual Report of the Public Officers' Welfare Council (POWC) for the period January 2016 to June 2017.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

PUBLIC BILLS

First Reading

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

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2018-2019) BILL 2018

(No. VII of 2018)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2018-2019) Bill 2018 (No. VII of 2018).

Question again proposed.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

(11.39 a.m.)

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr X. L. Duval): Madam Speaker, the hon. Prime Minister on Thursday last attempted in his speech to show to the nation seven pathways to supposedly transformation journey for the country; 305 paragraphs in all; a few good measures - there will always be; a lot of bad and some really ugly measures, Madam Speaker. The good, the bad, and the ugly were present on Thursday.

I will concentrate, obviously, on the bad and the ugly. I am sure quite a few people on the other side of the House will deal with whatever small amounts of good exist in the Budget. Madam Speaker, I will group my points in seven clusters also, and I will call these clusters 'Seven paths to nowhere'.

The first is the obvious economic decline of Mauritius under the present Government team; obvious economic decline when we compare to 2014 which was the last year of the previous Government, and I am going to show that quite clearly in terms of figures. I will also lay a copy on the Table of the House. Decline in economic performance under this Government, quite clear. Failure to address vital challenges faced by a number of our economic sectors; failure to address these problems which makes this Budget irresponsible. Some - in my view - misguided tax incentives have been given. That is the third cluster. Then, I am going to look at the excessive secrecy that is endangering our democracy today. This Budget also has, as I mentioned, some harmful measures, and I am going to deal with that, Madam Speaker. A lot of half-baked measures, I will also look at that - that is point 6 - and finally, failure to improve vital public services, and God knows that is prevalent in this country.

Madam Speaker, what is the context of the Budget? For me, and for many independent observers, this is the last Budget of this present Government. The last Budget for a number of reasons: Firstly, there is a provision of Rs180 m. for the Electoral Commissioner. They will make us believe that this is, in fact, for the Village Elections. Everybody knows, Madam Speaker, and I am sure you know, that Village Elections are never held a few months

before a General Election. That is always the case because that is seen as bad omen, and so it is not held. So, I don't believe we will be going for Village Elections, especially as the new law on Local Government allows the Prime Minister to postpone himself the Village Elections.

Secondly, Madam Speaker, difficult decisions have been postponed in this Budget. And we know that you can only postpone difficult decisions for a bit of time otherwise they catch up on you. So, difficult decisions are being postponed. Economic storm clouds are on the way and we have just completely ignored them, whether it's the sugar industry or the vital sectors or whether it is the more complicated issue of the ageing of the population. Completely ignored!

Thirdly, Madam Speaker, giveaways in the Budget. There are lots of giveaways here, there and everywhere, and we are not really considering how to finance them in a short-term or the long-term.

Fourthly, as I mentioned, there are many half-baked budgets which have been announced. In fact, Madam Speaker, this is not really a Budget. This is more like a communication exercise. I will illustrate what I mean quite clearly. The previous officers of the Ministry of Finance were used to be obviously officers of Ministry of Finance sitting there. Now, all these officers have gone, and these officers who are just down there on the ground floor are now filled with advisers in communication. It is my opinion that it is these advisers in communication who have actually drafted this Budget. It is not in an economic statement because it does not deal with the issues of the economy, it is a communication exercise so that you can engineer claps in this House during Budget Speech. But the real engineering or re-engineering of our economic sectors to face the challenges of the future are nowhere to be seen in this Budget.

Madam Speaker, it is what I believe to be a *budget trompe-l'oeil*. When you look at it on the first, it is not too bad, but when you go deep into it, then you are very, very worried because, as I mentioned, it ignores economic reality. Why a *budget trompe-l'oeil*? It is because of the way that this Budget is being financed. How is it being financed, Madam Speaker? Firstly, by off-balance sheet debt, Rs14 billion in the coming financial year, and I will deal with that in a moment. Grants from Overseas, Rs8 billion. That is in total Rs22 billion, grants from Overseas and off-balance sheet debt. Then, if we look at the figures in

detail, there is something which will surprise you, VAT and Customs Duty increasing by 10% from one year to the next.

Now, perhaps you need to be an ex-Minister of Finance to know this. How do VAT and Customs Duty increase by 10%, one year to the next when, in fact, growth, even by the optimistic figures of the Prime Minister, will only provide 4%? Where is the 6% difference, Madam Speaker? The 6% difference is found in inflation and depreciation of the rupee. A majority of the VAT is picked up at the point of entry at the Customs. So, obviously, it is Customs Duty. The more the rupee depreciates - and we have seen how the Bank of Mauritius is spending billions of rupees of taxpayers' money, incurring a loss last year - the Bank of Mauritius - of Rs5.6 billion in its operations, of taxpayers' money in 2017. This money is used basically to depreciate the rupee and to take care of the excess liquidity that arises from that.

That is, therefore, the reason why you can balance this Budget because the hon. Prime Minister - and he cannot say no - is counting on a huge increase in VAT and Customs Duty, which we know will hit everybody because VAT is generally on everything that we buy. That is how this Budget relies heavily on inflation and depreciation of rupee to balance the books of Government plus, of course, the off-balance sheet financing.

But let us deal first, Madam Speaker, in terms of the declining economic performance of Mauritius. Declining! Because, very cleverly, the hon. Prime Minister's team, the advisers have picked on figures which show almost everywhere an improving economic situation. Improving from what? Improving from the dire economic situation of last year! No more! All of it is what? 2017 being better than 2016! That is what it shows! But the real test, the real proof of the pudding: has the economic miracle happened? Obviously not! But have they even done better than the last year of the previous Government, where I had the honour to be Minister of Finance? I have waited a few years because I did not want to take it up all the time; I wanted to see a track record.

Let us see, Madam Speaker, and I will, with your permission - this is my own work; I have done some of my own graphs. If you just look at the inflation, I just mentioned inflation, in 2014, 3.2%; latest inflation figures April 2018, 5%. Maybe it will fall a little bit till the end of this month. The public sector debt is 60.7% in 2014 against nearly 63% now. That is the official figure, Madam Speaker. Here, I am really worried.

There is one country, we all remember, that hid its public sector debt. That country was called Greece. I am not saying we are quite there, but we are on the way to Greece. Greece hid its public sector debt so much that when it really hit the books, the country went bankrupt. Bankrupt! And it had to beg on the international stage for money! Just to be able to pay civil servants, it was not even able to do that. So, Madam Speaker, what is the situation? Everybody knows in Mauritius that the public sector debt is being understated for many reasons. Firstly, Betamax! Rs5 billion with Rs400,000 accumulating in terms of interest every day of the year. Rs400,000! We have lost the first case. What does prudence tell us? I am an accountant myself. Prudence tells us that you have to account for it, you have to provide for it, but you know, in most probability, you have to pay for it. No way is Betamax seen anywhere.

But there are also, Madam Speaker, large amounts borrowed by ex-BAI. From where? From the Commercial Banks and from the Bank of Mauritius! Rs3.5 m. one way, Rs6.5 m. the other way. That is what was given here in this House. Where is this debt shown in the accounts, in the public debt? It does not show because it is gone from the Bank of Mauritius, it is gone from the private banks. But, as at today, we all realise that, at the end of the day, it is the taxpayer who is going to have to pay to bail out these ex-BAI companies. They have borrowed and at least no money seems to be coming their way.

Finally, Madam Speaker, there is, of course, all these very - not clever, I would say - stupid, silly financing of Metro Express, all these companies, all these projects, by a letter of comfort which has never been disclosed. An instrument of debt which we have signed with India, etc., and others, which has never been disclosed, it has always been kept hidden, and what we understand is that Government does not intend to bring into public debt any of that money that is being borrowed in the name of the taxpayers to finance these projects, Madam Speaker. I don't believe that they should be cut off-balance sheet.

Therefore, I am going to do something very rare, I am going to do that nevertheless, Madam Speaker. I am going to take the trouble of writing to the IMF. I will write to the IMF. The name of the person I am going to write to is Mr Abebe Selassie. He is the Head of the Africa region of the IMF. I am going to write to him. I am going to expose to him my understanding because it is all hidden, we are not sure any of us of what is happening. I am going to expose to him what I, as Leader of the Opposition, think is actually being done to hide the real amount of public debt in Mauritius. At least, he cannot say that he is not aware

and I will wait for his reply, because I will get a reply. Then we will be better advised as to whether or not, and I think, Government has been systematically hiding the real amount of public debt in Mauritius, Madam Speaker.

But you can take other figures, private investment falling from 14.4% in 2014 to 12.6% in 2018. FDI also falling, and so on and so forth, Madam Speaker! I am going to table at the end of my speech a few tables just to show clearly the deteriorating economic performance of Mauritius in almost every vital economic sector in Mauritius, including job creation.

I am not going to go into it, Madam Speaker, whether it is public investment, manufacturing, textile, agriculture, quantity of fish exported, deficit on current account, savings rate, total exports, all these, Madam Speaker, have deteriorated under this Government. Ease of Doing Business, which is a very famous index by the World Bank, we have fallen from 20th to 49th in 2017, and I think now in 2018, we are back to 25th. Heritage foundation, economic freedom index, we have fallen from 8th to 21st in the world under this team, Madam Speaker.

The exception, of course, is unemployment. There, we know it is a subjective index. Nevertheless, it shows some improvement. We won't forget though the thousands and thousands of civil servants who have been recruited by this Government with no apparent increase in the quality of services provided. The last Cabinet Communiqué of Friday shows, I think, 5,600 civil servants recruited in the last 12 months or so. That is only last Friday. So, Madam Speaker, there has been a fall in unemployment, subjective fall, but a lot of it is, in fact, recruitment of civil servants themselves.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, you will not be surprised when I tell you that economic growth has fallen from the figure of 3.6% in 2014 to 3.5% last year. Not 3.9%, because if you take economic growth as real prices, which Statistics Mauritius has given, it has fallen, it was corrected by 0.3%. It was 3.8% and the latest figures, even the Bank of Mauritius publishes its figures, economic growth for 2017 was downgraded as far as real GDP at basic prices are concerned, from 3.8% to a paltry 3.5%, less therefore than the same Statistics Mauritius gave for economic performance, economic growth in 2014, less, culmination of all this. And, of course, we will never reach 3.9% for this current financial year or 4.1%, in fact, best estimates for 2017-2018 is about 3.6% growth. That is the best estimate, Madam Speaker. Only construction shows considerable increase, but we know there has been a surge in public

investment projects, with a large number of overseas contractors, meaning that the effect on our economy is less.

But, Madam Speaker, one thing perhaps I want to take is poverty. What happened, in fact, to poverty? And now I will also quote the Household Budget Survey 2017. I will also quote this and I will quote it on page 2, and this is what it says on poverty –

“The proportion of households below the relative poverty line, set at half of median household income per adult equivalent, was estimated at 9.4% in 2017, same as for 2012.”

That is not me, that is the Household Budget Survey saying. Same level! Nothing has been done according to the Household Budget Survey that has had an impact on poverty in Mauritius - full stop - and this was done for the year to December 2017. So, this is a fresh report, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, we know that the Budget is a three basic objectives. One is, improve economic prosperity; the other one is, improve public services, and then the third one is to redistribute wealth. That is the three basic pillars of a Budget.

So, I am going to take the first issue, that is, trying to ensure some economic prosperity for the country and, therefore, how has this Budget dealt with the vital challenges that are being faced by our country? Madam Speaker, you were yourself Permanent Secretary, I understand, at the Ministry of Agriculture, so you know well what I am talking about when I mention sugar. When I mention sugar, this is what – 50% fall in the price of sugar. When you add other revenues from *mélasse*, bagasse, etc., the stark truth is, it is still lower than the cost of production for the planters, still lower than the cost for sugarcane planters.

We are told there is going to be a Ministerial Committee that is being appointed. But, Madam Speaker, where is the real scandal? The real scandal is that this is not new. This is not something new that you are appointing a Ministerial Committee yesterday for tomorrow, at the end of 2016, that is, when sugar prices began to fall. They became dramatic in the first half of 2017, a year ago. The fall became dramatic. I even had a Press Conference in July 2017, where I mentioned the dramatic situation of sugar.

What did the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry do? Not much! He appointed a Committee. He allowed the Committee to sit for one full year, and then when the results

came out, there was a *tollé* in the country and very quickly the report was taken back and some face-saving measures; now, the Ministerial Committee. This is irresponsible, Madam Speaker. As I mentioned, the key point in sugar is not that there is a problem. Everybody realises there is a problem. The key point in sugar is that the problem has been there for a long time. The problem has been there at least 12 months and more.

If you sit on your hands for 12 months as a Government in a sector as crucial and as vital as sugar, so vital for our social fabric, employing at least four thousand people directly on a full-time basis, if you sit on your hands for that long, then there is no other way than to say it is an irresponsible Government, and now we are going to have a committee. And this Budget prepared by Advisers in Communication does not deal with sugar. The only thing it says is the easiest thing: 'We will put a tax on imported sugar'. I understand that a letter has been issued by the sugar producers saying that there will be no immediate increase in the price of sugar on the local market pending a change in circumstances.

The hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security is talking after me, perhaps he can elaborate on this. Can he please table this letter that, I understand, has been received, which commits the sugar industry not to increase prices? Because, Madam Speaker, an increase in local sugar prices here will have dramatic consequences on inflation. It will wipe off even the Rs30 given on the LPG for a household. It will wipe it off! Because sugar goes into almost everything that we consume and it has a dramatic increase and we are talking about 80% Customs duty. We are talking about a lot of money, a lot of inflation from this measure. But based on the commitment of the sugar industry not to increase prices for the moment, what will happen in three months' time when circumstances will change? The price will not always stay like that. So, I would like the hon. Minister to table that letter so that people will know what commitment has been or has not been made. And if MCIA was really efficient, was really fulfilling its job, would we need all these committees? It is the MCIA's job to have told us what to do and you see again the failure of our institutions to deal with our real problems.

Another issue, Madam Speaker, completely ignored by this Government, is the fish processing industry. Here, we are talking about 8,000 jobs, Madam Speaker. You know, I am sure, as I do, that last year the main factories were closed for two months because of a lack of fish. Why? Because there is now a quota on yellowfin tuna and the catch has been reduced by 15%. So, obviously, with less fish there is less fish to process. There is a lot of other

complications to do with that with regard to timing of the catch, etc. But I would have expected, Madam Speaker, a responsible Minister of Finance to deal with sugar, to deal with fish processing. There are 8,000 jobs involved, Rs20 billion of exports and not a word in the Budget. Not a word, Madam Speaker!

Whereas, in fact, it ought to have been done by the hon. Minister of Ocean Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. He ought to have taken his suitcase and gone to the European Union and negotiate there with the Minister of External Affairs and, maybe, even the Prime Minister, negotiate there to put some order into this industry to ensure that fishermen, who fish in our waters, deliver all their catch to Mauritius. At least, that could be done instead of exporting the catch elsewhere. There is real urgency, but total disregard of the real problems in the fish processing industry. That is the absolute truth! I hope that you will come out, *gouvernement pou casse sommeil*, and that we can deal with this issue. Because one profitable huge firm has made a large loss last year and it has told everybody who wanted to hear, any further loss and it is leaving Mauritius, Madam Speaker, and that will have the effect that it will have on the economy. We are talking, as I mentioned, of billions of rupees of exports.

Thirdly, Madam Speaker - I have got just four sectors I will look at - textiles. It is a long-suffering sector, clearly a sunset industry now, declining exports. It once employed 90,000 people and now not even 50,000 people employed. Exports have fallen by more than Rs3 billion in three years. Major companies are delocalising. They are leaving Mauritius. They are going to Madagascar - I won't mention the name, hon. Soodhun knows the name well - leaving for Madagascar! Others are leaving for Bangladesh, etc. What are we doing? Sitting on our hands! Nothing is being done! Nothing in this Budget!

We are creating industrial parks for people who are leaving Mauritius? They don't need the industrial parks! They are leaving. Thank you very much, bye bye! So, what is happening? Nothing has been offered. We need to increase labour productivity, encourage investment in technology. Do you know how much FDI came through last year in 2017 in the whole manufacturing sector? Rs100 m. compared to nearly Rs.1 billion in 2014! I tell you, Madam Speaker, it is surprising maybe to you, but every single economic indicator is in red compared to 2014! Every single one, except as I mentioned.

So, Madam Speaker, I don't know why, for instance, the graduate employment is not also offered this free labour, is not also offered to the textile industry because God knows that

they need it. So, we need to give them encouragement. We need to support innovation and all that is being offered is new property development, Madam Speaker. This Government actually loves property development!

In tourism, Madam Speaker, I had the honour to serve for many years, three times as Minister of Tourism. It was once a thriving industry. In 2015, I was Minister of Tourism, 11% growth; in 2016, 11% growth! In 2017, crash, 5% growth! Not crashed enough - well, they will crash more this year. This year, 2.8% growth, stagnation in the tourism arrivals. Major markets at Reunion have shown 10% fall, Madam Speaker. China, in May, I am talking about, 12 % fall; UK stagnation; Italy 24% fall. And this despite a vast and expensive campaign that we have had on CNN, BBC, Eurosport! We have all seen it. Vast campaign! And what do you get? Stagnation at the UK, at least, and 2.8% growth! That is the result of what has happened.

The revamping of Mahebourg, fair enough! How will it be done by PPP? I don't know. But still, let's say we are revamping Mahebourg, but Mahebourg is not a tourism hub! Where the tourists are going to come from? They are going to come from Grand' Baie in all the traffic, not even by the Metro Express, to Mahebourg? It is not serious! If we want to have a tourist village, we must have it where the tourists are. We don't have them to drive up and down for a tourist village. But, at least, it is a little step in the right direction.

But what is the real problem of the tourism industry probably, Madam Speaker, is that in Mauritius some people believe that we are a resort destination. We have hotels. The hotels are a bit like stand-alone. Once you get there you are in paradise. But, as soon as you step outside, whether it is next to my home in Merville or whether everywhere else, the country is simply dirty. There is so much waste lying around. There is so much rubbish even on our beaches, Madam Speaker. It is a disaster. The environment is a disaster. Madam Speaker, I am worried for the direction that the tourism industry is taking. Now, in all this stagnation, what happens to the MTPA budget, the main organism to promote our country? The MTPA budget has been cut by Rs38 m.

I do not know if the Minister of Tourism has done something to upset the Prime Minister. But why has the MTPA budget been cut by Rs38 m., whilst he can easily argue that tourism numbers are stagnating and, as the rupee is depreciating, it would mean another fall in its purchasing power overseas? So, we are going to see a restriction, Madam Speaker, in promotion activities this year with the fall in the MTPA budget. But what needs to be

given, Madam Speaker, what needs to be done is to treat Mauritius, not as a resort destination, but as an island destination; that people come and visit our island, Mauritius. And that means what? That means a proper environment; that means protecting our beaches from erosion. That is something extremely important. Also, Madam Speaker, massive attention to law and order, security and, of course, providing some entertainment to our tourists. Madam Speaker, therefore, I have dealt with these four sectors, which I think are facing real challenges and which have hardly been touched upon or not touched upon at all in the Budget.

I am going to deal very quickly, Madam Speaker, with some of his misguided tax incentives. The really weird one is a tax incentive to invest in Africa. That, I really do not understand. We are going to give tax reductions, tax breaks to Mauritian companies that are going to engage in property speculation in Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire. Why give tax breaks for overseas, when instead we know we need to encourage our construction industry here? And I will tell you why I think it is weird. Because I have learnt, Madam Speaker, that Senegal has recently removed all the tax incentives in its own country for construction in its special economic zone. So, Senegal has taken away tax incentives for investment in its own country and we, in Mauritius, are giving incentives for people who want to invest there. That, Madam Speaker, is beyond my understanding.

I hope the Prime Minister or the advisers in communication will tell us why we are doing that, because taxable income is taxable income. It is important to get money to run the country, Madam Speaker. So, I do not understand this. And then, there are all these numerous eight-year tax holidays, which were started by hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo some years ago. It does not make sense anymore. It was fine when we were on 35%-40% tax rates. Everybody was happy to get an eight-year tax holiday. Nowadays, 15% tax, nobody cares about the eight-year tax holiday. And it is pointless just to offer eight-year tax holiday every year like this. I do not understand. So, it is all just misguided, Madam Speaker. Tax incentives have done their time. But the really weird one, as I mentioned, is the Africa one.

Madam Speaker, I am going to come to a very important issue; this question of excessive secrecy nowadays, which I think is endangering our democracy. I am very serious about this; endangering our democracy with excessive secrecy. We have seen how no one, not even in this House, we have been able to obtain information, really, really important

information, what is happening to our country and what is happening to the finances of our country.

We tried to get some information on Agalega. We do not even know what the project is; we do not know what the cost is; we do not know what is going to be done there, and the Government has steadfastly refused to divulge what agreement has been reached, what contract has been reached with the Indian Authorities as to the use of Agalega. We are a Sovereign Nation; the people of Mauritius are entitled to know what agreement has been made in its name, full stop.

The Indian line of credit. Who knows what is really the situation, apart from a selected few in Government? Nobody knows what has been taken, how it is going to be repaid, what are the conditions and what has been guaranteed by Government. Metro Express goes into that, Madam Speaker, the Larsen & Toubro. Did they publish, did they divulge the contract with Larsen & Toubro? No! We have not seen the contract with Larsen & Toubro. We are told that it is fixed price, but we do not know what is fixed and what is unfixed. That is the situation with Larsen & Toubro, Madam Speaker. And we continue like that. By the way, on the Metro Express, on the Indian Line of Credit, I mentioned last year in my speech that it was a mistake to borrow in US dollars. Firstly, because it increases our excess liquidity and the Bank of Mauritius incurs huge losses to mop it up and secondly, because of depreciation in the rupee. Now, we are a year forward. How much has the rupee depreciated in that one year? 5%, Madam Speaker. So, our debt is increasing by 5%, that is, millions upon millions of rupees that you will need to add to the debt of Mauritius because the debt is in dollars. That is the true situation.

Madam Speaker, coming to the Safe City project, which I think is more dangerous than even the biometric card that was there before, it is being financed by Mauritius Telecom. What is the real cost? Some information has been given, but not much. What is the guarantee that this Government has given? We do not know. Excessive secrecy, Madam Speaker. And then, I will go on, Madam Speaker, to the construction of 6,800 houses, apparently announced *en grande fanfare* on Thursday. 6,800 houses on 21 sites! We do not know what these 21 sites are. Do you know though that it is going to be apparently constructed - if it is ever constructed - by a company called Poly Technologies? What is Poly Technologies?

Poly Technologies is a Chinese company. It has been created, according to the internet, by the People's Liberation Army. So, a company, Poly Technologies, created by the

People's Liberation Army, has apparently signed a MoU with the Government of Mauritius, of which nobody knows anything about, to construct 6,800 houses, apparently. But the good thing is that we know that these houses will never come. I know a good thing, but, unfortunately, probably these houses will never come.

We can go on like this, Madam Speaker, with the National Day Celebrations Ltd created to finance the very expensive Independence Day Celebration, CEB (Green Energy), CEB FiberNet, CEB facilities, and the new one, National Water Development Company. But then, Madam Speaker, I am always going to fight for transparency and I am going to deal with something in a moment, and that is the Mangalore contract, Mangalore refineries for oil. Because I think that you cannot continue in a shroud of secrecy all the time, doing things we do not know whether they are in the interest of the consumers or in the interest of Ministers.

So, Madam Speaker, I am going to deal with that in a moment. But the big thing in common with all this secrecy is what? It involves billions of rupees of taxpayers' money, billions of rupees of loans, contracts given in an opaque manner, most of the time, as with Mangalore, without any competition - most of the time, 99% of the time, given without any competition - and that is, Madam Speaker, the basic things in common with all this incredible, this unacceptable secrecy. As I mentioned, Madam Speaker, in a democracy, accountability is the very basis of that democracy. Transparency is essential to combat corruption. Competition is essential to obtain value for money. These are basic truths that do not even need to be repeated, which I am repeating today, and this Government has flouted all along, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, before I come to petroleum, I am going to deal with some of the harmful measures that I think this Government has taken. Firstly, so far as our poor fishermen are concerned, they fight day in, day out; wake up at 3.00 a.m. in the morning. It is cold, it is wet, and it does not matter. They go on their little pirogues, little *canots* and find fish for us. They have been complaining for years of unjust competition by foreign boats fishing along the shores of Mauritius. They have been complaining for a long time; it is nothing new. They are finding it harder and harder to make ends meet. Apart from an icebox, what has this Government offered to them? Death! The end of their livelihood, robbing them, Madam Speaker, of their right to feed their family, to earn a decent living, to pay for the education of their children! The fishermen are rightly mad, Madam Speaker, at this announcement - and I fully support this anger - that, henceforth, overseas fishing boats will be able to fish near

shore, destroying, Madam Speaker, whatever fish is left and destroying the livelihood of these poor fishermen. I hope, here, that the Prime Minister will not proceed with this measure. It is really very, very harmful for our citizens.

Madam Speaker, I am going to deal now with housing, construction of houses. A few weeks ago, the hon. Minister of Housing told us that all the houses built by this present Government - only 268, that is the figure - have been delivered to poor families. Only 268! Another 300 also have been constructed, but not delivered. Hon. Soodhun knows it well, it is true! 268 by the PQ answered a few weeks ago. So, we are talking about 600 houses in all, constructed over a three and a half year period and now we are being told that there will be another 6,800. My problem is this, and it also deals with the houses that are supposedly being constructed, apart from the 6,800, 3,041. My problem is the quality of life. How people will live in these houses?

At the moment, we are constructing stand-alone houses. The previous Government regenerated them. At some time, by this present Government, since it had been done away with, it was that we were not going to construct huge ghettos. We would construct small plots of 60 to 100 houses maximum because the more you construct, the worse the living conditions are. We have seen that in Camp Levieux and we have seen that in so many places, in La Tour Koenig etc. It is almost impossible for a decent family to live there.

Now, we have reversed this policy because the 6,800 houses that are going to be constructed are on 200 sites also. So, obviously, on average, it is going to be 100 houses, not even houses, apartments - I will talk on that in a moment - being constructed on a site which, immediately, Madam Speaker, is becoming an environment in which people do not want to live in, and that is the problem. So, we need to reverse that. We need to cancel that. We need to return to the previous regime of constructing small number of houses. I built a *Cité* in Grand' Baie, *Cité Lumière*. Nobody hears about it because it is small and it is well integrated. We should replicate that all over Mauritius. Yes, let us built the 10,000 houses; we do not build them in ghettos that people would not want to live in, in the future. That is the first issue.

The second issue is that we are always building up to recently stand-alone houses. Because it is high-rise houses, whether it is the Malaysian flat or whatever, have been a disaster. Mauritians are not used to live in high-rise houses, they cannot adapt and they become *invivables* very quickly. What is being proposed, - *voilà le développement* - same

thing, back to the old system, ground plus three, without elevators, I presume. Imagine how these people will live in.

So, we are going backwards in terms of the type of accommodation that is being constructed now. We are constructing apartments and no more the stand-alone houses and they are going to be regrouped in large numbers. As I have mentioned, in the 3,000 which are supposedly being constructed at the moment, 656 houses are in Dagotièrè. Imagine how that will be in a few years' time, 350 houses at Wooton, 206 at St Julien, Mare d'Albert etc. This is not a pathway to transformation, it is a pathway, Madam Speaker, to hell and that is not what we should offer to our people. We all know that these high-rise buildings are no longer the norm anywhere. What people go for now is mixed housing, middle-class housing coupled with housing for the low-income group.

Madam Speaker, I am going to come now to the very thorny issue of passports and citizenship. As if this is the only way now that we are going to get money is to sell the jewels in the crown. Let us just sell the country itself and money will come! That is the only way it seems that Government thinks it is going to reverse this terrible trend. There has been quite rightly, Madam Speaker, *un grand tollé*, a lot of opposition to this measure: passports for sale. To whom? We have seen the record of the Government here, in terms of Know Your Client (KYC), in terms of vetting of people where we have had notorious - notorious in English, not *notoires* - international crooks, if I may say so, like Alvaro coming and getting the red carpet treatment in Mauritius. Is this what is going to happen to our passports?

Let me remind you, Madam Speaker, that when a country gives visa-free travel to Mauritians, it gives it on the basis of its assessment of Mauritians, that we are a developed society and that we have a type of citizen who is not going to create trouble. We do not have terrorists. We do not have all that. We do not have, hopefully, international crooks. We do have a few probably, but they are well-known.

So, this is the type of society we are and when Europe gives us visa-free entrance, UK, India and most of Africa etc., there is a reason for that. We put this in danger when we start selling *à tour de bras* our passports. I don't know whether it is legal or not, there is a question mark. I read that the State Law Office has not even been consulted on this issue in today's papers. Madam Speaker, extreme care must be taken here so that our reputation is not ruined overseas and the visa-free travel that is given to our citizens, which benefits us greatly

in terms of ease of travel and in terms of cost of travel, are not taken away by countries merely because we need US\$500,000. That is one thing, Madam Speaker.

But what is even more harmful to our society is the sale of our citizenship, making us become foreigners in our own country, Madam Speaker. The implications are huge and have been rightly identified all over the country. One particular bad effect will be on our cost of land and houses. These people who come, they are going to have not millions, but billions of rupees to spend. They will have to recoup their investment of Rs35 m. when they bought the nationality. We know that already foreigners can come and stay in Mauritius if they buy an IRS, a RES or a PDS.

So, what is the point of having the nationality? The point of having the nationality for a foreigner is to be able to buy property. That is the reason where you have nationality otherwise they can stay as they like. The reason is to buy property. I can imagine, Madam Speaker, a huge rise in property prices as a result of this sale of citizenship. Obviously, it is not going to be one or two passports, one or two citizenships sold. That will have no effect on the Budget and will be pointless. So, if we put it in the Budget and we put amounts expected, that is, Rs100 m. from that this year, it is that we are intending to sell hundreds upon hundreds in the future of these passports and of these citizenships.

I was Minister of Finance, there were issues developing, I remember, in the region of Tamarin. There was difficult integration at that time between South Africans and Mauritians. For some time we had to stop giving the first IRS, etc, Work Permits and Occupation Permits to South Africans because there was some sort of stress between these two communities in the West of the country. That is the past. Now, Madam Speaker, we are going to open it even more and I can imagine that there will be associated social problems, integration problems relating to that. Associated problems with property cost and, Madam Speaker, we can foresee a time when property in Mauritius, at least desirable property in Mauritius, will become too expensive for Mauritians. These people have billions and billions of rupees and they will buy *à tour de bras* and we will be left out. Hon. Sinatambou used to say that before. Already, Madam Speaker, most of the lands of Mauritius are owned by a few families, the rest of us have to scramble for whatever is left and now we are going to introduce a whole new element.

There is something else also, Madam Speaker, which is dangerous. I remember again when I was Minister of Finance. Did you know, Madam Speaker, that we nearly lost a local

Sugar Estate to an overseas buyer? Nearly lost! Because he came in with a hostile takeover and was going to take one of our biggest Sugar Estates! We were able to stop this transaction in part because he was a foreigner and he needed permission. But now maybe if a person comes back, he buys the passport first, he buys the citizenship first, then he buys 1, 2, 3, 4 Sugar Estates, and what happens then? We are opening a gate, Madam Speaker, maybe a floodgate which we do not need to open at this point in time.

Madam Speaker, therefore, it is as if the only thing the Government has thought of during the last three and a half years apart from macadamia nuts is to sell - the country is really going nuts, Madam Speaker. And of macadamia nuts, we have not heard of them in this Budget at all. Maybe he will tell us because I know there was a programme on TV the other day just to show that macadamia nuts are happening.

Madam Speaker, I am going to talk about the Mogas and diesel issue because I was told that my motion had fallen by itself. Now, maybe it has not fallen by itself, but still I am going to take the opportunity to talk about it now. Madam Speaker, briefly I am going to talk about it. Taxes are excessive on diesel and Mogas, *essence*; they went up on 15 May by Rs3.80 for diesel, Rs4.70 for petrol and it is fallen now by half of the initial increase, which ought not to have happened anyway.

Madam Speaker, after the election, hon. Lutchmeenaraidoo, Minister of Finance and Economic Development brought in this massive increase of Rs3 in the Build Mauritius Fund which brought in billions of rupees for the Government. But I always understood that when the prices were going to rise again, this massive tax that had been introduced would be taken away on the basis, Madam Speaker, not to overburden the economy and our fellow citizens.

This has never been taken away. What happens now is, in fact, that part of the subsidies that were being stolen anyway – I will come to that - have now been reduced and Government is stealing less subsidies now than previously. That is all that has happened basically. On the international markets, Madam Speaker, Brent oil has fallen substantially from a height of \$80 some weeks ago to \$72 today. A fall, Madam Speaker, of 10%! Easily verifiable by anybody who cares! But by some trick of calculation, you will notice that the price structure, instead of showing a fall in the price of Mogas and gas oil, shows an increase for Mogas at least of 693 to a new figure of 730 increase in the price whilst the price on the international market, as I have mentioned, has fallen by 10%. There is a way of doing it, there is some trick, I know, that has been used, otherwise it cannot be so. And the responsible thing

that the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development should have done was to recognise this fall, the trend of falling prices on overseas markets.

The second thing, Madam Speaker, is the whole question of the subsidy, as I mentioned. Previously, Madam Speaker - and I am happy I raised it in the PNQ - the subsidy, the amount which was being added - let me put it this way - to petrol was Mogas was Rs2.70 per litre. Of that, I have shown very clearly, only R1 was being used to subsidise flour, rice and LPG, and the rest was being kept aside by STC so much so that, at its June 2017 accounts, the STC showed that it had an excess of Rs1.2 billion in its bank account representing excess subsidy that it had charged to the petrol account on the litres of petrol, of *essence*, Mogas and diesel and had not used to reduce prices of these three items, flour, gas and rice.

That is the situation, Madam Speaker. That was in June 2017. Almost a year has gone since. We can imagine that maybe now about Rs2 billion is being kept by STC representing excess subsidies charged, but not used. And, Madam Speaker, that money is sufficient to give free of charge for one year. Free of charge they can give the LPG; they can give free of charge if they wanted, the flour, etc. to the consumers. So much money has been accumulated by the State Trading Corporation in the name of the poor consumers. But, Madam Speaker, all that this new price structure has done is reduced by that R1, the over excess subsidy charge, there ought to have been no amount at all in the STC price structure, contribution through subsidy because sufficient amounts had been ordered by the STC and there was no need at all for any addition in the price here.

Madam Speaker, I am going to deal with this item, excessive secrecy, which, I think, is harmful to our democracy and that in relation specifically to petroleum products. Why are not we told at what cost, at what price, we buy our petrol? Why? We all have to pay for it; it is a monopoly, the STC. We are entitled to know what price we are paying for it. Since 2006, we have been - that is 12 years ago - renewing on a three-year basis a contract with Mangalore Refineries. What is Mangalore Refineries? It is a Government company, but it is not a charity, Madam Speaker. Mangalore Refineries is not a charity; its Directors, its Managers have to make profits. They have to make profits and they make a lot of profits, about Rs2 billion worth of profits last year - Mangalore Refineries. So, we are dealing with a profit-making company. We are not dealing with a charitable institution. That is the first point.

Now, Madam Speaker, I am going to table the agreement with Mangalore which I have recently obtained. This agreement with Mangalore gives the conditions on which we buy our petrol. It is not the last one. It is the previous one, but it is basically the same I understand. Of course, when we buy from Mangalore, although we are big buyer, they don't just give it to us at the market price. We must pay a premium. We must pay an amount additional to Mangalore to refine it, etc. It is normal. But what about the quantum? Should it be as it is at present on moto spirit, Mogas, USD30.25 per metric ton or should it be less? That is the question. I cannot tell you whether it should be less. I cannot tell you whether we have got a good price.

We know at the time we signed this, there was a lot of pressure coming from India to sign this. And so, if it was that profitable to Mauritius, would we get pressure? That's another issue. But let us say, Madam Speaker, that we say: "Okay, USD30.25 is what we pay as a premium for Mogas". And you will see there are lots of other premiums for other items that we buy. How do we know that it is the best price? There is only one way to know, Madam Speaker, and I am going to ask that for the next round of negotiations. We open it to a competitive international bid as we do when we buy flour to check whether Moulin de la Concorde is giving us a good price. Nothing new in that! We must have an international bid to know whether consumers in Mauritius are paying the right price for the petrol products or whether they are not paying the right price, Madam Speaker, because I have been told – I have checked myself – by international firms in Mauritius that they can supply at a cheaper price to Mauritius - and Mauritius comes first - than the premium that is being applied by Mangalore.

So, Madam Speaker, it is high time after 12 years that we have - and I will table this, Madam Speaker - a competitive environment, a competitive situation. Too much secrecy is harmful to our country and I don't know why so many things now are secret, what is perhaps even worst, Madam Speaker. In December 2017, when there was this emergency, we were no longer able to buy because the ship was stuck in the port in India. Then we went to buy three or four consignments around the world. That price that we bought we were also told that it is a State secret. It is a matter of security and we are not able to know at what price the STC went to buy this emergency shipment. Why? There can only be two reasons. Firstly, it was cheaper. That is possible. We bought, I don't know, from Saudi Arabia. I don't know what my friend did there, but it may be that we bought cheaper. The hon. Member is smiling and he is saying 'yes'.

(Interruptions)

The hon. Member is saying 'yes'. We bought cheaper under emergency than we would have bought under normal long-term contract. If that is the case that would be a real scandal. And so, the hon. Minister has a duty towards this nation to reveal what is the price that we bought under emergency procedures. If it is much more expensive, then obviously we can say maybe something happened for it to be much more expensive. But, Madam Speaker, you understand my point. The point is that there must be transparency. These things cannot be hidden from the consumer. You hide it, you are open to corruption. You are open to malpractice. You are open to favouritism and you destroy democracy. This is, Madam Speaker, my point. So, we are going to renew it next year. I have tabled a copy of the agreement, and we hope, Madam Speaker, that there will be more transparency. There will be better measures to protect our purchasing power.

Madam Speaker, I am going to go a bit faster. Half-baked measures, Madam Speaker, employment of youth! Rs1 billion is being spent. I understand again, like for the passports no consultation with the State Law Office, for the employment of youth, no consultation with HRDC. They learnt it on TV as we did. I set up the original Youth Employment Programme. I am very proud of it. 27,000 people have been trained and employed since that time. The great majority of these people, at least at my time, 95% were kept on by the industry, by the employer after the initial one year or two years of training. That is fantastic, Madam Speaker! But I don't agree that we should provide employees for free to people, whoever they are. I don't agree that we should provide employees for free.

Imagine, Madam Speaker, suddenly I am an SME, you send me a graduate for free, Rs14,000. I don't have to pay anything. If he lives next door, I don't have to pay anything. Am I going to supervise him? Am I going to check if he is gainfully employed? It is for free. I can take one, I can take 10. Taxpayers pay. There is no contribution from the employer. It does not make sense. The employer will surely be getting something from it and he must be made to pay. Provide like the YEP, Madam Speaker! The YEP, half was being paid by the Government, at least half by the employer, maybe more than half by the employer, graduates and non-graduates. That, Madam Speaker, was the key of the success because when you pay for something, you take care that it works. You take care that you have worked for the person. You take care that you supervise the person.

So, Madam Speaker, this whole jamboree, Madam Speaker, of providing Rs1 billion, 3,000 people here, 1,000 people there, so many thousands there, most of them for free to the private sector is not a good measure. The private sector must be made to contribute for workers that are provided to them. But the real issue, Madam Speaker, why we have to put a billion rupees is not the fault of X, Y, Z, except the fault of the Ministry of Education.

The whole issue in Mauritius - I keep repeating it, hopefully, someone will listen to me one day - is the Tertiary Education sector, that is, the public sector, the public universities. A real disaster! Getting worse and worse! The University of Technology, Mauritius lost 3,000 places in the rankings. It lost 3,000 places in one year! 3,000 places! It was 7,000th. It is now 10,000th in the world. In Africa, it loses 100 places. It was 229th - not a lot to be proud of - it is now, I think, 330th or something.

So, there has been a constant degrading of our Tertiary Education sector under this present Government. And nothing, not a single word in the Budget! Why do we have to pay for the graduates to retrain? Why is there such a high record level of youth unemployment? It is because our universities, our vocational training centres are not doing the work. Otherwise, we would not need this retraining or this career guidance. All this is not working! Inexistent! So, the first thing that the Government should have done – three and half years, it is too late because we are on the eve of the elections - was to look at tertiary education.

The great injustice that is being done to our youth is that they are being sent to universities and then God knows what happens after. They are unable to get a decent job because they are wrongly trained or trained in the wrong sectors. That is the real issue. Talk about artificial intelligence - come on, not from these universities, Madam Speaker! We can't even get E-health service going. Not even E-health after so many years! We are going to go now for artificial intelligence. That is a joke! So, Madam Speaker, the real issue is the question of tertiary education and that is why, because of the failure of tertiary education, we have to put Rs1 billion to subsidise employment for the youth.

Had that money or part of it been used - because a lot of money that is actually sent is not used - by the sector, had the money sent been used by universities, we would have seen a complete different picture. Did you know, Madam Speaker, that out of the Rs25 m. - the Minister must know - that were provided for in the Budget last year for this famous University of Technology - Rs25 m. were sent, looked very nice in the Budget Speech - only

Rs5 m. were used? Rs20 m. have been returned to the Ministry of Finance. That is the status of our universities. Even when they have money, they are incapable of using it.

Madam Speaker, I come to a few other issues like traffic. One issue that we must do is to ensure that the existing laws are actually applied. We all see so many motorcycles, so many people every day breaking the law and nothing is applied now. Madam Speaker, it is good that we have more draconian measures, but at least if the existing laws can be monitored and enforced by the Police.

I drive in the north - I avoid driving as much as I can - sometimes; all these motorcycles without lights, nobody wears his jackets that they need to wear. It is simple things that the Police could have enforced. We would have seen a great difference. And, of course, Madam Speaker, we are a country with a high density of population, many, many cars, 8%-10% increase in cars every year with no pavements. How can you drive and at the same time avoid all the people walking on the street? This is not normal, and this ought to have been the real issue, Madam Speaker.

I am now going to talk on the last thing, which is failure to improve public services, Madam Speaker. The Police - we keep recruiting more policemen, but we do not equip them. We see them all with their blue shirts, their blue trousers, black shoes, one belt, that's it. In which country in the world do you see policemen walking around like this? No country in the world. This is the only country. No equipment at all with them. No equipment, whereas I myself chaired a Committee sometime before and we have recommended a full range of equipment to our policemen so that they are able to do their work. Madam Speaker, there is no equipment provided, only Rs80 m. this year, and the Police will continue, law and order will continue to degrade.

As far as health is concerned, medical negligence is on the increase, deaths on the increase, disappearing babies, deterioration of equipment, equipment broken down. Continuing very, very poor service, specifically to the '*ti dimoune*' of this country. Very, very poor service. Recurring appointments given and total disregard for service quality. Hospitals managed by doctors, whereas they should be managed by managers.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to have introduced something called the exams for the doctors. I introduced that sometime ago. There was a lot of opposition...

(Interruptions)

Yes, yes, they can check it! India, I sought from them first over here, the guys from India.

(Interruptions)

Oh, yes!

I introduced that, Madam Speaker. It was in the Budget. I can go and prove it, if you give me five minutes, but I do not want. But I did that, Madam Speaker, and it has been a good thing. 50% of people failed, Madam Speaker. That shows that there is necessity for the exams, and that is a good thing. But, generally, quality of health service is deteriorating. I mentioned tertiary education.

Sports, Madam Speaker, the sport *est malade*, we know; only one medal in the games. Even the one lady who won, has she been given any consideration? Nothing. She is being treated like dirt. She won and being treated like dirt. Nobody cared, I think, to even pick her up at the airport. She was given a bouquet and she threw it down. This is how we treat our sportsmen and women. It is a fact; treated like dirt, and I would have expected as a minimum that we would have reintroduced in the Budget *per diem* for our sportsmen and women. Not a word again. We send them overseas, they have to beg. Thank God, I think it was Easter, they got some money. Had it not been Easter, they would not have got any money from the Federation or whatever, the Olympic Committee. *Le sport est malade*. Nothing, and again we have to wait supposedly for a few months for that to come.

Before I finish, Madam Speaker, I will come to Arts and Culture. In South Korea, what they did, they decided to give a big boost to their arts and culture - and it has worked - by giving one per cent of the budget. The annual budget of the Government is devoted to arts and culture. It creates animations, it creates entertainment for the population, it fosters creativity.

In Mauritius, for us to have a proper arts and culture environment, we need at least to double the budget of Rs500 m. - at least double. I am so sad that something like Porlwi By Light which, for the three years, has brought joy and massive number of people to Port Louis, has engendered creativity - we have all been surprised by that creativity of Mauritian talent - is not happening now. It has been cancelled. Why? Because Government has not found the Rs20 m. that should have gone to help these guys, these young people who have devoted themselves to a major festival in Mauritius. And I am very sad that this has happened. I presume it is too late for this year, but this sort of thing must be sponsored, must be helped,

and the Ministry of Arts and Culture must get at least a doubling of its budget so that it is effective.

Madam Speaker, I will finish by saying, again, that this is a mere communication exercise Budget. I have shown, I think, that it has not dealt at all with the main issues faced by this country; no credible economic re-engineering plan which ought to have been the order of the day.

In fact, there have been so many articles in the Press prior to the Budget - I think a record - which highlighted the economic issues. All have been ignored in the Budget. In place, what we have is a sale of passports and property speculation, even to the point of encouraging property speculation in Africa. We have ignored the troubles of our main economic sectors, and I think they will face a bleak future, Madam Speaker.

You may know, Madam Speaker, that we are on the brink of a trade war. Even in normal times, our main export sectors face huge competition, are on the decline. Let us hope it does not happen. With the start of the trade war, I think yesterday, Trump put 25% duty on 50 billion dollars' worth of imports from China. China will reciprocate; same thing is happening vis-à-vis Europe.

What if the trade war would bring about a slump in economic development worldwide? What if the trade war will bring about a reduction in growth, in economic growth worldwide? Are we prepared, has this Budget even noted the dark clouds on the horizon? Has this even prepared us for that? Has it put even some money in the kitty for that?

I remember, Madam Speaker, when I came to the Ministry of Finance, Rama Sithanen, fearing the worst economic decline, had borrowed on standby 800 m. US dollars from the World Bank. We never used it because we did not need to use it. But that money has been kept there in case of need to boost the Mauritian economy. That was, therefore, how you would foresee and prepare for the future. Nothing in this Budget prepares us for any economic disaster following any trade war and a slump in world growth, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I will end by saying this. The IMF, the famous IMF which the Prime Minister seems to have liked the report anyway - I don't have the same view - this is what the IMF says at page 3 concerning what ought to have been done in this Budget –

“Broader structural reforms are required in areas such as the labour market, higher education, governance and anti-corruption”.

Do you see any of these in the Budget? Do you see, as the IMF had asked us, broader structural reforms in the labour market, higher education, governance and anti-corruption? Nothing, Madam Speaker! This is why, coupled with the completely ignoring our economic qualms, our economic issues, I think, Madam Speaker, that this Budget misses the target, misses the whole point. It is an exercise merely in communication and does not at all deal with the economic prosperity of Mauritius and our future well-being. At the same time, it introduces a number of harmful measures which I hope the Government will reverse at the time of the Finance Bill.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

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

At 1.01 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.37 p.m. with Madam Speaker in the Chair.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Members, this morning the hon. Leader of the Opposition purported to table the Term Agreement for Product Sale/Purchase on F.O.B. New Mangalore Basis signed between Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL) and the State Trading Corporation on 01 July 2010.

I have perused the said Agreement and noted that it contains a confidentiality clause which, amongst others, states that, and I quote –

“Each of the parties shall at all times use its best endeavours to keep confidential the terms of this Agreement.”

In addition, according to established practice such documents ought to be laid only if it can be done without injury to the public interest, the more so since the Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited (MRPL) is currently the supplier of petroleum products to the STC.

I, therefore, rule that the said document cannot be tabled.

Hon. Minister Seeruttun!

(2.38 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Merci, Madame la présidente. Madame la présidente, permettez-moi tout d'abord au nom de la population et aussi aux noms des '*ti-dimounes*' de féliciter le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour son budget de l'année fiscale 2018-2019, « *Pursuing our Transformative Journey* ».

Voilà un budget préparé dans un contexte international difficile. D'ailleurs, l'honorable *leader* de l'Opposition avait parlé de *trade war*. Aussi, qui dit contexte difficile dit aussi champ de manœuvre très serré. Mais malgré cela, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances arrive à trouver et à donner la considération voulue à toute la population, surtout ceux qui sont les plus vulnérables, la classe moyenne, les jeunes, les personnes avec un handicap, les planteurs, les éleveurs, les pêcheurs mais aussi les PME.

Et tout cela, Madame la présidente, sans avoir à compromettre le développement durable et tout en assurant que les *fundamentals economic* soient respectés. Donc, pour résumer, Madame la présidente, c'est un budget à visage humain, mais responsable. Pour moi, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances me fait penser à son premier budget qu'il avait présenté en 2004. Et déjà, à ce moment-là, le Premier ministre d'alors avait déclaré, et je cite "Coup d'essai, coup de maître". D'autres avaient même parlé de *chirag*, lumière. C'était l'époque de '*Ti Frère*'.

Mais les six budgets présentés jusqu'à maintenant, on voit la même philosophie; une approche cohérente toujours bien dosée où rigueur rime avec compassion. Pour moi, Madame la présidente, cela démontre sa grandeur d'âme et son humanisme. Et tout cela sans trompette, ni tambours, on pourrait dire sans cigare, ni djembé, non plus *Blue Label*. Aujourd'hui, je peux dire, Madame la présidente, cette lumière brille à mille feux et donne de l'éclairage au pays, et surtout aux jeunes. Notre jeune Premier ministre et Premier ministre *zène* est devenu pour moi le grand frère de la nation mauricienne.

En fait, les sept orientations de ce budget mettent la population au centre du développement. Et pour moi, ce budget c'est la reconstruction de l'île Maurice de demain, c'est-à-dire, pour les jeunes, pour les nouvelles générations, donc c'est l'avenir qu'on regarde.

Madame la présidente, 50 ans de cela, *Professor James Meade*, grand économiste qui avait reçu le prix Nobel, avait prédit que notre île Maurice n'avait aucun avenir. Mais 50 ans

après, la persévérance, la détermination et le courage des mauriciens ont démontré qu'il avait tort. Malheureusement, aujourd'hui, on a, ce qu'on appelle, des James Meade locaux qui ne voient que du noir. Rien ne va pas. Comme dit mon collègue, l'honorable Sinatambou, le syndrome de '*narien pas bon*'.

Le Leader de l'Opposition, lors de sa réaction à chaud, il avait dit qu'il n'y avait rien de bon dans le budget, c'est un budget raté, mais, aujourd'hui, quand même, il vient reconnaître qu'il y a des bonnes mesures et je suis sûr que s'il va continuer à lire ce qu'il y a dans le fond de ce budget-là, il va trouver que c'est un bon budget. Eh bien, le temps, il le sait déjà ! Et, bien sûr, les autres partis de l'Opposition ont trouvé que c'est du bla-bla et qu'on a rien fait depuis qu'on est au pouvoir.

Moi, Madame la présidente, je leur demanderai d'aller demander à ces plus de 250,000 retraités qui ont vu leur pension augmentée de R 3,600 en 2014 pour passer à R 5,810 aujourd'hui, plus de 60% d'augmentation, ce qu'ils ont à dire sur ce budget et sur ce gouvernement. Allez demander à ces personnes qui ont un handicap et qui ont moins de 15 ans, qui n'étaient pas reconnues par le gouvernement.

Aujourd'hui, ce gouvernement vient reconnaître ces gens-là et donne le support qu'il faut. Allez demander à ces dames *cleaners* qui touchaient R 1,500 par mois. Combien d'années elles ont crié haut et fort ! Il n'y avait personne pour les écouter. C'est nous, ce gouvernement-là, qui a été à l'écoute, et qui a corrigé cette injustice. Allez demander à ces employés qui touchaient moins de R 9,000 par mois. Aujourd'hui, avec le salaire minimum, ils arrivent à toucher un salaire décent. Pourtant, depuis combien d'années on parle du salaire minimum ! Personne n'a osé, dans le passé, de le faire.

Aujourd'hui, c'est une réalité, Madame la présidente. Et quoi ? En trois ans ! Allez demander à ces ménagers qui aujourd'hui vont payer une bonbonne de gaz à R 240. Sortir de R 330 deux ans de cela, R 90 de baisse et toujours on dit qu'on a rien fait ! Allez demander à la classe moyenne, qui a toujours été négligée dans le passé. Aujourd'hui, quelqu'un touchant R 50,000 peut économiser jusqu'à R 18,000 comme montant de taxe qu'il n'aura pas à payer. Cela représente autour de R 1,500 tout de suite, par mois, qu'il aura dans sa poche.

Et nous savons tous que c'est la classe moyenne qui fait dynamiser l'économie d'un pays. Nous savons tous que c'est eux qui vont faire un agrandissement dans leur maison, qui vont construire une nouvelle maison, qui vont consommer. C'est la première fois que des

personnes touchant entre R 15,000 et R 20,000 auront droit à ce qu'on appelle le *casting of slab benefits*. Allez demander ces 50,000 foyers qui ont de l'eau gratuitement s'ils consomment jusqu'à 6 m³ d'eau. Aujourd'hui, 227,400 familles ont de l'eau 24/7 par rapport à 2014, il y avait que 166,750 et là les bénéficiaires de panneaux photovoltaïques, vont eux aussi pouvoir avoir de l'électricité gratuite.

Le chômage est en baisse continue. Plus de 8% avant 2014 et aujourd'hui c'est 7.1 % et tout à l'heure-là, référence est faite au rapport du FMI. Si on regarde la projection du FMI, vous allez voir que la baisse va continuer davantage dans les années qui viennent. Tout à l'heure, je vais revenir sur le rapport du FMI. Allez demander aux athlètes - qui ont fait briller le drapeau mauricien à l'étranger, qui sont aujourd'hui à la retraite et qui n'ont jamais été reconnu - qu'est-ce qu'on a fait pour eux. Les éleveurs, les planteurs, les artistes et Rodrigues en termes d'investissement qu'on est en train de faire à Rodrigues, c'est inégalable.

(Interruptions)

Dépasser la barre de R 5 milliards.

Le développement que va connaître Agaléga, ils auront accès à l'Internet et ils ne vont être plus coupé avec le monde, Madame la présidente.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No interruptions, please!

Mr Seeruttun: Madame la présidente, le combat qu'on mène pour récupérer Chagos. Depuis 50 ans, on mène cette lutte. Ce qu'on a fait ces derniers temps, c'est extraordinaire. Le vote obtenu à l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies, beaucoup ici étaient sceptiques, mais nous savons le travail qui a été fait derrière et les résultats en témoignent. Nous avons un rendez-vous prochainement. J'espère que cette fois-ci, comme des vrais patriotes, on aura toute la population derrière nous pour pouvoir gagner cette bataille. *The Ease of Doing Business* de 49 à 25. Ce n'est pas arrivé comme ça, Madame la présidente. Il y eu un travail qui a été fait et le travail continue. Le Leader de l'Opposition parle de 20 et si on est tombé au rang de 49^{ème}, sortir de 20, parce que justement avant 2014 des mesures n'ont pas été prises comme il fallait parce que cela aurait des répercussions dans un an ou deux ans par rapport aux mesures qu'on prend à un moment donné.

Alors, malgré tout cela, Madame la présidente, l'Opposition trouve que rien n'a été fait depuis trois ans. Peut-être si on est assis quelque part à Grand Gaube, au bord de la piscine, avec vue sur mer, pour eux, ce qu'on a fait, ce n'est rien du tout. Mais ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, no interruptions! Please, proceed, hon. Minister!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please!

Mr Seeruttun: Pour la population en général ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Can we have some order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order, I said!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Perraud, no crosstalking from a sitting position! Hon. Minister, please proceed!

Mr Seeruttun: Merci, Madame la présidente. Bien sûr l'Opposition est là pour opposer ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Please, sit down, hon. Minister! I think interruptions are continuing. Let me just say that when the Leader of the Opposition was talking, everybody was silent, and I would request ...

(Interruptions)

Please!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet and I do not want anybody to interrupt me when I am talking. I am asking all of you to respect the decorum of the House and to proceed in silence. The Whips have agreed on 45 hours of debate. This is serious work and we do not want to lose time on futile remarks. Please proceed, hon. Minister!

Mr Seeruttun: Merci, Madame la présidente. Donc, je dis l'opposition est là pour opposer, je peux comprendre, mais je préfère écouter les gens de la société civile, les professionnels, les experts, les syndicats et voilà ce qu'ils ont à dire, Madame la présidente. Je parle des syndicats, Madame la présidente. Dans le cas de M. Vinod Seegum, il dit que c'est globalement positif. M. Aniff Peerun parle des mesures positives. M. Rashid Imrith dit: 'la population est soulagée'. M. Satyadev Tengur parle des mesures en faveur des consommateurs. 'Un budget très équilibré' de M. Gopee. 'Ce budget est une bouffée d'air frais' dit M. Deepak Benydin. Et M. Reeaz Chuttoo vient même dire que ce budget n'est pas comparable avec les budgets de l'ancien régime.

Madame la présidente, ce n'est pas seulement des syndicalistes. Voyons un peu les firmes des consultants. PricewaterhouseCoopers says -

'We commend the Government's effort to work.' KPMG says: "This Government's fourth budget entitled "Pursuing our transformative journey" was delivered with a deep sense of enthusiasm and optimism." Deloitte says: "(...) the budget aims to achieve inclusive growth and prosperity for all residents through poles of development and related policies."

Il parle pour les jeunes, pour les *SMEs*, et aussi en ce qui concerne les *innovative technologies*. Ernst & Young: *ambition to have a stronger economic performance, recognition of the fundamental values in a new landscape.*

Voilà un peu ce que disent les experts, et vous savez tous qu'on n'a rien à avoir avec eux, aucune relation privilégiée. Donc, c'est pour cela que je dis allons écouter ceux qui sont sérieux. Et aussi Business Mauritius qui trouve l'exercice budgétaire 2018 encourageant.

« Il s'agit d'un budget très social, comportant des mesures intéressantes pour la formation des jeunes et l'intégration des femmes. »

C'est ce que dit le président de Business Mauritius. Et son CEO parle que le gouvernement est allé, à travers ce budget, dans la bonne direction, particulièrement en ce qui concerne les défis auxquels font face les services financiers, entre autres. Même chose du côté de l'AHRIM, Madame la présidente.

Donc, voilà, Madame la présidente, un peu la réaction de ces différents *stakeholders* de ce pays. Et pour le grand public, ça a été un soulagement. Et ça a été comme ça depuis qu'on est là, Madame la présidente. On n'a qu'à voir les mesures qu'on a annoncées, qu'on a mises en place depuis 2015.

A chaque fois qu'on a présenté un budget, les membres de l'opposition parlaient 'd'élections derrière la porte'. Depuis 2015 c'est comme ça ; ce n'est pas nouveau. Donc, on peut s'attendre encore une fois qu'ils parlent '*d'élections derrière la porte*', mais nous avons un mandat de cinq ans. Aujourd'hui, on est dans cette ferveur de la coupe du monde. Un match de foot ne s'arrête pas à la mi-temps ou à la 75^e minute. Un match de foot va jusqu'à la dernière seconde.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Seeruttun: D'un côté, ils parlent d'un budget électoraliste, qui veut dire comme si c'est bon, et de l'autre côté ils disent qu'il n'y a rien de bon. Donc, pour moi, c'est une opposition qui part en confettis avec ce budget, Madame la présidente. Pour moi, c'est un budget responsable, un budget, comme on dit, qui prend en compte tous les *fundamental economics*, et les indicateurs économiques sont là pour le démontrer. Ce sont les faits. Ce n'est pas ce qu'a voulu faire croire le leader de l'opposition.

Moi aussi j'ai vu le rapport du FMI et ses projections, mais c'est encourageant. Allons voir un peu, Madame la présidente, quelques indicateurs économiques. Qu'est-ce que ça donne ? Selon le FMI, l'inflation va connaître une baisse continue. On attend une baisse cette année-ci, et ça va continuer à baisser dans les années qui viennent. Le chômage à son époque était de plus de 8 % ; aujourd'hui, on est descendu à 7.1 %. Et si je vais d'après le rapport du

FMI, pour eux, c'est 6.9%, et la projection est que ça va continuer à baisser pour les années qui viennent.

Pour la dette publique, c'est pareille. La tendance est à la baisse. Moi aussi j'ai accès à ce rapport-là, l'honorable leader de l'opposition. Le déficit budgétaire, pareil ; ça va continuer à baisser, Madame la présidente. Notre réserve en devises étrangères, niveau record ; 10.7 mois d'importation. Alors, pourquoi dresser un tableau noir pour un pays qui est en train de faire autant d'efforts pour réussir ? Je les laisse avec leur rapport qu'ils sont en train de *cook*, comme on dit, pour essayer de faire croire à la population que rien ne va dans ce pays. Mais comme je le dis encore une fois, tout ça, on peut vérifier, et nous savons tous que les experts du FMI qui viennent ici ne sont pas des '*baters bis*' comme on dit. Ce sont des professionnels, des experts, et quand ils viennent ici pour faire un rapport, ce n'est pas comme si on va leur donner n'importe quoi et ils vont accepter. Il prétend qu'il va écrire maintenant au directeur du FMI pour lui donner des informations sur la situation économique du pays.

Alors, on met en doute aujourd'hui ces experts qui viennent ici et on met en doute le rapport qu'ils ont soumis. Écoutez, moi je dis que si quelqu'un peut se permettre de dire que son collègue peut aller acheter des timbres un samedi après-midi à la poste centrale, on sait de quoi il est capable alors.

Mais je voulais m'attarder sur la croissance, Madame la présidente. Le *leader* de l'opposition et aussi le *leader* du MMM parlent de 'pas sérieux' lorsqu'on vient projeter la croissance dans le budget. Lorsqu'on prépare un budget, il y a des mesures qu'on est en train d'annoncer pour être exécutées. Donc, par rapport à ça, il y a une projection de ce que va être la croissance. Et bien sûr, à chaque fois, il y a des imprévus, il y a des choses qui sont en dehors de notre contrôle, qui peuvent faire à ce qu'on n'arrive pas à atteindre le *target* fixé. Et ce n'est pas nouveau. C'est arrivé pratiquement tout le temps. Le *leader* de l'opposition a été ministre des Finances, tout comme le *leader* du MMM. Allons voir un peu ce qu'ils avaient projeté eux-mêmes lors de la présentation du budget et quelle a été, en réalité, la croissance de ces années-là.

Pour le budget 2002-2003, le taux de croissance est projeté à 4.8 %. En réalité, et encore une fois selon le FMI, 2.1 %. Pour le budget 2003-2004, 6 % était la projection. 2 % en réalité ! Le budget 2012 présenté à l'époque par le *leader* de l'opposition, 4 %. 4 %, c'était sa projection. En réalité, 3.2 %. En 2013, c'était 3.4 %. 3.2 % en réalité. Et 2014,

pour ne pas rater le coche, il donnait un *range* entre 3.8 % et 4 % ; là aussi il n'arrive pas. 3.6 % en réalité!

(Interruptions)

Fair enough! Je peux comprendre. Mais venir dire aujourd'hui que ce n'est pas sérieux lorsqu'on fait une projection et qu'on n'arrive pas à atteindre l'objectif, c'est ça qui n'est pas sérieux.

(Interruptions)

Madame la présidente, je parlais du FMI. Mais Moody's, une agence de grande réputation aussi en a noté. Quel a été notre *credit rating*, Madame la présidente? BAA1! Maintenant il vient dire que c'est lui...

(Interruptions)

Franchement, Madame la présidente! Alors, il vient dire que c'est lui. Il était avec nous pendant deux ans. Il était dans le *front bench* pendant 10 ans avec l'ancien régime. Quand c'est bon c'est lui! Quand ça ne marche pas, ce n'est pas lui! Il parlait du secteur du tourisme. C'est lui qui a amené cette croissance de plus de 10% ! Mais pourquoi il n'avait pas pu faire ça avant? Avant aussi il a été le ministre du Tourisme.

(Interruptions)

C'est parce que justement il y a une politique différente à partir de 2015 ; ce qui a permis à ce secteur de développer d'une manière extraordinaire.

(Interruptions)

Bien sûr, lorsqu'on arrive à un tel niveau, il faut maintenant continuer à le maintenir...

(Interruptions)

Ils ont lutté pour pouvoir dépasser la barre d'un million d'arrivées touristiques. Jamais il n'a pu le faire! Aujourd'hui on est sorti de moins de 1 million en 2014 pour frôler les 1.5 millions cette année-ci. C'est ça la politique qu'on a adoptée qui a fait qu'aujourd'hui on est en train de faire mieux dans ce secteur-là.

Madame la présidente, pour moi, ce budget, ce gouvernement est ce qu'on appelle un *daring Government*, qui ose faire des choses autrement pour que ce pays arrive à atteindre un niveau de développement afin de permettre aux jeunes, la nouvelle génération de vivre mieux dans ce pays-là. Vous vous souvenez de l'époque où on voulait développer le secteur de TIC ? L'Opposition d'alors ne croyait pas dans ce projet. Ils parlaient d'éléphant blanc. Pourtant aujourd'hui on l'a fait. Aujourd'hui on sait que si on veut réussir, c'est dans les nouveaux secteurs économiques qu'il faut trouver le salut. On parle aujourd'hui de l'innovation. On est à l'ère de robotique. On parle de...

(Interruptions)

Ça peut faire rire parce qu'ils ne comprennent pas !

(Interruptions)

Je peux comprendre ; ils sont dépassés.

(Interruptions)

Le Fintech, le Sunbox licensing, c'est ce qu'on va faire, Madame la présidente. L'innovation! Alors, le *'work at home'* pour les femmes qui, pour une raison ou une autre, ne peuvent pas se déplacer pour aller prendre un travail dans un bureau. Voilà ce que fait ce gouvernement qui ose ! Le Métro Express, combien d'années on a parlé de ce projet ? Personne a eu le courage d'aller de l'avant. Aujourd'hui, c'est une réalité. Le projet est en marche.

La commission sur la drogue, personne n'a osé dans le passé. Pourtant il y avait une demande à ce qu'on mette en place cette commission. Mais personne n'a voulu - le Premier ministre de l'époque. Nous avons fait cela. On est en train de combattre ce fléau comme il faut. Donc, c'est pour cela que je dis que nous sommes un gouvernement qui ose.

Le salaire minimum, j'en avais parlé plus tôt. On en a parlé dans le passé, mais jamais on a pu le réaliser. Mais aujourd'hui c'est une réalité. Grâce à qui? Ce gouvernement! Ce leadership ! Cette équipe!

On parle aujourd'hui sur l'affaire de passeport, Madame la présidente. Comme-ci on allait vendre le passeport ! Cela n'a jamais été une question de vendre, Madame la présidente. Sachez que ce n'est pas quelque chose qui est sortie

comme ça d'un coup. On va permettre à ce qu'on appelle le *high-net-worth individual* de venir à Maurice dans le souci de développer le pays, de revoir nos services financiers, d'attirer plus de *financial business* à Maurice, de mettre sur pied ce qu'on appelle le *wealth management* à Maurice.

Il y a eu une étude qui a été faite par la firme McKinsey. Ce n'est pas n'importe quelle firme. J'espère qu'ils savent de quoi je parle quand je parle de la firme McKinsey. Et dans la stratégie pour pouvoir développer davantage ce secteur, une des recommandations était justement d'attirer ce qu'on appelle le *high-net-worth individual*. Ce qu'il faut aussi savoir, Madame la présidente, c'est que cette firme avait l'occasion de consulter les experts locaux, les économistes réputés, et parmi il y avait le Dr Rama Sithanen. Très réputé! Alors voilà ce qui a été recommandé dans ce rapport et voilà pourquoi dans ce *Blueprint* sur les *financial services* on arrive avec cette mesure. Nous savons tous lorsqu'on parle de *high-net-worth individuals*, on ne les trouve pas dans tous les coins de rues. Ce ne sont pas des gens qu'on croise tous les jours sur notre chemin. Cela me fait penser à Robin Sharma. Robin Sharma, le guru! Je me demande comment il a eu ce passeport. Je vois le sourire de l'honorable Boolell. Dans quelle circonstance, comment c'est arrivé, personne ne sait.

(Interruptions)

Il y a aussi un cardiologue personnel de M. Rawat qui devait l'accompagner pour un traitement, et en une soirée, il a eu le passeport mauricien.

(Interruptions)

Allez demander qui c'est, allez demander à votre *leader*, de qui je parle. Voilà un peu la manière dont on donnait les passeports dans le passé, Madame la présidente.

Aujourd'hui, ce qu'on veut c'est attirer des personnes qui peuvent donner la valeur ajoutée à notre pays. Des personnes qui ont un réseau extrêmement important. Des personnes qui vont venir avec leur savoir-faire, avec leurs talents. Voilà un peu ce qu'on peut faire si on veut vraiment sortir l'île Maurice de ce qu'on appelle le *middle-income trap* au *high-income economy*. Donc, toute cette affaire de vendre le passeport, c'est totalement à côté de la plaque. C'est une contribution qu'on demande pour pouvoir assurer un certain projet qu'on peut mettre pour l'avenir de nos enfants.

Alors, Madame la présidente, je trouve ça dommage que des gens qui veulent faire croire qu'aujourd'hui il y aura des milliers de ce qu'on appelle le *high-net-worth individuals*

qui vont débarquer à Maurice. Il n'y a pas autant dans le monde. Mais on a dit aussi qu'il y aura des conditions attachées. Il y aura ce qu'on appelle le *due diligence*. Ça va se faire avec tout le sérieux qu'il faut. C'est ça ce que veut faire le gouvernement.

Je voulais dire deux mots sur ce projet de *Mangalore Refinery* avant de bouger sur le secteur qui me concerne principalement. Il parlait d'un accord qui date de 2006 entre le STC et *Mangalore Refinery*, qui est une compagnie qui appartient à l'État Indien. En 2006 il y a eu, d'après lui, chaque trois ans, un renouvellement. Donc, on peut comprendre qu'il y a eu en 2009, 2012 et 2015. Où était le leader de l'Opposition toutes ces années pendant que les discussions avaient eu lieu. Alors, il n'avait rien à dire! Tout d'un coup, aujourd'hui, il met en question l'accord. Donc, encore une fois ça montre que c'est quelqu'un quand il est d'un côté, il parle dans un langage donné et quand il est dans l'Opposition c'est un autre langage complètement en contradiction avec ses propres paroles.

Alors, Madame la présidente, je crois que la population est suffisamment intelligente pour comprendre que ce n'est pas du tout un *leader* de l'Opposition qui est sérieux, qui veut que ce pays avance, qui veut que ce pays progresse, et ils vont faire tout pour casser, comme on dit, l'élan de ce gouvernement. Et ça aussi on le voit tous les matins, comme on dit *day in, day out* un tableau noir qui est donné sur la situation à Maurice dans certains médias.

Je vais parler maintenant sur le secteur du sucre, le secteur de la canne. Lorsqu'on parle du secteur de la canne, Madame la présidente, il y a beaucoup de passion, d'émotion parce que si Maurice existe c'est beaucoup à cause de la canne à sucre. Si on est tous là, on est tous venus parce que justement il y avait cette culture à développer, cette plante à planter et à faire le sucre. On sait aussi le rôle que ce secteur a joué dans notre économie, comment il a permis le développement et la diversification de l'île Maurice.

Même si aujourd'hui le secteur de la canne à sucre représente peu en termes de sa contribution au *GDP*, mais joue toujours un rôle important en termes d'emploi, en termes de revenus en devises étrangères que ça génère, en termes de coproduits de la canne, l'énergie, et aussi sur l'aspect environnemental il y a un rôle important que ça joue. Le secteur de la canne à sucre à Maurice a connu pas mal de réformes et vous allez voir qu'à chaque fois qu'il y a eu des réformes en profondeur, c'était à l'époque où il y avait un gouvernement dirigé par le MSM, que ce soit dans les années 80, que ce soit en 2000 et maintenant, on va voir.

Avant, il y a avait le protocole sucre et donc l'industrie jouissait des filets de protection, et ça a permis justement d'avoir accès à un marché, et aussi avoir un prix

préférentiel. Aujourd'hui, tout cela est parti, mais depuis bien avant on savait. Vers la fin des années 90, c'était déjà connu que le protocole sucre allait être aboli. Mais rien n'a été fait. Et qui était le ministre de l'Agriculture dans les années 1995-2000 ? Rien n'a été fait. Ce n'est qu'en 2000 avec le nouveau gouvernement, le Premier ministre d'aujourd'hui qui était le ministre de l'Agriculture d'alors, c'est lui qui a embarqué la réforme dans industrie sucrière. Et il est venu avec un plan stratégique et c'est lui qui est venu avec ce qu'on appelle le VRS.

Madame la présidente, aujourd'hui on parle comme-ci c'est nous qui sommes en train d'accorder des facilités à des gros capitaux que c'est eux les grands défenseurs des petits planteurs et des travailleurs. Je vais vous montrer comment dans chacune de leurs décisions, ils ont délaissé les petits planteurs et les travailleurs.

Alors qu'en 2000 lorsqu'on embarquait dans cette réforme avec le VRS 1 qui avait été proposé aux travailleurs, les établissements sucriers devaient financer ce VRS à partir d'un prêt de la Banque centrale. C'était un prêt. Mais en 2006, avec le nouveau gouvernement, il y avait eu des mesures d'accompagnement de l'Union européenne, le gouvernement dirigé par le docteur Ramgoolam avec comme ministre de l'Agriculture, l'honorable Dr. Boolell, sont venus avec le VRS 2. Cette fois-ci, comment serait financé le VRS 2? A travers l'argent reçu de l'Union européenne. Donc, cet argent avait été donné pour financer le VRS 2. Or, si cet argent avait été utilisé d'une manière beaucoup plus responsable, peut-être on aurait été ailleurs aujourd'hui. On n'aurait pas été là en train de parler de l'industrie cannière.

Alors, qui était responsable...

(Interruptions)

...oui, lui aussi il était...

(Interruptions)

Le VRS parle des travailleurs, Madame la présidente. Savez-vous qu'en 2007 lorsque le VRS qui avait été donné à ces travailleurs qui voulaient partir à la retraite, il y avait 8,287 bénéficiaires du VRS. Lorsqu'on est arrivé en fin 2014, il y avait que 1,500 de ces 8,287 qui ont pu avoir leurs titres de propriété.

(Interruptions)

Si c'était vraiment donné la considération voulue à ces travailleurs de cette manière-là, je préfère qu'on ne l'a pas, Madame la présidente. Or, en ce qui nous concerne, depuis 2015 à ce jour, 5,838 bénéficiaires ont déjà eu leurs titres de propriété. Donc, il nous reste que quelques bénéficiaires maintenant et on est en train de suivre à ce que justement ils puissent avoir leurs titres de propriété le plus tôt possible. Et ils parlent de défenseurs des travailleurs de ce pays et de cette industrie!

Il y avait aussi l'affaire de 2000 arpents qu'ils se vantent d'avoir pu négocier avec la MSPA. 2,000 arpents qui devaient être transférés au gouvernement. En 2007, il y avait un accord qui devait prendre fin 10 ans après, donc, en 2017. A la fin de 2014, sept ans après, seulement 713 arpents ont été transférés. 713! Sept ans!

(Interruptions)

Sept ans!

(Interruptions)

Nous avons en trois ans...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, hon. Dr. Boolell, please! You will have the opportunity to reply!

Mr Seeruttun: En 3 ans, Madame la présidente, j'ai tout complété.

(Interruptions)

C'est ça ce qu'on appelle le gouvernement Travailliste/PMSD, Madame la présidente!

(Interruptions)

On parle du prix de la bagasse, Madame la présidente. Sachez que c'est la première fois, c'était à la fin des années 80, avec un gouvernement dirigé par Sir Anerood Jugnauth à l'époque, qui était venu reconnaître la valeur de la bagasse. C'était la première fois! Et à l'époque c'était aux alentours de R 100 à R 125 par tonnes de sucre que les planteurs allaient gagner pour la bagasse. On avait créé ce qu'on appelle le *Bagasse Transfer Fund* où tout cet argent allait être versé aux planteurs. Il y avait des contestations de la part des IPPs, des usiniers et même que la Cour allait donner raison au gouvernement et aux planteurs, le

gouvernement en 1999 arrivait à tomber sur un *out of Court settlement* pour donner 50% aux IPPs et 50% aux planteurs. Et qui était le ministre de l'Agriculture, Madame la présidente, à l'époque, en 1999? L'honorable Dr. Boolell!

Alors, il vient dire qu'il faut aujourd'hui rémunérer de manière juste les planteurs. Oui, c'est vrai! Mais, personne n'a trouvé bon de le faire de 2005 à 2014. Nous sommes venus en 2015 avec le *Cane Sustainability Fund* pour sortir de R 100 pour la bagasse par tonne de sucre pour que les petits planteurs gagnent aujourd'hui R 1,200.

(Interruptions)

Et on a fait ce qu'on appelle la *positive discrimination*, donner les petits planteurs plus alors que les gros planteurs ont eu que R 300. Cela démontre la considération que nous donnons aux partenaires les plus menacés de cette industrie.

Le SIT - qui avait créé le SIT ? Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

...*vieux ferraille* ! Aujourd'hui, il y a 55,000 actionnaires. Des Employés, planteurs, travailleurs sont actionnaires dans ces différentes entités de l'industrie. Et dans l'accord de 2007, le Premier ministre - avec son gouvernement - parlait d'augmenter la participation, sortir de 20% pour venir à 35%. Le *Leader* de l'Opposition aussi faisait partie de ce gouvernement et il doit savoir de quoi je parle. Sortir de 20% à 35% ! Qu'est-ce qui s'est passé depuis ? L'argent a été mis de côté pour pouvoir faire l'acquisition de ces actionnariats, mais jusqu'à maintenant les planteurs et les travailleurs n'ont rien vu venir. Anne, ma sœur Anne ! Et on me dit que...

(Interruptions)

Pe faire. Et on me dit que l'argent qui a été mis de côté a été donné au groupe BAI, Monsieur Rawat, que l'argent est parti avec Monsieur Rawat ! Voilà la manière dont on traitait les employés de cette industrie et les planteurs de cette industrie, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Seeruttun, I hope you take responsibility for what you are saying!

Mr Seeruttun: Oui, Madame la présidente, entière responsabilité.

Le *Leader* de l'opposition parlait tout à l'heure de cette industrie qui connaît des difficultés, avec raison, mais le prix du sucre a commencé à chuter depuis 2009. Depuis 2009, avec le régime sucrier qui part, le prix baisse continuellement, sauf il y a deux années, il y avait une baisse dans la production mondiale, donc le prix avait augmenté. Mais sinon la tendance était à la baisse.

Le *Leader* de l'opposition était ministre des Finances pendant trois ans. J'ai été voir un peu quels sont les mesures nouvelles qu'il avait proposées pour venir au secours à cette industrie qui faisait face déjà à une réduction du prix. Pas une mesure nouvelle concernant cette industrie et, tout d'un coup, aujourd'hui, il découvre que cette industrie fait face à des difficultés. Déjà en 2014, le prix était à R 12,693, et c'est comme cela que nous, en 2015, on est venu avec une série de mesures pour soutenir les planteurs. Il y a eu un *cash compensation* qui a été donné aux planteurs ; R 2,000 par tonne de sucre, et on a donné R 3,400 aux petits planteurs ; on a *waive* la prime d'assurance ; on a suspendu le cess. La même chose en 2016.

En 2017, il y avait des projections que le prix allait être stabilisé. Bien sûr, avec l'abolition du quota imposé sur les producteurs européens, il y a eu une surproduction et, donc, le prix a continué à chuter. Et il y a eu, justement, un mémoire qui a été soumis par la Chambre d'agriculture conjointement avec le Syndicat des sucres. Et déjà en 2017, c'était en août, encore une fois, le gouvernement est venu avec des mesures pour les soutenir ; R 500 millions ont été donc allouées pour venir en aide à cette industrie.

Mais à l'époque, lorsqu'on avait pris ces mesures-là, le prix était à R 13,500, et quelque temps après, il y a eu encore une baisse pour descendre à R 11,000 la tonne de sucre. Donc, il y a eu un appel des planteurs, et c'est là qu'on a dit 'Ecoutez, on ne peut pas venir avec des plans d'aide *piecemeal*. Il faut voir l'industrie dans son ensemble, quel est son avenir, et comment trouver des solutions pour régler le problème.'

Donc, un comité technique composé principalement des producteurs, petits, grands, moyens usiniers, ont fait un état des lieux de la situation et ont proposé des solutions, et hier on a eu le rapport. Comme c'est un dossier qui concerne plusieurs secteurs, comme c'est un secteur multifonctionnel, comme on dit, on a tout de suite mis sur pied un comité interministériel présidé par le Premier ministre lui-même pour montrer l'importance qu'on donne à cette industrie pour pouvoir, justement, voir comment assurer la survie de cette industrie. Il y a eu des réunions déjà ; il y a eu des consultations. Le Premier ministre, lui-

même, a eu des consultations avec les représentants des travailleurs, et eux-mêmes ont dit, 'Écoutez, allons se revoir après le budget pour discuter de l'avenir de cette industrie. C'est complexe, il n'y a pas de solution magique, et il faut le faire, comme on dit, sans *haste*, sans précipitation, pour qu'on trouve des solutions durables à cette industrie.' Donc, voilà où on en est aujourd'hui. Mais il y a eu quelques mesures dans le budget.

Vous savez, il y a des pays aujourd'hui, les gros producteurs, et c'est eux qui dominant le marché. Ils sont en train de soutenir leur industrie. En Inde, par exemple, 1 milliard de dollars a été alloué à cette industrie, et nous savons tous aujourd'hui comment ces pays protègent leur marché domestique. Nous, nous exportons 90% de notre production de sucre. Donc, on l'exporte, et le fait qu'on est un petit marché domestique, on est complètement exposé aux risques externes. Tout à l'heure, le *Leader* de l'Opposition parlait de hausse du prix du sucre. Ce qu'on est en train de proposer, c'est seulement de protéger, comme le font les autres pays, notre marché domestique pour pouvoir s'assurer que le prix qu'on est en train de vendre le sucre sur le marché local est plus rémunérateur que ce qu'on peut avoir ailleurs. Mais à part cela, Madame la présidente, on a déjà entamé des discussions pour diversifier notre marché, que ce soit en Inde, que ce soit en Chine, que ce soit en Afrique, dans la région.

Donc, il y a une série de travail qui est déjà entamé et qu'on va poursuivre pour pouvoir avoir un prix beaucoup plus rémunérateur avec nos sucres spéciaux. Tout cela ce sont les mesures qu'on est en train de mettre en place. Mais c'est vrai qu'aujourd'hui la situation est difficile et il faut trouver des solutions, et j'espère pouvoir, prochainement, donner encore plus de détails au fur et à mesure qu'on avance dans nos discussions. Donc, j'espère que cela démontre un peu l'effort qu'on est en train de mettre en place pour assurer la survie de cette industrie.

Laissez-moi me tourner vers d'autres secteurs qui me concernent, notamment le secteur de la culture vivrière, le secteur de l'élevage, les bois et forêts. Il y a une série de mesures qu'on est en train de mettre en place, Madame la présidente, pour assurer la sécurité alimentaire, pour assurer, pas seulement qu'on produise des fruits et des légumes, mais des fruits et légumes qui sont sains à la consommation. Avec notre programme d'encourager l'*organic farming*, on est en train de vraiment pousser dans cette direction. Le *sheltered farming* est un autre aspect. Aujourd'hui, avec le changement climatique, il y a tellement de risques, et on a vu, on a vécu au début de l'année, avec les grosses pluies, à quel point nos

planteurs sont exposés à ces risques qui sont hors de notre contrôle. Et c'est pour cela, dans le budget, je suis content qu'on vienne de l'avant avec la création de 100 fermes protégées.

Cela va changer complètement la situation de ces planteurs. Il y a toujours eu des planteurs qui sont exposés à des risques de maladie, de mauvais temps, de la sécheresse, des ravageurs. C'est eux qui prennent tous les risques, qui font tout l'effort, et bien souvent, quand il y a ce genre de problèmes, ils perdent tout. Et là, on est venu avec un plan d'assurance ; un plan d'assurance qui a été travaillé par des experts pour venir proposer cela à ces planteurs, afin qu'ils soient, d'une manière adéquate, couverts par une assurance.

Tout cela, ce sont des mesures qu'on est en train de mettre en place pour pouvoir justement protéger la production locale. Même chose pour le secteur de l'élevage. On a connu le problème de la fièvre aphteuse il y a deux ans de cela. Je suis heureux de dire qu'aujourd'hui on a enlevé l'interdiction sur les bétails de Rodrigues. On peut faire venir les bétails, à condition qu'ils aillent directement à l'abattoir parce qu'il y a encore des règles sanitaires à respecter. Donc, encore une fois, on est là pour soutenir les éleveurs de Rodrigues, mais aussi pour alléger un peu la situation. On est en train de créer des fermes à Melrose pour les génisses, une ferme de moutons à Salazie ; un centre de quarantaine à Plaine Magnien. Tout cela est fait pour pouvoir améliorer la production laitière à Maurice.

Madame la présidente, je voulais aussi parler de l'*Agro Forestry*. L'honorable Dr. Boolell parlait lui d'une menace pour notre forêt. Ce qu'il ne sait pas, c'est qu'aujourd'hui c'est la *FAO* qui encourage l'*Agro Forestry* pour pouvoir augmenter la production de légumes dans le monde. Donc, ce n'est pas comme si c'est moi qui ai décidé de mettre ça en place. C'est quelque chose qui est déjà là, et on va poursuivre dans cette direction pour pouvoir améliorer notre production locale en termes de fruits et légumes. Il y a plusieurs variétés de légumes qui ont été relâchées ; des légumes qui sont beaucoup plus résistants à des maladies.

Madame la présidente, on a mis en place un plan stratégique pour le secteur non-sucre. On va poursuivre l'exécution de ce plan d'action et on va voir les résultats dans quelques temps. Je ne vais pas trop m'attarder - le *Chief Whip* est en train de me regarder. Donc, je voulais encore une fois, Madame la présidente ...

(Interruptions)

Oui, il faut en faire mention. Madame la présidente, des prêts ont été alloués aux éleveurs de porcs qui, malheureusement, n'arrivent pas à les rembourser. Je suis sûr que le *Leader* de l'Opposition s'en souviendra. Ces éleveurs ont fait appel pour qu'on *write-off* ces prêts. Je suis ravi que le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances ait décidé de *write-off* complètement la dette de ces éleveurs. Encore une fois, des mesures qui montrent que c'est un gouvernement qui donne le soutien dont ils ont besoin pour pouvoir continuer leurs activités.

Madame la présidente, il y a aussi le *marketing* du porc et c'est un de leurs soucis. Aujourd'hui, avec la *Mauritius Meat Authority*, il y a un travail qui est en train d'être fait pour pouvoir acheter et aussi vendre leurs produits. Donc, tout cela, c'est pour dire à quel point on est en train d'aider ce secteur.

Il y a un dernier secteur dont je voudrais parler, celui du thé. Encore une fois, c'est un secteur qui a été négligé par l'ancien gouvernement. On avait démantelé le *Tea Board* et les planteurs de thé étaient comme si laissés dans la plaine. Aujourd'hui, ce secteur connaît une nouvelle vie avec le support qu'on a accordé à ces planteurs ces dernières années. Pour moi, c'est du jamais vu, en termes de fertilisants qu'ils ont gratuitement, en termes de cisailles qu'ils ont gratuitement, en termes de *duty free* pour les véhicules utilitaires et la *road tax*. Encore une fois, cette année-ci dans ce budget, le Premier ministre est en train de leur donner ce qu'on appelle un *winter allowance*.

On sait très bien que pendant la période hivernale, la cueillette est en baisse, donc, on vient avec un soutien financier qui va tourner autour de R 2,500 par arpent. Voilà un peu les mesures qu'on est en train de mettre en place pour pouvoir soutenir les planteurs de thé. Comme je l'ai dit, ce secteur a un avenir. Des investisseurs étrangers sont intéressés à venir développer davantage ce secteur et on va voir comment ce secteur va progresser dans les années qui viennent. On a mis toute une panoplie de mesures incitatives pour pouvoir les aider à vraiment progresser dans ce secteur.

Madame la présidente, je crois que j'ai dit ce qu'il fallait sur ce budget. Néanmoins, il reste encore des choses à dire, mais le temps fait défaut. Je vais conclure par dire, Madame la présidente, une citation qui va ainsi –

“Some people make things happen.

Some people watch things happen.

And then there are those who wonder, what the hell happened?"

Nous, nous sommes de ceux *that make things happen*.

Travay la pe fer !

Merci beaucoup, Madame la présidente.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan!

(3.56 p.m.)

The Minister of Tourism (Mr A. Gayan): Thank you, Madam Speaker. Madam Speaker, may I, first of all, congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the presentation of a Budget qui a *l'adhésion de la population*.

Madame la présidente ...

(Interruptions)

Ils sont libres de faire un *walk-out*.

Madame la présidente, je disais que c'est un budget qui a été qualifié par certains membres de l'opposition comme un *non-event*, par d'autres comme une farce et par d'autres aussi comme un budget qui n'a aucun effet. Mais ce qui compte avec un budget, parce que le budget c'est un instrument politique, c'est un instrument économique, et le Premier ministre a pu présenter un document traçant l'économie, pas seulement pour l'année en cours mais pour les années à venir. C'est un budget qui a un consensus au niveau de la nation. C'est un budget, qui, à mon avis, *paves the way for a better Mauritius*.

Madam Speaker, the theme of this Budget was clearly spelt out by the Prime Minister as being "Pursuing our transformative journey" on the basis of a shared vision and harmonious living. We have always said, on this side of the House, that we need to have an inclusive society, that we need to have a society that is sustainable, inclusive, and we need to generate wealth. For that to happen we must have wealth creation as there will be no sharing otherwise. This is why we believe that this particular Budget sets the stage for inclusive development for a sustainable development and for wealth creation.

But as all things in life, a Budget in Mauritius has to take into account what goes on in the world. We had Brexit. We had the hiking of prices for petroleum products because of

Donald Trump, the President of the United States moving out of the Iran deal. We have now a US trade war with China and with the European Union, another major trading bloc. We have uncertainty in the Middle East, especially after the United States recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. So, these are things over which we have no control. In Mauritius, a Budget has to take all these things into account because we are a very small country with a small economy. We cannot lay down the rules as the major powers do. We have to work with everybody and this is why this Budget, I think, succeeds in getting everybody around and to getting Mauritius on a path of growth, on a path of prosperity, and on a path of making all Mauritians feel proud of our achievements.

Let me say something about the fuss that is being created about this Passport business. And I say this because this morning in one of the newspapers, in l'Express, the headline was – *«vente» du passeport mauricien, un véritable danger.*

And yet, in the same paper yesterday this is what was said, and I quote from l'Express *Dimanche de 17 Juin 2018 à la page 5.* And I say this because many Members of the Opposition and many members in the media keep talking about Mauritius being a Banana Republic. Now, if we are really a Banana Republic who would want to get a passport from that Banana Republic. This why I think it is important for me to make the point that we in Mauritius cannot continue to act as though we are the centre of the world. We have to act with the rest of the world and when we say things in this country, it has an impact all over the world because of social media digitalisation and all the modern means of communication. But let me come back to what was said yesterday in that newspaper, and I quote –

« Une sacrée levée de boucliers contre le projet de « vente » de passeports ! La réaction émotionnelle, enrobée de dignité est que nous serons ainsi un pays sans amour-propre, sans fierté, rabaissée par le désespoir, alimentant notre image de république bananière. Je ne suis pas entièrement d'accord!

D'abord, ce pays a besoin d'investissement et dépend essentiellement des étrangers pour, au cours des années à venir, doper le pouvoir d'achat local sur lequel quelques projets majeurs dépendent, alors que notre démographie recule. On peut ne pas être d'accord avec les choix économiques faits (dans lequel cas, il faut quand même aussi proposer les plans alternatifs qui assureront la croissance et les emplois au niveau souhaité par la population ! Où sont ces alternatives ?), mais il n'y a aucune manière d'assurer ne serait-

ce qu'une once de chance aux projets de Smart Cities et d'IRS en chantier, par exemple, si nous n'accueillons pas plus d'étrangers à bras ouverts !

Nous ne sommes, d'ailleurs, pas les premiers à «vendre» notre citoyenneté. L'Autriche accorde un passeport, réputé 4e meilleur au monde (171 pays rendus accessibles sans visa) contre un don non remboursable de \$ 2 à 4 M ou un investissement privé de \$ 10 M. Le programme EB5 des États-Unis offre la green card, qui mène au passeport, pour un investissement de \$ 1 M (et dix emplois) ou même de \$ 0,5 M dans une région «défavorisée». La Bulgarie demande \$ 1,2 M, mais, comme Chypre, va jusqu'à rembourser l'investissement éventuellement... Le passeport de Malte se paie \$ 1,85 M et comme le 8e plus valable au monde (166 pays sans visa) permet de vivre et de travailler n'importe où dans l'UE et même en Suisse. Fait intéressant, Malte impose un plafond de 1 800 passeports à son programme... faites le calcul. »

And then he goes on to Antigua and Dominica.

“Tous ces programmes demandent de satisfaire quelques critères minimums et, à l'ère du KYC – Know Your Client - demandent à l'acheteur de passeport de faire certifier la légitimité de ses fonds d'origine. »

And then he goes on –

“Le programme proposé par Maurice n'en dit pas moins ! Aux paragraphes 107 et 108 du discours du Budget, on dit clairement que l'EDB va gérer deux «schemes», l'un pour obtenir la citoyenneté, l'autre pour obtenir un passeport et que l'étranger en question devra satisfaire «defined criteria and... due diligence». »

Madam Speaker: Hon. Gayan, I will just stop you there just to tell you that you can quote from newspapers, but do not quote extensively, please.

Mr Gayan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will comply with your ruling. I was just saying that that particular article also mentions Sobrinho. A lot has been said in this House and outside about Sobrinho. I hold no brief for Sobrinho. I am not his friend; I do not know him, but after the terrorist attacks of 2001 in the United States, Madam Speaker, the United States adopted Resolutions to the offer, there can be no movement of massive funds without a

due diligence being carried out by the Banks. No money can come into Mauritius from overseas without the banking system being fully aware of it. And when money comes, whether it is Sobrinho or someone else, or whether it is Dawood Rawat taking money overseas, there has to be a bank involved.

When Sobrinho brought money, there was a due diligence carried out, I presume by the Barclays Bank because Barclays Bank gave a platinum card to the President. But I am also informed that the Mauritius Commercial Bank carried out a due diligence. And yet, after that exercise, everybody thinks that the money is tainted. Maybe the due diligence is not strong enough or whatever, but one cannot simply, *comme on dit en français, descendre la réputation des gens sans des preuves*. If somebody has been convicted, fine, but just on the basis of attacking somebody's character is not the right thing because this has repercussions on the image and reputation that we have overseas. No investor will come to Mauritius if he knows that this is the treatment that he or she is going to get whether in this House or outside this House.

But now that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has come, let me come back to what he said when he was the Minister of Finance. I say this, Madam Speaker, because I have a lot of regard for the Leader of the Opposition, I have a regard for everybody in this House. But I believe that when somebody has been a Minister of Finance, when he becomes the Leader of the Opposition, he has to have a degree of detachment and objectivity when dealing with the Budget. It cannot be that everything in a Budget is wrong.

Let me say that after he had presented the Budget in 2012, Mr Li Kwong Wing who was the spokesman of the Opposition replied as the first Member on the Opposition to reply to the Budget. And I quote from Hansard what Mr Li Kwong Wing said –

“Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to begin with some comments on last year's Budget. What it said and what it has delivered so far. Remember it was about more growth for the greater good! There was a list of deliverables to be completed within a time scale and examples are so many...

Let me take the growth rate first, the first economic indicator of the impact of their Budget and also the key theme and aim of that Budget. The Minister holds that there will be a growth rate of 3.4% in 2012. Every economic analyst in the private sector has estimated it to range from 3.1 to 2.9.”

And then he goes on -

“Let us say that it is a flop.”

That was the Budget of the hon. Leader of the Opposition, according to the Opposition. And then he goes on to say that the way the Budget had been handled by the then Minister of Finance, *c’était un “lavage à sec, dry cleaning sans baignoire.”* And it goes on like this.

(Interruptions)

The PMSD thinks that the Tourism Industry belongs to them. That if they are not there, tourism does not work. Let me give them some figures, Madam Speaker! I think it is good that they know that the Tourism Industry will survive independently of any political party.

In 2012, in his Budget Speech, the hon. Leader of the Opposition said this –

“101. In the Tourism Industry, the trends in 2012 demonstrate clearly the benefits of adapting to global transition.

102. Arrivals from Africa, Asia and Australia all showed double digit growth this year thus compensating for weaker arrivals from Europe. In total, tourist numbers have been stable but occupancy rates have fallen as a result of increasing room capacity.”

I have the figures of tourist arrivals for 2012. Year 2012, tourist arrivals - 965,441. Percentage changed over previous year, 0.1%. 0.1%!

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: No, please!

Mr Gayan: 0.1%! The hon. Leader of the Opposition also prepared the Budget of 2013. In 2013, this is what he said about Tourism –

“189. And I will start with challenges in the Tourism industry.”

They always have challenges in the Tourism Industry.

“190. As a result of strong measures taken in last year’s Budget and the diversification plan applied by the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, we have been able to revive growth in the tourism sector.

191. The Tourism industry has picked up recently with growth rates of 11.5 per cent in August and 8.4 per cent in September. (...)”

In 2013, what is the rate of growth for the year? 2.8%!

(Interruptions)

2.8% over the year! This is why I say: *Il ne faut pas vendre la peau de l’ours avant de l’avoir tué*. The 2.7% as at present is for the first five months. We have the best months coming. We will wait in December, you ask me that question, I will tell you the rate of growth. And I will also say ...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, it is good that he knows - and he knows - in 2003, I became the Minister of Tourism. Because the problems faced by the Tourism Industry, I was the instrumental with the then Government to waive all visa requirements for people from China, India and many of the Arab countries. It was too complicated for them to send their passports to the capital to get visa. That visa waiver has been very beneficial to the Tourism Industry. He knows that. These are decisions that we took, but from which he benefited because we lost power in 2005. Never mind! That’s part of the game.

(Interruptions)

That’s part of the game!

But in 2013, Madam Speaker, the hon. Leader the Opposition, who was Minister of Finance, set up a Joint Public/Private Tourism Committee to look principally at destination marketing strategy. That was in 2013. It was implemented in 2014. And what happened to that committee in 2015 when he became Minister again? He scrapped that committee. So, presumably, he put up that committee as Minister of Finance to have an oversight over what hon. Minister Yeung Sik Yuen was doing at the Tourism Industry. Presumably! He was a Member of the PMSD. So, he was *fané* as member of the PMSD.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker: Hon. Leader of the Opposition, do not interrupt him! He did not interrupt you!

Mr Gayan: Madam Speaker, let me say because tourism...

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, I will come to China, but let me say that the hon. Leader of the Opposition boasted about more than 10% double-digit growth in tourism. We were relying on China to boost tourist arrivals. There was China Southern that was coming to Mauritius. China Southern was coming to Mauritius with an amount of subsidy from the MTPA. That was stopped when he was Minister of Tourism. Immediately, we saw a big drop in Chinese arrivals.

Before coming to this House this afternoon, Madam Speaker, I was with a delegation of Zhejiang Provincial Tourism Bureau at the Intercontinental Hotel. They are having a forum today and they have many people who have come from Zhejiang. We have Mr Che Jun, Secretary of Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of the Republic of China, Mr Jin Yonghui, quite a number of top level people from Zhejiang. This is a direct result of the roadshow that I led to Zhejiang last year. We want the Chinese market to continue because China is a major reservoir of tourists, not only for Mauritius, but for many countries in the Indian Ocean, but we must recognise that there are structural problems in the Chinese Tourism Industry. Seychelles has also experienced a drop.

The Maldives has experienced a drop. I must say that we are very concerned about this. I am talking regularly to Air Mauritius and also to other airlines. I am in contact with the Chinese authorities to explore how we can boost arrivals from China. But, when we talk about boosting arrivals from China, we must also have the Tourism Industry in Mauritius on-board.

Any tourist from wherever he comes must be given the same treatment as the European tourist. A differential in the quality of treatment discourages certain categories of tourists from coming to Mauritius. So, I am working with l'AHRIM. I am telling them they must train their staff to ensure that any tourist from wherever country he or she comes, whatever may be the origins, must be given the identical quality treatment, and unless we do that, we will always continue to have problems with certain categories of tourists. This is why, Madam Speaker, I say that China will continue to be a major source of tourism for

Mauritius. I am happy that that delegation is here. They have come with members from the political establishment. They have also come with 150 members of the media and journalists. I do hope that this will have a lot of positive impact in the Chinese market in terms of visibility and awareness for our destination.

Madam Speaker, I say that the number has dropped from China, but it has also dropped from Reunion which is a major market for Mauritius. The reasons are simple. As from last year, there is *le principe de continuité territoriale* adopted by the French authorities with regard to travel within France. French Blue is a charter flight from France to Reunion. Charter Blue is offering an airfare from Reunion to Métropole at 350 Euros. Under the principle of the *continuité territoriale*, la Région gives 300 Euros to every passenger. So, in effect, the *réunionnais* is paying only 50 Euros to get to France. When I enquired about this, I was informed that the *continuité territoriale* was only for one trip per person per year. Yesterday, I met some people who are involved at high level in the tourism industry in Reunion and they said: ‘Although that is a principle, yet the fact is that everybody is getting this *continuité territoriale* as many times as he or she wants.’

So, inevitably, there will be an impact in Mauritius. So, this is why I keep saying that Tourism is a vulnerable industry. Something happens anywhere in the world, we have an impact here. We can see a couple of weeks ago we had this demonstration of LGBT in Port Louis. Immediately, in Reunion there was a problem and now this problem has been exported to France. So, my concern, Madam Speaker, as a Minister of Tourism, is that we need to keep maintaining the high image that we have. We must be patriotic and we have to do that at all times and not try to bring down our own destination, because whenever we do make a statement that damages the image of the country, it has an effect. When people act in a manner which damages that image, it has even more important effect. My appeal to Mauritians is that let us not do anything that will damage our tourism industry, and let us make sure that anybody who does is taken to task.

Réunion, Madam Speaker, the number has fallen down because of the reasons I have mentioned, and until we address the issue of air fares from Réunion to Mauritius, we will continue to have that problem. It is easy to say, “Oh, tourism has gone down!”, etc. But, as a responsible politician, as a responsible journalist, instead of bragging in those terms - “Oh, it has gone down, it has gone up!” - let us see what are the structural problems in the industry.

This is why we are planning to talk to Air Mauritius and Air Austral and others to see how we can boost arrivals from Réunion.

Madam Speaker, you may have seen in the Papers yesterday that we are talking of an Indian Ocean Pass. There have been attempts at the level of the *Commission de l'océan Indien* to try to have a regional airline. It is not possible; it is not feasible. We have to face the facts. We don't have that volume of traffic between islands of the Indian Ocean to justify such a carrier. So, the idea of the Indian Ocean Bill has been floated. Let us give an opportunity to whoever comes in the region; for example, someone comes from France to Seychelles, he wants to come to Mauritius, we have a single fare, let us say 100 euros. 100 euros from Seychelles to Mauritius, 100 euros from Mauritius to Madagascar and Comoros whatever, that would be the Indian Ocean Pass. I hope it works. This is how we can generate more traffic within the islands. But, of course, we need to have visa requirements waived as well, because for the Comorians to go to Réunion, for example, they have serious visa problems. These are things that we are addressing, and these are things that we need to look at in a more dispassionate matter and try to construct that industry in a way that really answers the needs of the times.

Madam Speaker, we have always marketed Mauritius as a high-end tourist destination, and the Mauritian Tourism Promotion Authority will continue to do that. We will naturally consolidate all the major markets for our tourism, but we also need to understand that things change. There is a lot of competition, especially in the Indian Ocean, and there will always be other events that come and will impact on the industry.

We have always believed that air connectivity is critical to the success of the tourism industry. We are happy that Saudi Airlines is coming to Mauritius, we are happy that Kenya Airways has started its operations, Nairobi to Mauritius, and we are also happy to announce that Alitalia will soon be starting its operations to Mauritius. We are working with the airlines that bring tourists and also with the markets where we have a reservoir of tourists.

One thing that we have realised is that direct connectivity is important for a tourist. Having to spend long hours in a stopover is not something that pleases everyone. But, for the first time, Madam Speaker, it will be possible for Mauritius to try to explore the possibility of having American tourists to Mauritius, because Kenya Airways will be flying direct to New York on a 14-hour flight, and the Americans take about two weeks holidays. In such a scenario, it will be possible to attract some of the Americans to Nairobi and Mauritius so that

they have the traditional safari and the blue safari. It is possible to do that. We are working with Kenya Airways to see how we can generate that kind of traffic from the United States to come to Mauritius, because this is a market that we have not been able to tap because of the distance. No American would want to come to Mauritius and spend two days travelling, coming to Mauritius, and two days travelling going back. So, this is why this direct flight via Nairobi might be a game changer in terms of tourism from the United States.

Madam Speaker, as you are aware, we have a new director at the MTPA. He is naturally going to follow on the work that we have been doing in promoting the destination. We are still hoping that there will be quite a number of new destinations that we will be covering. Madam Speaker, you will recall that last year KLM started its operations to Mauritius. That also is a very significant player, and we do hope to tap into the Nordic countries market. But, there again, a lot of tourism depends on seasonality. When there is lovely weather in Europe, no one will want to come to Mauritius. When it is very cold in the Nordic countries, of course, they will want to come to Mauritius. So, we have to work on this.

This is why my personal opinion is that if we work very closely with Saudi Airlines, during the low season we will be able to generate a lot of traffic from the Arab world. Because when it is 50 degrees temperature in Saudi, it is about 15-16 degrees in Mauritius. When it is not raining at all in Saudi, in Mauritius, it is raining, and the Arabs love the rain. They luxuriate in the rain and the cool weather. But we must be able to attract that kind of market. For us to be able to do that, again we need the hotel industry to work with us on this. The hotel industry today is geared towards the European market.

In fact, hon. Xavier Duval knows that the Eurocentric nature of our tourism industry is a handicap in the development of the tourism industry. So, we need to look at other opportunities and see how we can generate more traffic from the non-traditional markets. Saudi is a non-traditional market. We have excellent relations with the Saudi Authorities and hon. Soodhun is a key in opening doors for us in Saudi.

(Interruptions)

He is a Sheik.

This is something that we want to work on. The African market, China, of course, but we are also very interested in developing ties with Japan and Korea.

Last Friday, there was a prize giving for golf in Bel Ombre. I attended the gala prize giving ceremony, and I was pleasantly surprised to see among the golfers who came to play in Mauritius, people from Korea, China, the Czech Republic, the United States, Papeete Tahiti, they came from very far, and someone had travelled about 36 hours to come to Mauritius to play golf. I believe that is something that we really need to work on. Golf is one activity that brings people who are high spenders, and maybe we can become one day like Singapore, where they can have bookings for golf years in advance. Who knows! It can happen, but we need to work on this.

Madam Speaker, you will recall that recently we had an international conference on sustainability and digitalisation in tourism, and I am very happy that in the Budget we have a lot of paragraphs dealing with digitalisation. What will happen with digitalisation in the tourism industry is very important. As we move forward with digitalisation, people booking online, people giving a lot of personal data to the hotels, there will be need to preserve the privacy of the customers, and this is why that particular conference was critical in getting everybody aware of the need to comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the data protection provisions of the European Union, because many of our European tourists come to Mauritius and their data is stored somewhere. So, what we do with the data is very important and how we handle the data is also very important because we do not want our stakeholders to get into trouble with the European authorities when it comes to the protection of data.

Madam Speaker, I must say that when the Budget was presented, the stakeholders in the tourism industry were not very happy, but they were satisfied with the measures announced and they were even more satisfied because of the amount of money devoted to the protection of the environment. We all know about coastal erosion. This year has been a bad year because of the heavy rains and the cyclones which have also damaged a lot of the coasts.

We are spending quite an amount of money with my colleague the Minister of Environment on restoring the beaches to what they were before and in areas which have been totally degraded to see how we can improve on what has happened because the technology exists today. In fact, in the Caribbean, especially in Cuba, they have a technology which restores the public beaches and coastal erosion matters within a particularly short time. So, we are going to look at all recent technologies for the restoration of our coasts because the sea and the coast will be critical as always for the tourism industry.

But, while we speak of the sea, in all my interventions, whether in Mauritius or elsewhere, I have been saying that Mauritius is more than the sea, the sand and the sun. There is a lot to know about Mauritius and we are spending quite some energy on promoting religious tourism, medical tourism and cultural tourism. We are having events all the year round. We are marketing the events; when the cruise season starts, we are planning to have a number of events in Port Louis to coincide with the arrival of the cruises so that at least those on the cruise ships will be exposed to what Mauritius is all about.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition spoke about getting the tourists to come to get to know the local communities etc. Yes! But, we have a major problem. It is the all-inclusive packages that are marketed by the tour operators. Until and unless we succeed in dealing with that issue, the tourist who comes to Mauritius gets transport from the airport to the hotel, he is given breakfast, lunch, dinner and all drinks. Why should he go out? He is given everything there! I have been the Minister of Tourism on a number of occasions and I have been wrestling with this problem for many years and I know there is a lot of reticence on the part of the tour operators to let go of this. The time will come with online bookings and digitalisation that this will have to change. But, for this to change we must be able to offer to the tourists opportunities to spend their money.

Where do they spend their money? Entertainment, world-class restaurants, casinos, activities and everything that goes with a big entertainment centre! I have spoken to my colleague the Minister of Housing and Lands that we need to find land around the major hotel groups, let us say in Grand' Baie, in Flic-en-Flac, in Bel Ombre, in Palmar and in Belle Mare, to find land that can be developed for the purpose of world-class restaurants and entertainment centres. We must be able to tell the tourists that if they go out of the hotel, they have opportunities there.

We must have a good transport system because if you are, let us say in Le Touessrok or Shangri-La's as it is now called, and you want to go to Flacq, you must take a taxi to reach Flacq. That makes it even more difficult. I have also asked the hotels to put more lights where the hotels are because when there is bright light people are comforted, they are not afraid, but when there is no light they are afraid to go out. So, we need to work on this. But I have to work on the legacy of what was there by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. These are things that he should have done a long time ago. Now we have to do it because we need to provide facilities, especially for the Chinese tourists. I am happy that the development at Jin

Fei will be one of those developments that will attract tourists. That will be one of the major entertainment centres in Mauritius once the whole project is completed. This is something that we will have to be looking at.

Madam Speaker, there are other things in the tourism industry that are of concern. We have the pleasure craft problems, we have the taxis. Every now and then in the newspapers you hear about the taxis. The taxis complain that they are not getting business from the hotels that they were used to. But I tell them the business model has changed. There was a time when the tourists would come to Mauritius and the only means of transport they would have to go anywhere was through a taxi. Today this has changed. Tourists can take the bus. They have already booked for their transport, for their excursions and for their visits and this is so much business that the taxi operator does not get and that creates a lot of '*manque à gagner*' for the taxis.

So, what I have suggested to them is to do like the big tour operators, go online, have a platform, sell your services, tell them what your tariffs are, tell them what are your rates; the Tourism Authority is working on that. Because, until and unless, we have clarity in the rates, there will be many tourists who will not want to take a taxi. As Minister I hear lots of complaints, I get letters. A taxi agrees to do a trip for Rs1,000 and along the way it has gone up to Rs2,000. This is the sort of thing that we need to avoid in order to give confidence to the tourist that when he or she is taking a taxi, a public means of transport, the tariffs are there, the tariffs must be clearly spelt out. Of course, there will be one or two exceptions if somebody hires a car for the whole day or whatever. These are things that will happen, but we need to have a system that is transparent and a system that can really work in the interest of the whole community.

Madam Speaker, let me say that I have spoken to quite a number of people after the Budget, there is a lot of confidence that has been created in the country as a result of the Budget. There is a feel-good factor and there is a sense of purpose in the population, especially among the young. The young people today know that there is Rs1 billion earmarked for prospects for their employment. I think this is something that is unique and this is an opportunity that I hope will be seized upon by the young people to really try to get training so that they get empowered to become productive. There are a lot of skills that we need to develop. When I say skills, Madam Speaker, it is because we need skills in all sectors of the economy, including the tourism industry.

I am informed, for example, that we do not have qualified people to be Food and Beverages Manager in the hotels. We don't have good sommeliers. We need to develop the skills and this is why this training programme will have to be across the board. It will have to cover all sectors of the economy and also the sectors of modern Mauritius, where we want to take Mauritius forward. This is the opportunity that the young people have. I hope that those who will be responsible for implementing these provisions will bear in mind that Mauritius is moving forward, and instead of complaining about foreigners coming to Mauritius, we must have our own people capable of delivering at the level that the foreigners are delivering. Until we do that, we will continue to have a problem of mismatch between skills and there will always be a lot of problems when we allow expatriates to come and work, whether in the hotel industry or in other sectors. So, let us work on this Budget! Some people say it is *un budget populiste, électoraliste*, but as far as I am concerned, I go by the word of the Prime Minister, he has another Budget to present next year and then we will go to the elections and we will present our *bilan* to the people.

Thank you very much.

Madam Speaker: Hon. Sesungrur!

(4.40 p.m.)

The Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance (Mr D. Sesungrur):

Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is always difficult to intervene after the presentation of a strong orator like my colleague, hon. Gayan. I cannot agree more on what he has just said, that this Budget has not only had broad consensus but has also created a feel good factor in the population. And how do I come to this conclusion, Madam Speaker? I have come across an interesting article during the week-end, which is from the '5 Plus', which has done a *micro-trottoir*, which is entitled "*bidze-la ki pe dir?*" So, there have been a number of people who have been interviewed and they have given their opinion, like, for instance –

"Pe fer la bous dou (...)."

Which is already something interesting.

"(...)Kot marsan legim zot pe dir lartik pann monte."

Kot kwafer, someone had to say this –

“Je travaille sur un filling et les gens semblent être contents.”

Going on, *dans ene restaurant-bar*, I suppose restaurant-bar Baloomoody. He is not here!

(Interruptions)

I do not know, they have deserted the Parliament, I do not know why, maybe because of the next *Comité Central*. The guy had this to say, in restaurant –

“Mes habitués sont contents que les prix de l’alcool et de la cigarette n’ont pas monté. C’est comme si c’était une baisse.”

And *lor laplaz* now, the interviewee had this to say –

“Labier pann monte ? Enn mari nouvel sa!”

He goes on saying –

“Saverdir gouvernman pou gagn lot eleksion sa.”

So, this is the kind of reaction that we can see.

(Interruptions)

Madam Speaker, the context of this Budget, as the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance presented, was in a special context where we were celebrating our 50th anniversary of the Independence. And it is not surprising that some of the Members of the Opposition, despite they know it well deep down that there are very good measures in the Budget, they have tried to create a kind of *démagogie* trying to paint a dark picture. And the main one is the one coming from hon. Ganoo, who is not here again, and the other one from the PMSD side. But the reality today, Madam Speaker, is that we have never seen an Opposition so divided since independence. And they have been unable so far to present an alternative to the population. There has not been any formal proposal, any valid proposal from the Opposition apart from baseless commentaries, apart from demagogical remarks. So, for me today, the Opposition has no credibility, they are so divided that they are unable to speak with one voice. They do not represent an alternative.

I have listened carefully to the hon. Leader of the Opposition regarding his commentaries, his analysis of the economic situation of this country. I must say, I disagree totally with him because he has picked up selectively on certain issues which he has used to

paint again a dark and gloomy picture about the economy. But when we look at the trend, we all know, Madam Speaker, in December 2014, when the people decided to change the regime. One of the main reasons for that was because of the chaotic economic situation. The growth rate was stagnating around 3% and it is this Government, when we came in office, with the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance using his good offices, he has tried to use the best mechanism, the best strategies to re-engineer the economy. And it is this Government which is now creating what is called a *lueur d'espoir* with the growth rising to nearly 4%. And, hopefully, by next year *on va vaincre cette barre psychologique de 4% qui est extrêmement intéressant*; the major criticism of the Leader of the Opposition regarding *la croissance économique*, regarding the inflation and also regarding the debt.

Coming to the situation of the debt, we all know that we have neither created the debt pile which is there today, nor do we want to leave a legacy where there will be more and more debt on the future generation. The Minister of Finance has taken appropriate measures and we are hopeful that next year the level of our debt will continue to go down. But an important aspect when we analyse our debt situation is the composition of the debt and it is important for us to know that we neither want to live beyond our means, but we also want our country to develop. We want to invest so that we have better infrastructure, we have a better condition of living, we can give our population a better quality of life. And the external debt portion of the total debt today represents approximately 18%, which is far from being alarming. Because what is more important for us to understand is that whether we have a debt level which is manageable. And today, given that most of our debt portion is domestic debt; it is recomforting to know that we have a *marge de manoeuvre* which is interesting and we can have recourse to measures in case we have to repay, in case we have to reimburse.

For me, Madam Speaker, the debt level is not alarming at all, neither we have created that debt pile nor are we going to leave a legacy which will be heavy for the next generation. We are a responsible Government. We will assume our responsibility and try to maintain our debt level within a limit, which is acceptable and everything has been done so that this debt level will go on decreasing. As far as inflation is concerned, Madam Speaker, we have done well under this variable, especially when we compare ourselves with other periods like in the years 2005 to 2010 when we faced high inflations. Under this Government, inflation even fell to 1% although we expect inflation to be around 4.2%, but this is because there have been massive injection in projects and we have to expect a kind of impact on this.

As regards fiscal deficit, Madam Speaker, again, here, the Minister of Finance has acted responsibly. Our fiscal deficit will be maintained within the limit of 3.2%, which is a satisfactory indicator, very close to the rule of thumb in the Maastricht Treaty governing fiscal conduct in the EU. Unemployment - again, here, we have made progress - is on the downturn. It is around 7%, lowest from 2005 where it was around 9%. Regarding investment and savings, again, we have an investment and savings level which is satisfactory. So, overall, on this side of the House, we believe that there have been much progress in improving our financial situation and we will not rest on our laurels, we will continue to strive, we will continue to persevere, so that we improve furthermore on those key economic fundamentals.

Madam Speaker, from the very outset, let me congratulate the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the presentation of the 2018/2019 Budget from being at the crossroads in 2015, we have progressed to a new era of development in 2016, before rising to the challenge of our missions in 2017 and now in 2018, we are well poised and on track in pursuing our transformative journey. The 2018/2019 Budget revolves around defined priorities namely: economic prosperity, social harmony and environmental sustainability. A prosperous and inquisitive economy where everybody has the opportunity to shine, a budget which is full of new opportunities, a civilised and tolerant nation which cares for the vulnerable, empowering the poor and the needy where talent and hard work is rewarded. We want everyone on-board. No one should be left aside. Madam Speaker, this is the Mauritius we want to leave to the future generation!

This Budget is a budget which has all the ingredients to prepare our people and our nation to meet the challenges ahead and embrace the future. A future which will be full of change, full of challenges, but also full of opportunities, either we embrace the future, seize the opportunities and build a successful and prosperous Mauritius or we hide from it. We have no doubt, Madam Speaker, we choose future. There is much to comment on this exceptional Budget, which has been widely acclaimed by one and all, by the private sector, by the business community and the people at large. The hon. Minister has very amply carried out a balancing exercise in the interests of various stakeholders to ensure a Budget of optimism, focus and support. It has gone down in history that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has, throughout his various ministerial mandates, given a special attention to the poor and the needy. A Budget well engineered to infuse renewed confidence and instil a feel good factor in

the country. A Budget geared to bring greater inclusiveness in the face of vulnerabilities afflicting the poor and stagnant and falling income of the middle-class.

The Budget provides focus strategies to strengthen the middle-class, augment its purchasing power and give an immediate boost to the family budget. Socio-economic welfare remains an imperative for Government with youth employability as a centre stage through diverse apprenticeship programmes. The hon. Prime Minister has kindled new hope in the lives of many Mauritians. Hope of a better future for this generation and the next. This is a realistic Budget. A Budget that speaks to the people. A Budget which attends to the issues they are facing. A people's budget, a common man's budget with considerable measures aimed at relieving the suffering and offloading the pressure of many of our compatriots. We have lived over three years of renewal and regeneration. The new measures announced by the hon. Prime Minister have been woven with most dexterity on an economic and social canvas using the same consistent visionary thread. A vision for Mauritius to be in the league of high-income countries where each and every Mauritian can aspire to live a prosperous and peaceful life.

C'est un budget, Madame la présidente, qui répond à des besoins fondamentaux de la population en matière d'infrastructure, de logement d'éducation, de santé et bien sûr pour les secteurs des services financiers. Ce budget va certainement aider à combler le fossé économique en tendant la main aux plus démunis et en ouvrant la voie à plus d'égalité en matière de chance et d'opportunité de vie. Madame la présidente, le Grand Argentier a présenté un budget dont les mesures sont plébiscitées par la population, incluant les représentants des différents secteurs socio-économiques, n'en déplaise à l'opposition, les échos, qui nous parviennent suite au discours prononcé jeudi dernier, sont plus que positifs. Oui, Madame la présidente, je le dis avec ferveur et fierté que c'est un budget visionnaire sur bien des plans et un budget socialiste à tous les niveaux. Depuis jeudi dernier, l'Opposition parlementaire, extra-parlementaire s'évertuent à dépeindre ce budget de manière sombre et négative, mais comme dit l'adage: «il n'est pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir».

Madam Speaker, I will now move on and focus on my own areas of responsibility. The financial services industry has grown consistently over these past years. However, the sector has reached a maturity stage and needed to be reengineered. Accordingly, during the year gone by, we have dedicated much time and concerted effort in envisioning the new Financial Services Centre, went up with the abolition of the blueprint, setting out new

strategies and policies. Now, that this report is ready, the major challenge will be the implementation of the measures and strategies. This Steering Committee set up under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office, will track timely and effective implementation of recommendations contained in the blueprint.

Madam Speaker, in the latest World Economic Outlook, the International Monetary Fund is expecting global growth to strengthen from 3.87% in 2017 to 3.9% in 2018 and 2019 supported by strong momentum, favourable market sentiment, accommodative financial conditions and the domestic and international repercussions of expansionary fiscal policy in the US. Growth in emerging market and developing economies is expected to increase further by 4.9% in 2018 and 5.1% in 2019, supported by continued strong economic performance in emerging Asia.

Comparable to IMF forecast for Mauritius, Statistics Mauritius is forecasting real GDP growth of 3.9% in 2018, taking into account performance observed in key sectors of the economy and policy measures announced in the Budget 2017/2018. While a higher savings rate of 10.9% is projected over 2018, the investment rate is expected to be slightly lower at 17.2% of GDP. Looking at all the major macro-economic fundamentals, we have every reason to be optimistic on the future growth path of the economy.

I am confident that the various projects underway and the proposals put forward within this Budget will stimulate the economy even further. Mauritius has forged a strong reputation as an International Financial Centre with the sector's growth rates clocking over 5% during the last four years and currently contributing to 12.1% of the Mauritian economy, directly employing more than 14,000 professionals.

Branding Mauritius would be one of the leading avenues through which we would capture new markets and expand into existing ones. Branding involves those investments in understanding customer needs and creating brands that appeal to them, by putting much emphasis on innovation, digitalization, artificial intelligence, block chain and Fintech, what many refer to as the fourth industrial revolution. The Budget provides the enabling environment for Mauritius to become a Fintech hub in the region, where we can effectively sell Mauritius brand to the region.

This branding, coupled with application of the blueprint, which would provide a roadmap to protecting and preserving our access to the Indian market despite the revised

DTA and the creation of a platform linking Asia to Africa through the Africa Strategy, will surely provide a signature recipe for Mauritius to move from an upper middle income economy to the restricted club of high income economies. The Mauritius IFC is particularly poised to play a strategic role in attracting investments and promoting prosperity for and across Africa.

In line with the Africa Strategy, Mauritius is acting as a catalyst for investment on the continent. And Mauritius features among the top sources of investment in Africa. The figures speak for themselves. For the year 2016, total inbound investment in Africa stood at USD 59 billion, and it is estimated that almost half of it went through Mauritius. In terms of private equity, our jurisdiction is trusted by leading an impactful private Africa Focus Funds.

Overall, there are more than 450 private equity funds that have domiciled in the Mauritius IFC and investing in the African continent. Our value as an IFC for Africa is enormous. This Budget clearly indicates the innovative strait of Government with the creation of a Mauritius Sovereign Fund with two schemes to attract high-net-worth individuals. This would become an essential component for the development of the Financial Services Sector in particular and other sectors in general.

Madam Speaker, reputed international organisations such as the World Bank have repeatedly drawn attention to the fact that Mauritius has a skills mismatch problem, and it is in dire need of soft skills to satisfy the country's ambition to become an International Financial Centre of repute. Furthermore, with an aging population and the fact that the population will start to decrease in the near future, Mauritius faces a serious demographic challenge, which will definitely have a direct impact on our productivity if not appropriately managed.

By bringing in highly qualified skilled individuals to the country, this will help Mauritius to immediately move to the next level of its development path, while at the same time providing our compatriots opportunities for transfer of knowledge. The Financial Services Sector is furthermore expected to undergo bold policy developments and radical transformation following the announcement of a new harmonised fiscal regime for domestic and global business companies and specific fiscal regime for banks.

The Budget also provides for the end of Category 2 Global Business Companies licences as from January 2019, with a grandfathering provision for existing companies. There

are additional enhanced substance conditions that will be required, reaffirming our commitment to position the Mauritius International Financial Centre as a trusted and substance-based jurisdiction. The hon. Prime Minister, Madam Speaker, has no doubt consolidated those foundations by delivering a Budget of substance for a jurisdiction of substance.

As of date, there are 11,632 GBC 1 structures, 10,154 GBC 2 structures, 186 Management Companies and 989 Global Funds licenced. Assets under management exceed USD85 billion. The acquisition of IFS Sanne Global, ABAX, by world-renowned groups shows the continued confidence of the international community in the Mauritius jurisdiction. Two investment banks will soon set up shop in Mauritius.

In addition, Dentons, the world largest law firm, has confirmed that it is extending footprint in our part of the world and associating its brand with two local law firms. Considered as a highly compliant jurisdiction according to international best practices, the Mauritius IFC offers a platform of substance for investing into Africa. The jurisdiction has been given place of pride in New Mauritius league tables, including the World Bank doing business, global competitiveness index and the Forbes survey of best countries for business. Moreover, Mauritius figures on the OECD white list of jurisdictions and has been recognised as being compliant with global tax laws.

Madam Speaker, the ambition of the Mauritian IFC is to double the size of the IFC revenue in real terms by 2030 to reach approximately more than USD2.2 billion, thus increasing the financial sector's contribution to GDP. This is also expected to translate into a rise in direct employment in the sector by 1.5 times and tax rated revenue by 2 times to approximately USD0.3 billion, which will contribute to the goal of transforming Mauritius into a high income country.

Madam Speaker, Mauritius remains the preferred investment platform for India bound investments due to a multitude of reasons. With the revision of the India-Mauritius Double Taxation Agreement in 2015, the market has seen more certainty being brought to the role and potential of Mauritius IFC for the Indian market. Post revision, the Mauritius IFC is increasingly being considered as a financial centre of substance for new avenues, including amongst others debt structuring and servicing.

The Mauritius IFC also offers the breadth and depth of structuring investments into regional headquarters and holding companies, and this is completed by offering such as treasury management centres, global funds, protected cell companies, captives, family offices and trust. Mauritius is also well poised to be the risk-mitigating platform that would provide the security and peace of mind to investors with 23 investment promotion and protection agreements signed with African States, which include clauses for protection against expropriation, compensation for losses and free repatriation of capital profits.

Madam Speaker, the Financial Services Industry is considered as a key engine of growth. However, dynamic as it is, the Mauritius IFC ambitions are challenged by a change in international economic landscape, international pressures and adverse Press coverage in addition to an eroding relative value proposition. Mauritius also has specific challenges to overcome that will protect its traditional markets. It goes without saying that we have got a tough job ahead. There are several imperatives and actions required at various levels. For instance, business environment, we will have to further improve our business environment to make it simple and user-friendly. At the level of our reputation, our image, Mauritius will have to actively improve the nature and enrich its reputation by building and communicating the image of Mauritius as a world-class specialist IFC underpinned by deep institutional and national relationship.

At the level of human capital, Madam Speaker, there is a shortage of professionals with the deep specialisation required for certain IFC activities. For instance, experienced wealth managers, corporate and private bankers, financial risk management professionals etc. At the level of banks and financial institutions, we will have to attract more international financial institutions, international law firms to improve the depth of financial services.

Madam Speaker, I now turn to another important responsibility of my Ministry which is good governance. The setting up of the Ministry was in itself a vivid testimony of our avowed and unshakeable belief in good governance, in clean, transparent and accountable administration. The 2015-2019 Programme and successive national Budgets have repeatedly underscored the need for good governance at all levels to improve the life of the common men across the length and breadth of the nation.

Madam Speaker, good governance, I must underscore here is solidly entrenched in Mauritius. It stands high on the priority list of Government agencies, formal oversight institutions, subnational Governments and local communities, civil society, the private sector

and political actors and institutions. All these actors do understand the importance of transparency, accountability, relationships between and among them to keep corruption under check to ensure effective, efficient and equitable delivery of services and to promote the development. Beyond being important for sustainable development, good governance remains for us desirable as a goal in its own right.

Madam Speaker, let me also draw your attention to the fact that we do not have any secret recipe for the promotion of good governance nor do we have a one-size-fits-all solution. Good governance hinges on individuals as well as collective commitment to ethical and lawful practices, a clear vision and mission, adherence to transparent values besides an unshakeable belief in an integrated approach to governance, ethics, risk and compliance.

Madam Speaker, to strengthen the practice of good governance my Ministry has always set in motion its plan to set up an institutional framework in the form of a national office of good governance. The national office will have, as its main objective, to disseminate good governance principles and practices at all levels of national life. Today, governance cuts across disciplines and institutions. Madam Speaker, the office will imperatively be the watchdog to fulfil Government avowed promise to shape a new, clean, transparent, secure, prosperous and strong nation. The ultimate responsibility of the national office will be to initiate, propose, lead, control, coordinate and supervise the implementation of good governance practices at all social, political and economic institutions in the country.

Madam Speaker, to demonstrate Government determination, my Ministry has already initiated discussions with the World Bank, the Mo Ibrahim Foundation and has enlisted the services of a world renowned British consultant for the preparation of a roadmap. I must say all those we have contacted and shared our vision have shown great enthusiasms in the realisation of this project. This project is ever more relevant with the advent of the blueprint for financial services in Mauritius, and I am confident that it will trigger rapid economic development and boost prosperity, create employment opportunities, promote new businesses and improve the well-being of the citizens and generate a feel-good factor on the island.

Madam Speaker, to conclude, I wish to end with these few concluding words. This Budget is presented during a most auspicious period as the country celebrates its 50 years of sovereignty and freedom to chart and determine its own destiny. This reminds me of the Budget Speech delivered by hon. Paul Bérenger in 1982 which shows the long way that we

have completed till now, and the paragraphs that I am going to quote shows the dramatic situation in which our country was in those days, and I quote –

“If the IMF were to deny balance of payment support to us, the other financial institutions would also withdraw the support because these institutions view an IMF arrangement as a guarantee of security. If we do not find the foreign exchange from these sources to meet the deficit in a matter of months, we will no longer be able to pay for imports of petrol and oil, food, raw materials and other goods. In that event imports would halt until we receive foreign exchange.”

That was the situation in 1982 compared to a reserve today which represents approximately 11 months, nearly a year of import in terms of reserves. So, there has been a long way which has been completed. Let me assure you that my Ministry will do its utmost to support and fulfil the vision of this Government in the realisation of its promises to the Mauritian population.

I thank the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the efforts put for this Budget in order to keep our country on a steady course and provide innovative insights to support both the economic and social perspective of development.

I wish to make an appeal to the population to contribute fully in our economic reconstruction and nation-building endeavours and help our Government in modelling and constructing a better future for our children. In this way, our transformation efforts will serve us all now and in the future.

Madame la présidente, ce budget est un budget à visage humain. C’est un budget social. C’est un budget économique. C’est un budget qui tisse le lien entre le mauricien et sa capacité de se prendre en main pour améliorer sa condition de vie. Des choix stratégiques énoncés dans ce document tracent la voie pour permettre à notre République de passer un autre palier de son développement. La vision du Premier ministre est claire. De pays à revenus intermédiaires, Maurice doit accéder aux *clubs selects* des pays à revenus élevés tout en ne négligeant pas le capital humain. Le chemin est tracé et c’est ensemble la main dans la main que nous devons le parcourir parce qu’avant tout nous sommes une nation.

Je vous remercie, Madame la présidente.

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

At 5.19 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.57 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhuboo!

Mr E. Jhuboo (Third Member for Savanne & Black River): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to intervene on the 2018 Budget.

M. le président, en 2015, lors de ma toute première intervention dans cette Assemblée, en marge des débats parlementaires, je concluais de la manière suivante –

« Voilà, M. le président, (...). »

C'était vous qui étiez dans la chaise.

« (...) nous sommes à l'aube de ce premier budget de *l'Alliance Lepep*. Critiquer dans le vide n'a pas de sens ; critiquer sans pouvoir comparer en ce qui a été promis et ce qui a été réalisé n'est pas productif. Nous le ferons en temps et lieu. »

Je crois que le temps est arrivé, c'est l'heure du bilan.

Pour répondre à l'honorable ministre Seeruttun, qui a fait une très belle citation, et qui a fait référence aux amateurs de cigares, il y a une citation d'un grand amateur de cigare qui était un homme politique éminent qui s'appelait Winston Churchill et qui disait la chose suivante –

« La critique peut être désagréable, mais elle est nécessaire. Elle est comme la douleur pour le corps humain: elle attire l'attention sur ce qui ne va pas. »

Donc, M. le président, nous sommes au quatrième budget de ce gouvernement. L'avant dernier, d'après le Premier ministre ; le dernier d'après d'autres, mais nous le savons déjà tous, le cinquième budget ne compte pas, puisque nous serons déjà en campagne électorale.

Pour tout gouvernement, les trois premières années sont cruciales. Pendant ces trois premières années, c'est pendant ces moments que les actions gouvernementales sont élaborées, les stratégies définies, peaufinées, la stratégie économique et sociale mise en place.

Pendant la quatrième année, on rectifie ce qui n'a pas marché, et la cinquième on récolte ce qu'on a semé, encore faut-il que les semences ont été bonnes et que la terre a été bien travaillée et irriguée.

Donc, pour moi, M. le président, c'est l'heure du bilan et ce budget, dans son contenu, est décevant, quelques mesurètes mais dans l'ensemble un budget décevant et quelques mesures choquantes.

Pour commencer, nous sommes tous unanimes à le reconnaître. Les premiers budgets successifs proposés par ce gouvernement n'ont pas été à la hauteur. Ils ont été un chapelet de bonnes intentions, de promesses mirobolantes. Mais les remèdes proposés à l'économie qui étaient censés déclencher, d'être le moteur d'un redémarrage économique fort et nous propulser dans la ligue des pays à hauts revenus, n'ont pas été au rendez-vous et n'ont pas amené les résultats escomptés.

On Thursday last, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the presentation of the Budget, we saw hon. Members from the Government side clapping their hands while listening to all the measures proposed by the hon. Prime Minister. I would like to remind my hon. friends of the following measures which were announced in the various previous Budgets by this Government and that were never implemented –

- an agri-business park in Highlands covering an area of 100 *arpents* – *zéro*;
- to further diversify our economy, the setting up of a manufacturing pharmaceutical hub in Rose Belle – *zéro*;
- Government will facilitate the setting up of a National History Museum – *zéro*;
- Heritage City – *zéro*;
- provision for six new Police Stations, a new Divisional Headquarters and two more Detention Centres – *zéro*;
- The setting up of a bicycle factory – *zéro*, and
- the creation of five Technopoles – *zéro*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I could go on and on like this. This Government has been in power since December 2014. It is the fourth Budget presented to the nation and, as I mentioned earlier, there was also one economic statement. There have been three consecutive Finance Ministers and, unfortunately, the figures speak for themselves. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, all our major economic indicators are simultaneously in the red, save it for financial

services and real estate. We are on a declining trend for all the other sectors of the economy in terms of real growth.

Essayons un instant de résumer ce qui a été promis par ce gouvernement sur les fondamentaux de l'économie. C'est ce que je qualifierai ce soir pour le gouvernement de vos actes manqués. Quels sont ces actes manqués ? La promesse d'une croissance soutenue de 5.3% a été un mirage. Elle a été de 3.7% entre 2015 et 2017 et sera aux alentours de 3.5% à 3.7% pour 2018. M. le président, dans le secteur privé, dans toute entreprise qui se respecte, chaque chef de département annonce ses objectifs et à la fin de l'année, un passage en revue de la performance de tout un chacun est effectuée afin de vérifier que ces résultats sont en concordance avec les objectifs annoncés et dans quelle mesure ces résultats ont dévié de leur objectif principal et le pourquoi de cette déviation.

Donc, s'il fallait procéder à ce même exercice pour ce gouvernement, sur le sujet de la croissance, ce gouvernement est de l'ordre de 30% en dessous de ces objectifs qu'il avait lui-même annoncés. Donc, vous n'avez pas tenu votre promesse en matière de croissance. Nous voulons toujours jouer dans la ligue des grands, dans la ligue des pays à hauts revenus. Et pour cela, il fallait générer 13,500 dollars par habitant pour 2015 et 2017. Nous avons généré seulement 9,760 dollars. Donc, nous sommes en dessous de 22% des objectifs annoncés par ce gouvernement.

Sur la création d'emplois, vous avez annoncé vous-même la création de 20,000 emplois par an. Vous avez créé en moyenne moins de 5,000 emplois. Vous êtes à presque 75% en dessous de vos objectifs sur l'emploi. En ce qu'il s'agit de l'investissement par rapport au produit intérieur brut, vous avez annoncé vous-même qu'il représenterait 25% en 2018. Il a été en moyenne de 17% entre 2015 et 2017 et il sera de 17% aussi en 2018. Donc, 30% en dessous de vos engagements. Sur l'investissement direct, vous avait fait une promesse de R 28 milliards en 2018. Vous serez aux alentours de R 13.6 milliards et là encore, vous êtes à 30% de l'objectif annoncé.

Si nous parlons du poids du secteur manufacturier sur le produit intérieur brut, vous avez annoncé un pourcentage de 25%. Il a été de 14% en 2014 et sera probablement de 13% en 2018; 44% en dessous de vos promesses. Le plus grave est l'engagement que vous avez pris sur la dette publique qui était de la ramener à 50% du *PIB* en 2018. Résultat, vous êtes à 63.8% de l'ordre de 28% en dessous de vos propres objectifs.

Imaginez-vous, M. le président, un seul instant, vous êtes un père de famille qui gagne R 100 et presque R 70 va pour le remboursement de la dette. Qu'est-ce qui reste pour nourrir sa famille? Qu'est-ce qui reste pour économiser? Qu'est-ce qui reste pour éduquer vos enfants ? Cela veut dire que nous sommes endettés à hauteur de 63.8 % de notre produit intérieur brut, de ce que nous produisons.

Concernant maintenant les secteurs porteurs de notre économie, M. le président. Le ministre Gayan a fait une déclaration adressée à l'honorable *Leader* de l'Opposition en lui disant la chose suivante : 'indépendamment des gouvernements l'industrie touristique ne souffrira pas'. Mon honorable collègue, le Docteur Boolell, m'a fait part d'une intervention parlementaire et c'était l'honorable Jean Claude de l'Estrac qui disait à l'honorable Madan Dulloo, alors ministre de l'Agriculture: « *Heureusement pou twa canne pousse tou sel* ». La même logique devrait s'appliquer pour le tourisme.

Une industrie touristique a besoin d'un engagement fort du gouvernement. C'est une industrie qui ne peut pas tenir debout sans l'appui du gouvernement, tant en matière de sécurité qu'en matière de promotion touristique ou même en matière de protection de l'environnement. Le tourisme pourtant considéré comme une manne, une ressource inépuisable, stable, ce secteur s'essouffle. Nous avons une croissance de 5.2% en 2017, nettement inférieure à celle de 2016 et elle sera de 4.7% en 2018. Les nouveaux marchés dont le marché chinois, sur lequel nous avons beaucoup investi, a perdu 20% en 2015 et 2017. Nous sommes en retard de 16% depuis le début de l'année.

Lancé en grande pompe par le ministre Mentor, à l'époque lui-même Premier ministre, le corridor Maurice-Singapour était défini de la sorte –

“The country might be living a defining moment in the history of its economic development. Mauritius is celebrated in our part of the world as a successful model in developmental terms and described as an “economic miracle” by international organisations. The air corridor between Mauritius and Changi Airport in Singapore promises to be a game-changing move by the government and offers high prospects for the economy.”

But the reality, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it is not picking up as shown by the very low number of clients using Mauritius as an aviation hub and a sum of Rs40 m. was earmarked in the Budget for the promotion of the corridor.

M. le président, pour le tourisme il y a quelques mesurette sur le secteur. Il n'y a rien de concret dans ce budget qui permettra la relance à long terme de ce secteur. Rien ou très peu sur la protection de nos lagons. Sur le secteur de l'informel et c'est là d'où viendra la croissance, le gîte, les tables d'hôte, la location de maisons, la location d'appartements. C'est ce qu'on appelle secteur informel. Rien sur ce segment et qui est pourtant un segment porteur.

Sur le secteur cannier, M. le président, je laisserai le soin à l'honorable Dr. Boolell, le spécialiste de la maison, d'élaborer sur ce sujet épineux et technique. Je souhaite me recentrer sur le volet de l'agroalimentaire. Le ministre Seeruttun nous a fait un chapelet de toutes ses bonnes intentions.

Nous avons aujourd'hui des milliers d'hectares qui sont à l'abandon, et ce gouvernement est jusqu'à l'heure incapable d'inciter nos campagnes à redevenir le garde-manger de notre pays. On se concentre sur la quasi-totalité de notre énergie sur la production de légumes, mais très peu sur la production animale, très peu sur la production de bœufs, de cabris, de moutons, de porcs ; tout est importé. Aucune tentative réelle n'est mise en place pour réduire nos importations. Nous avons 1.2 million de touristes, nous avons 1.3 d'habitants à nourrir, et notre *focus* a toujours été le sucre au détriment du non-sucre. Il faut former académiquement à l'élevage et à la transformation une nouvelle génération de Mauriciens. Il faut accompagner financièrement ces nouveaux entrepreneurs et les équiper d'outils modernes. Il y a quelques lacunes dans ce budget, j'en ai fait moi-même l'expérience. C'est pour vous démontrer la léthargie des services vétérinaires. J'ai fait moi-même une application pour une importation de *breeders* de cabris. Cela fait presque deux mois que je suis sans réponse. Donc, il y a d'un côté les bonnes intentions et il y a de l'autre coté la réalité ; la lourdeur administrative. Là encore, M. le président, les normes MauriGAP 1 et MauriGAP 2.

Vous aviez annoncé - pas moi - votre objectif, d'ici 2020, de produire 50% de légumes bio. Si nous sommes aujourd'hui à 5% de production de légumes bio, cela relèverai du miracle. Donc, encore une fois, il y a des effets, de bonnes intentions, mais derrière cela ne suit pas.

Sur le secteur manufacturier, M. le président, alors qu'il devait représenter 25% de notre produit intérieur brut, comme promis, il représente 13%. On a perdu le *focus* sur cette industrie. Les gros *players* se sont délocalisés vers Madagascar, vers le Bangladesh ou l'Inde,

et depuis, les petits et les moyens commencent à fermer les uns après les autres. Et pire, ce qui est produit à Maurice ne l'est pas par nos employés. Il est produit par la main-d'œuvre étrangère, principalement chinoise ou indienne. Vous avez perdu le *focus* sur cette industrie ; vous n'avez pas pu créer les conditions pour que les PME de ce secteur survivent. Et pire, vous n'avez pas pu former des milliers de Mauriciens qui auraient pu travailler dans ce secteur. A défaut, ce sont des millions de roupies qui sont payés à des étrangers, qui rapatrient et dépensent l'argent produit sur notre territoire dans leur pays.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the fishing industry is concerned, the business model has not changed for decades. And as a consequence, this Government has not been able to attract tuna fishing companies to register their vessels in Mauritius, hence missing the opportunity to create a Mauritian Tuna Fleet. The Asian Fishing Fleet is operating around 200 vessels in Mauritius and hardly one is registered in Mauritius. This is a loss of opportunity in terms of value added for the economy. The current shipping laws in place are not favourable for the registration of foreign shipping vessels. This needs to be amended so as to create a Mauritian flag deep sea fishing fleet.

As far as the agreement with the European Union is concerned, we can draw the same conclusion. Mauritius is not looking at the long-term and, in essence, is letting go the opportunity to develop its fishing industry and related industries. At this point, there is no agreement on the fish having to be processed locally, nor is there any provision or measures which may incite the fleet to be registered in Mauritius.

M. le président, le plus grand gâchis de ce gouvernement se joue au niveau du ministère de l'*Ocean Economy*. Quel gâchis ! Un ministère qui aurait pu devenir un pilier de notre économie, un gisement de croissance fort pour le pays, et là encore, c'est une occasion ratée. Au-delà de la culture de bambaras, de l'aquaculture ou de la recherche du pétrole dans nos eaux territoriales, une réelle stratégie sur ce secteur pharmaceutique/parapharmaceutique/médical/agro-alimentaire n'a pas été exploitée. Le potentiel, M. le président est exponentiel, mais malheureusement cela se résume aussi aux hommes et aux femmes qui pilotent les projets. Ce ministère a été ramené à son strict minimum, la pêche. Et là encore, c'est une catastrophe. Les officiers censés protéger nos lagons ne sont plus intéressés qu'à rançonner les pêcheurs. La pêche qui était illégale hier est devenue légale aujourd'hui. Pour vous démontrer le sérieux de ce ministère, on parle de la

création d'un *fishing hub*, aquaculture. Où ça ? A Bambous. Sur quel site ? Le site réservé pour faire un *petroleum hub*. Cela montre la démonstration d'un manque de sérieux.

Enfin, M. le président, le passé, c'est le passé. Essayons de regarder l'avenir et de comprendre ce qui me rend inquiet pour l'avenir. Le rôle du politique, M. le président, est de reformer. Le rôle du politique est d'identifier les dysfonctionnements. Le rôle du politique est de constater la situation qui prévaut dans le pays, dans le fonctionnement de nos institutions, et de proposer de changer ou d'imaginer. Pourquoi je trouve que tous les budgets se suivent et se ressemblent ? Pour la simple et bonne raison qu'ils sont préparés par les mêmes personnes depuis 30 ans. Le même moule, la même trame, le même état d'esprit, la même philosophie déconnectée de la réalité. Cela se résume aujourd'hui à un chapelet de bonnes intentions et une distribution de goodies.

Quel est le constat, M. le président ? Notre île va mal. Quelle île va-t-on léguer aux générations futures ? Nos cités ouvrières, nos villes et nos villages suffoquent par manque de planification. Tout coûte de plus en plus cher : se nourrir, se vêtir, se loger, Produire. Pas de sécurité dans le pays, sur les routes, sur les plages, dans nos maisons ; de l'incivisme à tous les niveaux. Un pays de plus en plus sale ; des valeurs qui s'érodent, un manque de confiance dans la capacité des hommes politique à changer les choses ; de l'or bleu, nos lagons livrés à eux-mêmes, pillés, souillés, pollués. Un *breakdown* sans précédent en ce qu'il s'agit de la recrudescence de la drogue synthétique. Une justice approximative ; le cas BAI, Betamax, et tout cela pour la pomme du contribuable.

Un service civil atrophié, incapable de se remettre en question, bloqué dans ses acquis et non son devoir, enclin à bloquer plutôt que de se réinventer. La lutte contre le gaspillage, M. le président. Je suis moi-même sur le *Public Accounts Committee and it is a waste of time*. Je souhaite même me retirer de ce comité, et une lettre sera envoyée en ce sens à Madame la présidente, parce qu'il n'en sort rien de positif. Nous abattons un travail colossal et puis, derrière, plus rien. Et puis, dans ce budget, cette ligne qui se lit de la manière suivante –

"(...) we cannot overlook the weaknesses that the Director of Audit has brought to light. When things go wrong in public finance, we must get them right. The Finance and Audit Act will be amended for Ministries and Departments to include an implementation plan in their Annual Report for preventing recurrence of shortcomings reported by the Director of Audit."

Et là encore, du vent. Des millions seront engloutis, mal dépensés, alors que cet argent aurait pu être distribué aux plus démunis de la société. Ce qui m'interpelle, M. le président - je l'ai redit l'année dernière -, c'est une vraie réforme, une réforme forte, une réforme salubre - qui est malheureusement absente - une réforme pour mettre en place des mécanismes pour une gestion saine, transparente, responsable de nos institutions pour lutter contre le gaspillage, contre l'impunité zéro, pour lutter contre *l'unaccountability* pour chaque roupie dépensée. Il n'y a rien dans ce budget.

Maintenant, M. le président, certaines mesures dans ce budget qui ont caractérisé le régime 'Lepep'. Le durcissement des lois par rapport aux automobilistes. Il a fallu quatre ans à ce gouvernement, des centaines de morts sur nos routes pour réaliser que le retrait du permis à points a été une erreur. Par pur entêtement ou tout simplement parce que cette mesure avait été implémentée par le précédent régime, ce gouvernement a retiré le permis à points, et pour conséquence, des centaines de nos concitoyens ont perdu la vie. Et voilà qu'aujourd'hui, on revient avec des mesures pour lutter contre cela.

Autre chose, la montée des produits pétroliers, et ensuite le déculottage du gouvernement qui revient en arrière pour des raisons que nous connaissons tous : la rue grogne.

M. le président, rien sur cette bombe à retardement que sera le trou de la sécurité sociale avec une population vieillissante et une natalité en berne, et en cascade les conséquences financières catastrophiques pour les générations à venir. M. le président, un pays doit être géré comme une entreprise, pas dans la recherche du profit, mais dans son efficacité, dans sa productivité, dans son *commitment*, dans sa transparence, dans sa compétence et dans son *accountability*, et il y a rien sur ce volet.

Pour finir, M. le président, ce bien précieux qui est notre nationalité mauricienne. La volonté de tout gouvernement successif depuis l'indépendance a été d'attirer des investissements et des talents de l'étranger. Depuis la création de la zone franche, du tourisme, de l'offshore, des divers *schemes*, nous avons accueilli des centaines de femmes et d'hommes qui ont contribué au développement de notre pays. Ces étrangers qui ont contribué au développement de notre pays, dont les enfants sont souvent nés à Maurice, nous avons pu récompenser certains en leur octroyant la nationalité mauricienne pour services rendus à la nation, parce que la nationalité mauricienne se mérite, M. le président. Nous élevons nos enfants à l'attachement et à l'amour du quadricolore. Nous abreuvons nos enfants sur les

valeurs de notre société mauricienne, d'ouverture, de tolérance, de respect, de travail, de persévérance, et surtout d'honnêteté.

Aujourd'hui, nous apprenons que cette nationalité pourrait être vendue. Je ne souhaite pas entrer dans un débat technique, comparer cette mesure à d'autres juridictions dans le monde, mais c'est sur le sacro-saint principe qu'une nationalité ne peut pas être traitée comme une commodité. Oui à une formule pour attirer des étrangers et des talents ; oui, récompensons ces personnes qui veulent investir, qui croient dans notre pays, qui croient dans son destin et qui croient dans son potentiel, mais ne faisons pas de notre nationalité une commodité comme une autre.

Pour conclure, M. le président, ce gouvernement a été constant dans l'erreur, dans ses prédictions et dans ses promesses. Nous sommes au crépuscule de ce gouvernement Lepep ; quatre ans ont déjà passé. Le temps passe vite ; le réveil pour l'alliance Lepep risque d'être brutal.

Merci.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

(6.22 p.m.)

Mr B. Jahangeer (Third Member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the last two years, this Government laid a lot of emphasis on measures to bridge the gap between the poor and the rich, measures like negative income tax or the minimum wage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget 2018/2019 is a Budget engineered mainly for the middle income class. Therefore, I would like to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister for such visionary measures to move from a middle income society to a high income society. This Budget, I call it a Budget of continuity. Why? Because there were projects not completed during the last Budget due to delays in consultancy, in tendering, so now we have a chance to shift the Capital Expenditure to this year's Budget.

I must say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, certain measures have been acclaimed widely by the population, For example, the decrease in petroleum, in the LPG price for the domestic use. Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my Constituency, the main issue when my

mandates come is with regard to employment and this Budget caters for Rs1 billion to tackle 14,000 unemployed youths through various measures.

After listening to hon. Jhuboo mentioning that unemployment is still there, let me tell him - I challenge - get me a mason, get me an electrician, get me a plumber tomorrow itself...

(Interruptions)

No! You cannot find one. We have to import because this is our biggest problem, that of mismatch. The people graduated with HSC, they are unemployed. What trade do we have? We have no trade. This is the problem. This is the mismatch that we are trying to solve with the Rs1 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 'job creation and innovation' are very important words. The SME Employment Scheme will be set up to cater for the unemployed graduates who want to be their own boss. We also have this mindset in the Mauritian youths. Today, they don't want to work under somebody; they want to be their own boss. So, the SME Employment Scheme will cater for that, to give them the right to be their own boss and to contribute to the productivity of the nation while receiving a stipend of Rs14,000 monthly. Who can do better?

Now, another aspect of the Budget is the removal of the excise duty on steel rods for construction. This came in the nick of time. Why? Because, actually, we are witnessing a construction boom in Mauritius. You can see it around Mauritius. When you look at the sky, you see a crane, you know the construction boom is here, like you see in Dubai. This will definitely catalyse the construction sector, bringing down the overall cost to construct a house or a building.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget has been positively acclaimed by the population in general. However, I do have some apprehension, for example, with regard to selling the Mauritian passport. A very important thing! I have listened to hon. Minister Gayan. He mentioned that some countries are doing it, for example, Bulgaria. Yes! But are there eligibility criteria? Is it based on your race, on your colour? We do not know! This is what we have to see. How will we define selling the Mauritian passport? To whom you will sell? Who wants to buy a Mauritian passport? I do not see any European who would like to buy a Mauritian passport.

What are the reasons behind it? There are only two reasons: either he is running from his country after committing a crime or he wants to evade tax. Those are the two reasons why you want to buy a Mauritian passport. For example, I take the case of Dubai. They open up this policy for residents. What happened then? They import terrorism on the soil of Dubai! The Moussad killed one Palestinian boss while he was coming from a lift two years ago. We do not want to see such a situation in Mauritius. We are a peaceful nation. I am a good patriot and I want my country to stay clean without importing such kind of terrorism or corruptions through the drug cartel. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would, therefore, kindly request the hon. Prime Minister to come up with some *garde-fou* measures to screen carefully before selling any of these passports.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me talk of something which I am a little sad to talk about, it is the water supply in the south. For example, I take the case of Rivière des Anguilles Dam which, during my campaign, I promised the people that we will see the Rivière des Anguilles Dam. What is the story behind the Rivière des Anguilles Dam? I will tell you. I have been in Kuwait two years ago and the previous Government at that time - in October 2014, the contract was ready with Kuwait Fund to be signed, but the Government at that time did not find it important. So, we did not sign the Rivière des Anguilles deal and today we are nowhere with the Rivière des Anguilles Dam. This is really a pity because it is in the Budget, the consultancy is going on, but in this mandate we will not see it completed. Then we have the Rivière du Poste and Mont Blanc Water Treatment Plant in my Constituency that was budgeted in 2015, but nothing has been done so far. The budget is there but nothing has been done.

Then we come to Telemetry and SCADA project. What is Telemetry and SCADA project? CWA is changing the trunk pipe around the island, but we need a brain to control the flow remotely. This is called SCADA. You sit down in a room and then you can control the flow automatically. This project has been going on for the last 10 years, not even us but the previous Government, but was never concluded. And that also we will not see it in this mandate because it is at consultancy stage. So, we are a little late, but it will be there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, indeed shifting from the digital age to the Artificial Intelligence is a very daring and ambitious project. It is a quantum leap, but are we yet in the digital age? No, we are not! Can you take your mobile and pay a Court fine, for example?

You cannot at this stage! Have you seen an Indian driving licence? In the Indian driving licence, the policeman if he stops you for a fine, he will ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Members, allow the hon. Member to address this Assembly.

Mr Jahangeer: ...in a handheld device and what will happen on the screen of the handheld device? He will see all your previous penalties and will penalise you according to your previous penalties and will tell you what fine he will impose on you. This is the Indian driving licence because there is a chip embedded in the driving licence. This is the digital age. You know it. The hon. Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation knows it very well and I hope we are coming to that.

What about Internet connection? What about our safety in connectivity? Recently, 4 or 5 months we have been left without high speed Internet. Why? Because there was a shark attack! What shark attack? The submarine cable was eaten by a shark. That is the problem. There is no security.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jahangeer: We are talking about the digital age, what about the Internet of things? In 2020, the average of an individual in his house there will be 6 Internet connected devices. Let me tell you a bit about Internet of things which we are very late to tackle this issue.

Internet of things is like your fridge. You can connect with your fridge, with your mobile, vice-versa, the fridge will tell you milk stop, buy, bring milk home because they have a sensor there, in the place where you have milk, they check the level of the bottle of milk, then they inform you on your mobile phone.

The hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned recently that we are going for smart metering. A very good thing! But the danger with it is that the smart metering will see the consumption of your washing machine, of your swimming pool, it will switch it off when the peak power is on, from CEB they will do it. But the danger there is that there is no protocol,

there is no standard yet, which the hon. Minister has to bring along, the encryption standard. Then we will be in the digital age. But we are not yet there.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Budget 2018/2019 caters generously for environmental protection, which is a good thing, but what about electric cars? By 2025, Europe will phase out fuel based cars like the petrol or whatever. They will produce only electric cars. I am saying 2020, this is the target. And also in 2040, India and China will do the same. Now, when you have electric cars, you need plugging and charging stations. Where are we with this in Mauritius? Because Mauritius, we will definitely import the electric cars. Where are you going to charge? You will run to Leal, you are going to ask to the main autocar shop? No. You have to have it in the main street like in all countries. In China, for example, they have it in the main street. Now, it is the time to cater for such technology because we are doing trenches all around Mauritius for drains. Now it is the time to lay a pipe, instead of after closing and making the drain and then you have to open up the road again. No. We have now to place a temporary pipe; when the time comes to build the plugging station, your cable will be easy to do it. You will not need to open up the trenches again. It is not important that we start now when we are doing the drain construction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the Budget 2015, we were at a crossroad. Why? We did not know which direction to push forward or backward because there was a lot of cleaning jobs to do in 2015. We had the BAI saga, we had several scandals at that time and we had to clean them up. The Police corruption, drug traffickers, all this had to be cleaned up.

That Budget was meant for cleaning up. Then the Budget 2016/2017 was *le budget de rupture*. We broke from the old model. The Prime Minister came with his own economic model and it was a very daring and ambitious action to remedy for poor water supply, improve social housing, tackle youth and employment. Then, came Budget 2017/2018. That was a budget, of course, of continuity, which came along the modernisation of the mode of transport namely the Metro Express.

We can tell you now at this point in time, the big question for this Budget is: will this Budget pave the way for a second mandate *par l'Alliance lepep*? This is the big question. Now, mandate for a Government depends on the performance of the Government. This is directly proportional to the performance of the Ministers. Some days ago, a certain newspaper mentioned there were a couple of weak links in the Government, that is, underperforming Ministries.

They took the case, for example, of hon. Koonjoo where they said his Ministry was underperforming. But hon. Koonjoo brought the Mauritius Maritime Training Centre which was not there. He brought that. He was the mastermind behind it. And then you have this project of Deep Ocean, that is, taking negative heat from the deep ocean which will cool down Port Louis. But that was an MoU with a private company. We are still blaming that the Ministry is responsible for the delay, but this is a private company. What can he do? If it was a Government institution, he could have put pressure on it, but this is a private company. How far can he put pressure? Is this his fault? I don't think so. Now, we take the case of my good friend, the hon. Minister of Financial Services and Good Governance. It was his bad luck; he came and sat on a seat which was full of garbage. He had to clean it. Now, we can see his performance because he is coming up with a White Paper on Fintech and soon he will have what we call a Blueprint for financial services.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

Mr Jahangeer: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, again, the Opposition has criticised - my good friend is not here - hon. Nando Bodha, the Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport for copying the project of previous Government. Yes, I agree. He took the project of the previous Government...

(Interruptions)

But you need creativity!

(Interruptions)

Wait! Wait! Why you did not do it?

(Interruptions)

It is an act of creativity, an act of goodwill. Did you have this? You did not have! He had the guts to come to materialise the project, and for that I give him full credit.

(Interruptions)

When you look at him, he does not sleep at night.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rutnah!

Mr Jahangeer: You see! Why you did not do it at your time?

(Interruptions)

You conceive the idea, but you never implement it! But the hon. Minister is implementing the project. We are proud of him. Now, when we come to, for example, my good friend, hon. Maneesh Gobin...

(Interruptions)

In a short time that he has been in power...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jahangeer: ...as a Minister, he came with a couple of Bills. Conventional Chemical Weapons, for example, or the Legal and Professional Framework.

(Interruptions)

So, this is performance. When the hon. Deputy Prime Minister took power as the Minister of Energy and Public Utilities, the hon. Leader of the Opposition at that time...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Dayal: I am naming the person concerned. Hon. Shakeel Mohamed mentioned the word '*idiot*' to me.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Mohamed: I said that I would never say it again here, but I am still thinking it!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members!

(Interruptions)

Order! Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Yes, I was talking about the hon. Deputy Prime Minister when he came to power; he was under the stress by the hon. Leader of the Opposition at that time...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed, please!

Mr Jahangeer: ..that we were walking on a tight rope.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jahangeer!

Mr Jahangeer: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

(Interruptions)

Mr Jahangeer: Can I?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please!

Mr Jahangeer: When the hon. Deputy Prime Minister came to power, we had it from the hon. Leader of the Opposition of that time that we are walking on a tight rope because the CT power at that time was declared null and void. And what happened today? Today, we have surplus of electricity. He tackled it quite well through ...

(Interruptions)

...the construction of St Louis Power Station. Now, we are having enough power to face any emergency in the country. What about brownouts and blackouts? You know what is brownout? Brownout is when you see your light flickering. Have you ever seen that in your house, nowadays?

(Interruptions)

No. It is because the supply of electricity is constant. It is good. That is the reason. Before, in all the houses, you would see the lights flickering.

(Interruptions)

This is called 'brownouts'.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Shakeel Mohamed!

Mr Jahangeer: Now, this does not exist because the CEB network has been reinforced.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jahangeer: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, then again, my good friend, hon. Soodesh Callichurn. The hon. Minister gave a definite blow to extreme poverty by the introduction of the Minimum Wage. That's it!

(Interruptions)

And the honourable lady facing me, the Minister of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research, came up with the Nine-Year Schooling. Somebody from the Opposition was saying: "That was my idea". But then, why you did not do it at the time when you were in power? But she took courage...

(Interruptions)

She dared do it and implemented it. She implemented it as it is today and people are satisfied with the Nine-Year Schooling. Then, we have my good friend, hon. Jhugroo.

(Interruptions)

He is taking his fight to the beach and this is a very well acclaimed measure. People like it because you are giving access to public beach where there was no access at all.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Mr Jahangeer: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security proposing in this Budget?

(Interruptions)

He is bringing the concept, which is a new concept called 'rural revitalisation'. What is it? It is a buzzword now in the agriculture. It is that you are enticing the youths back to mother earth because the young people do not like to dirty their hands with earth, with soil. Now, the hon. Minister is giving enough incentives, enough measures through his sheltered farms. He is redefining the green economy, and he is giving enough support for this youth to export their produce. What else do you need from this Government?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are just a few tangible achievements that this Government has reached so far. But then again, leadership is the name of a game for a good Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, President Xi Jinping of the Communist Party of China (CPC), through his strong leadership and reforms and innovations, brought along to the expectation of his people and he is opening up policy, he is now regarded as the father of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

In Mauritius, we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a few good Leaders here. Hon. Bérenger is a good Leader to his party, to MMM Party. He has contributed to the social and economic development of Mauritius. Same did the Leader of the Labour Party. In spite of the fact that he is still behind the curtain, he is still ruling. He still controls his party members. This is leadership.

(Interruptions)

Then we come to the Leader of the PMSD who is, as we know, '*le coq de la basse-cour*'.

(Interruptions)

He has also contributed well to the...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Jahangeer: He has contributed well to the society.

(Interruptions)

But then again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is another party Leader who easily maintains stability within his party and his allies, who addresses issues like poverty, employment, economic growth, gender caucus the way forward. And that Leader, through his reforms and devotion policy, will be remembered for decades as the father of socialism with Mauritian characteristics, and this Leader is the one and only one Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

Yes, to answer the question, he will lead to a second mandate.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rughoobur!

(6.49 p.m.)

Mr S. Rughoobur (Second Member for Grand'Baie & Poudre d'Or): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for this opportunity to intervene on this Bill.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Rughoobur: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let us be honest on one thing. This Budget has created a feel good factor in the country. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is almost at its fourth year, that is, we took office in December 2014, January 2015 and we are almost going to complete four years in Government.

True it is, some hon. Members in this House mentioned that it is the time to make an assessment of what has been realised, what has been accomplished by this Government, and our hon. friends, colleague Ministers will come with a list of what have been their

achievements during the debates. But we, as backbenchers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will, of course, talk about our achievements in our constituency, the support we have been bringing to our mandates and the responsibility that we were entrusted by our mandates. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the second part of my speech, I will come to the support that, as a backbencher, along with my two colleagues, we have been providing to our mandates in our constituency.

But, before coming to that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have listened to hon. friends on the other side of the House. There are a couple of Members from the Opposition who have been saying that this Budget does not adequately address the fundamentals. And part of these fundamentals, today the Leader of the Opposition has been mentioning a few of them. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would rather talk of challenges of the coming generation. What are those challenges? I have identified six of those challenges, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and let us see whether the Budget that we have in front of this House today does sufficiently address *les défis*, those challenges, yes or no.

One, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the issue of adequacy of the right human capital. Second is the issue of competitiveness of our nation. Third, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the issue of sustainability. Fourth is the issue of regional integration. Fifth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the important issue of social discipline, and sixth, the issue of adequate infrastructure.

And when we have a look at this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we talk of the adequacy of the right human capital, what has the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance been bringing in this Budget? Those people who believe that the YEP, that the NSDP, that those programmes for the MITD *ont mis un subterfuge pour doper le chiffre d'unemployment*, are wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We should not forget that we have always been saying that there is a serious deficit at the level of *la formation* in this country for several years. And we are tackling this. This one billion what we voted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have not voted this because we have been thinking of scoring political marks. This is to cater for those youths that we want to prepare for employment, because today, as rightly pointed out by my friend, hon. Jahangeer, we have a serious problem. *Les bâtiments qui sont en train de pousser comme des champignons* around the country. Go and look for technicians today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, go and look for electricians, you do not get. You look for AC technicians! My hon. friend Callichurn

would confirm to you. Contractors have started to look for qualified plumbers, they want to import from abroad as we do not have this in this country.

We have to prepare this country for all this, and that is the reason why the Prime Minister, *avec raison*, has decided to allocate, to make provision, to encourage the MITD to recruit 3,500 youngsters, to give them training. Let us form these technicians. We have to prepare our country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, adequacy of the right human capital is extremely important, and it is in this spirit that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in his Budget, has encouraged the University of Mauritius to double the total number of intake in the field of IT, and he is so right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Look for software engineers today - we were talking of digitalisation. In my company, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been looking for one or two software engineers, you do not get in this country. You want to digitalise some of your processors in your business, you will not get software engineers. Where to get them? When you try to head hunt, then your competitors double the amount that you can offer to these software professionals. This is a good thing, but we have to prepare our economy for this. So, adequacy of the right human capital, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and this is why one billion rupees is there in the Budget. First challenge, we are addressing!

Second important challenge, I was talking of competitiveness of our nation. And when we talk of competitiveness - the Prime Minister has often been mentioning - we have created a Ministry of IT and Innovation. We have created this because we know how important this Ministry is for our economy, and a lot is being done at the level of this Innovation and IT - I have just mentioned - as well as investment in technology; a lot, in order to ensure that we prepare our country, as I said earlier, for this digitalisation process. But productivity as well is important, and it is important for us also to ensure, because the Government is giving support, the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister is giving the support that is required. But it is up to those institutions to deliver. And when we are talking of this competitiveness of the nation, we have the best Budget in the world. If you create an institution like the EDB, and if people do not deliver, we are going to fail, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I know the Prime Minister means business, and if people have been appointed at the level of EDB, they will have to perform, they will have to deliver, because our

competitiveness of the nation depends on these institutions. It is not only the Prime Minister alone or the Minister of Finance alone who is going to do everything.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking of these institutions, I have been saying that this issue of productivity is extremely important. I talked about productivity, the issue of investment in technology, and the issue of innovation.

Now, first challenge, adequacy of human capital; second, competitiveness of our nation; third is the issue of sustainability, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We are struggling for an economic growth of more than 4%. But what has this Government done? What is the vision of the Prime Minister, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? We do not want the 4% economic growth at any cost. This is the reason why the Government has created a Fund of Rs2 billion to promote and protect the environment. This is for the environment component of our development. And if we are talking of sustainability, we have to ensure that we take into consideration those three components: the economic one, the environment one, which I have just mentioned - Rs2 billion voted for the promotion and protection of the environment - and also the social component. *Je ne crois pas qu'on ait eu un gouvernement plus social que ce que nous sommes aujourd'hui*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have invested year in, year out.

This year, we have earmarked, I think, Rs780 m. for poverty alleviation. Not only this! Look at those series of projects that have been earmarked for social housing; NEF, the National CSR Foundation. Hundreds of millions of rupees will be allocated to the NGOs, again for the promotion of social initiatives. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, combining these three elements, this is what this Government is doing to promote the sustainability concept, and all this is in this Budget. When we are talking of the challenges of the next generation, this is what we are doing.

We are coming today with the other challenge that I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regional integration. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the past, we have been hearing that we got several *arpents* of land in Madagascar and several *arpents* of land in Mozambique. What was the outcome ultimately? What were the projects that were developed when we got those lands in Mozambique and in Madagascar? Nothing! It is this Government that has created the Africa Fund; we have gone to Senegal. I am very happy that some bright professionals have been recruited by this Government. I hope that we kept this Africa Fund separate from the EDB. This is a personal request that I have to the hon. Prime Minister.

The Africa Fund is doing an excellent job. I know that we have to reengineer it with more people probably around, but they have gone to Senegal. It is a very good initiative. They have gone also to Côte d'Ivoire. The hon. Prime Minister personally went to these two countries in order to give a boost to this regional integration component of our development which is extremely important. *L'Afrique est notre salut*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

So, to tell you what we have been doing at the level of regional integration - all this is mentioned in the Budget, the initiatives that are being taken. Of course, those proposals are not perfect in the world, but the intention and what we have started doing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are the right priority that we are addressing. We need Africa, and I must say that what we have been doing lately - the FTA has been signed between COMESA, the SADC and the East African Community last year - is a very good initiative. It shows the commitment of this Government to promote regional trade which is extremely important.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to come back to this issue of regional integration, let me say how important it is because there is increasing competition everywhere around the world. Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where we have a surplus on trade is with the COMESA and our trade with the COMESA is almost 3 % of the total intra-trade. 3 %! Number one is Egypt with 22.1 %, exporting 1.6 billion dollars. We are currently exporting, I think, around 250 to 230 million dollars in the region, less than 10 billion. The potential is huge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is the reason why we should continue this aggressive promotion of regional trade. *L'Afrique est notre salut*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And, rightly so in this Budget, the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development has been laying much emphasis. We will have to be more aggressive in the months and years to come.

Now, the next challenge that I have been mentioning, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the issue of social discipline. Even at this level we will note that at the level of law and order this Government has been doing a lot. In this Budget again we are investing in equipment for the Police Force. We are recruiting more Police officers. We are trying to ensure that we have a system of law and order that we are proud of, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But, apart from this we are encouraging the participation of *la société civile* in the management of our country.

You will note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Prime Minister has personally invested himself in meetings with the unions, in meetings with the NGOs only to ensure that we promote a working relationship with the civil society that is harmonious. It is what is

going to promote social discipline in the country. This is a very important signal not only for us Mauritians, but also for investors abroad, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This social discipline is extremely important for stability.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the final challenge that I have been mentioning is the issue of infrastructure. Do I have to comment on this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Since we are in Government, there is a list of projects that we have earmarked *et c'est en chantier maintenant*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have a vast amount of projects which are there and we are trying to prepare the country for the next generation with those types of projects. We have several projects in the pipeline, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I don't have to mention it. But, we know that in this Budget mention has been made of several billions of rupees that are being invested. These investments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are not for scoring political marks, it is for preparing this country to face the challenges of the next generation. This is what we are doing. So, when people say that this Budget does not adequately address the fundamentals, I am surprised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! So, these are the challenges, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Before resuming my seat, I want to come back to a few of our achievements as backbenchers along with my colleagues in my constituency because some hon. Members have been mentioning that *comme s'il y a eu un effet d'annonce*, that nothing much has been undertaken by this Government. Let me say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the support of the hon. Prime Minister, and the whole Government, what we have realised in our constituency is phenomenal. Once we were appointed, we started working, the three elected Members of Constituency No. 6.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the tenders have been floated for the construction of a new market fair and a traffic centre of almost Rs300 m. The contract will be awarded and work is going to start this year itself. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in Pereybere and Camp Carol works are in progress now and will be completed again this year; Rs90 m. of drain works in Pereybere and Camp Carol which were long overdue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Laying of pipes! Many residents of Morcellement Swan in Pereybere were having huge water problem. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this new project of more than Rs120 m. that has been implemented is now completed - I don't say at 100 %, but at least there has been substantial improvement in the water supply in these regions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we now have other projects like the new multipurpose complex at Petit Raffray and a new village council. We have invested almost Rs20 m. We have invested almost Rs10 m. in the Vale for the lighting of a football ground and a new village council, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have got a list like this. There is also the renovation of the new football ground in Poudre d'Or. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, projects have been realised. Projects worth more than Rs750 m....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Rughoobur: ...in our constituency. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not to forget the project of drain works at Fond du Sac which I mentioned. This is a long awaited project. Let me inform the House that even at the level of the drain works at Fond du Sac, the plans are ready, consultants are appointed. It is a project worth more than Rs150 m. The land acquisition is under process and even this project is going to start this year itself, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said at the beginning of my speech, there is a feel-good factor in the country today with this Budget. I am totally convinced that with the support of the population we will remain focused on this objective, this vision that we have to transform our country to a high-income economy in the years to come.

With these few words, I thank the House for its attention.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Leopold!

(7.10 p.m.)

Mr J. Leopold (Second Member for Rodrigues): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I stand tonight to give my contribution to the 2018-2019 fiscal debate. Before I get to the substance of my response, I would like to thank the hon. Minister of Finance, his staff and his advisors for the preparation of this national Budget. And I would also like to thank the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and the people of Rodrigues for their input.

As representative of the OPR Party in Parliament, I let myself guided by our fundamental philosophy of Listening Leads and value the feedback of the population. The contribution that I will make today is not only because it is grounded in my significant mandate of representative in this House, but as an elected Member, it is a privilege and a sacred duty. As hon. Members of the House, we have the obligation, no matter how high the Cabinet Office we may hold, we have always to remember that the people who put us here, whom we are campaigning for, who made promises to get us here into the Chamber, we must always remember that they are our employers, to whom we must answer at all times. And I want to assure the people of Rodrigues that, as a Parliamentarian, I am here to represent them in my contribution to this fiscal debate. I also want to assure them that I will do the best that I could to ensure that the Central Government maintains its responsibility throughout by performing the core basic duties as protector, provider and as investor in people. I do not intend at all to deal with all issues and sectors, but I intend to highlight our vision and plan for the way forward, that is, that of the Rodrigues Regional Government led by the Chief Commissioner and the Leader of the OPR Party, Mr Louis Serge Clair.

On every occasion I have, I will always take the opportunity to thank the Rt. hon. Minister Mentor, Sir Anerood Jugnauth and hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger to confer power to Rodrigues island in 2001, from the setting-up of Rodrigues Regional Assembly with an Executive Council in 2001. And in 2002, the first regional election was held in Rodrigues. It was at this moment that the great process of moving power from the National Authority to the people of Rodrigues started. It is nearly 16 years now since the first regional election took place in Rodrigues. Though the electoral system is not perfect at all, but with responsible Regional Government, decentralisation of power has allowed Rodrigues to make significant infrastructural, social, economic progress, further recognition of Rodriguan identity and its culture. So, decentralisation of power to Rodrigues has proven to be efficient and it is fundamentally based on the idea that local representatives are better able to respond to local needs.

We have a Regional Government which composes of local residents, who are in a better position to understand the unique problem of an area and to commit them to resolve the issue. The OPR Party has governed the Rodrigues Regional Assembly for 10 years out of the 16 existing years, and is governing for its seventh consecutive years, and by the end of this present mandate, that will make an eleventh consecutive years of governance.

I would like, once again, to thank the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for having been personally to Rodrigues for discussion with the Executive Council of the Rodrigues Regional Government prior to the preparation of the local Budget. A sum of Rs3.575 billion was allocated to the Regional Government, to which the sum of Rs825 m. are dedicated for the development of Rodrigues. With the sum allocated, the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues has engaged his Government to the people of Rodrigues into defining his priorities through the presentation of a Draft Estimate of recurrent revenue, recurrent expenditure, capital revenue and capital expenditure for the financial year ending 30 June 2019 on 23 March of this year, under the title '*Le Rodriguais, catalyseur de son développement*'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the budgetary exercise had passed through the Rodrigues Regional Assembly and is now included in the national Budget for approval. I am glad today that the Rodrigues Regional Government and the Central Government share the vision of development and responsibilities towards its people. The Rodrigues Regional Government and the Central Government, through the budgetary exercise, have justified their commitment to protect, provide and put people first in a sustainable approach for the prosperity of the whole nation.

Within the autonomous status, Rodrigues has made, so far, successful achievements, namely in the field of education, environment, preservation of our culture, the recognition of Rodriguan identity, care of the most vulnerable so as to enable the population to thrive socially and economically. However, despite all those efforts, we are well aware that there is still progress to be made to reach the expectation of our population. In so doing, the Chief Commissioner, once again, in his last Budget Speech, has taken 16 engagements to be addressed to pave the way in the building of a Rodrigues Island which is, and which will be more prosperous and to fulfil the high expectation of the Rodriguan people.

Adequate health services and regular water supply remain the main concern of the Rodrigues Regional Government and the population. Although access to health care is free in the Republic of Mauritius, and no doubt its effectiveness can be measured, our low mortality rate, compared to some of the African regions, and also the increasing number of healthy aged person we have, are good examples.

But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, both the Central Government, through the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Regional Government are well aware of the various

challenges that we face for the delivery of an optimal level of care to our people. The Rodrigues Regional Government is putting many efforts in the promotion of the well-being of patients by improving the health services of Rodrigues. Despite all those efforts, we are still lacking so many specialist care facilities in Rodrigues, and patients needing specialist care still need to have that extra burden to come to Mauritius for further care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is high time to bring about adequate health care to the Rodriguan people by investing in health care budget strategically, to ensure high level of care delivery, so as to satisfy the expectation of our society. As the improvement of patient care is a priority to the Regional Government, with the increasing demand of a better care by the people, so its improvement for better care will need to be determined by high-quality of infrastructure and qualified staff. During the last visit of the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, he was made aware of the numerous challenges and the existing problems in health care services in Rodrigues. The problems relate to both medical and non-medical factors.

In his capacity as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, he had personally intervened to ensure that the fundamental requirements for adequate healthcare delivery be done which is patient oriented. Upon personal intervention by the Prime Minister to the Government of India, experts from India have already prepared, finalised and handed to the Commissioner of Health a Master plan for a modern hospital in Rodrigues with all the equitable facilities to meet the needs of the local people.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Leopold: In view of improving the health care services in Rodrigues, the Rodrigues Regional Government is putting more emphasis into the training of local doctors to palliate the shortage of doctors of specialist fields such as gynaecologist, paediatrician, physician, cardiologist, anaesthetist, psychiatrists and so on. Facilities are also given to locals for the training of new medical officers to the set standard for the better understanding of the medical aspect of patients. In the same line, staff other than medical are given adequate training so that high quality of care and desirable outcome to patient care are met.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because of the small surface area of the Rodrigues Island, hilly nature, prolonged drought, fresh water management is another major issue. Lots of

efforts by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in producing more water to reach the daily requirements in Rodrigues with increasing ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Leopold: ... economic activities and increasing demand of high supply of water by the population, owing to the geological nature of the island, meeting the daily demand of water in Rodrigues is becoming increasingly challenging. The population had endured water shortage for so long and they are well aware of the situation together with the Regional Government and lots of palliative measures are being taken.

Water is a renewable resource and during rainfall water, water are stored underground, harvested by individual at home, reservoirs and the rest is supposed to be recycled back as rainfall, but with climate change, this is not necessarily happening. We are more and more experiencing long period of dry season with less rainfall making water management more and more difficult in Rodrigues. Despite that, as a responsible Government, the Regional Government is well aware that clean drinking water is a basic necessity. It is, therefore, important to enhance the production and management of clean water effectively.

With the funding provided by the Central Government, the Rodrigues Regional Government is leaving no stone unturned, so as to make sure that the families in Rodrigues have easy access to clean water for their daily needs. To achieve this goal, the Rodrigues Regional Government is making continuous efforts to increase the production, improve the distribution of suitable drinking water in the most sustainable way. Rodrigues being reliant on agriculture, especially animal farming, this activity additionally bring pressure on our short water supply as the two need daily access to water.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the daily needs of water in Rodrigues is about 11,000 cubic metres. Despite all the efforts in making use of underground water, harvesting rain and using water from existing reservoirs, these are not enough to meet the daily demand of water in Rodrigues. Unlike in Mauritius, the only option for meeting adequate amount for water supply, as highlighted by various reports from surveys conducted for the real situation of water production in Rodrigues, the only solution is to convert seawater into freshwater. In view of making Rodrigues an ecological island, efforts are made to make sure that renewable

energy is utilised to power desalination plant. A similar project is already underway on desalination plant where a hybrid system is installed to dually use solar energy, therefore, reducing the use of fossil fuel.

The Rodrigues Regional Government is making sure that all five desalination plants be operational as soon as September this year, to adequately produce enough water to meet demands and is also ensuring the physical capacity of producing enough water to all aspects of economic needs. Measures like giving permits to only building with rainwater harvesting system is in place. Furthermore, rainwater harvesting system is installed in all public buildings like hospital, schools and hotels to release pressure on water management in Rodrigues.

In order to optimise the production of water by the process of desalination, the Rodrigues Regional Government is taking action to privatise the operation of distillation units. This is very important knowing the technical nature of the operation. Highly technical team will be operating those machines and in turn transfer of knowledge to staff of water unit will be encouraged, so as in the long-term plan the operation will be done effectively. All those mentioned measures will help to increase water supply to, at least, once a week to every household in Rodrigues. Other than that, the Rodrigues Regional Government is continually working with scientists and engineers to find new ways of exploring water production. As water is important in all spheres of development, the Rodrigues Regional Government, with the help of the Central Government, are seeking technical assistance from abroad for the development of a Rodrigues Water Development Plan to look at the institutional aspect water management, making sure to have people with necessary technical ability to satisfy water demand to domestic use, agricultural use, economic and industrial activities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once again, I need to thank the hon. Minister of Finance for his investment in young people. I congratulate him for all measures he is taking into investing sustainably in the use for the economic prospect of the Republic of Mauritius. This Budget is giving the youths the space necessary for economic empowerment, allowing young people to use their abandoned energy to transform their own life and the life of others through their engagement in the society and the management of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although here, in the Republic of Mauritius, men and women have equal opportunities such as education and health care as example, I welcome the innovative approach of the hon. Minister of Finance in his Budget into accentuating and

incorporating gender equality as an objective in all policies at all levels. This will allow Government institutions setting appropriate framework and strategy into diagnosing the causes of gender inequality, then calling for action to find solution and legislate.

It is also high time once and for all, by various incentives cited in the Budget Speech, to tackle violence against women and girls, both physical and sexual violence, and making sure that the health, the dignity, security of women and girls are not subverted.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the consideration that the Central Government is giving to Rodrigues, Rodrigues Island too is on the path set in pursuing this transformative journey. It is translated into the finalising of landmark physical projects, which are important for economic developments and creation of jobs, and I name a few: the construction of a new runway, the building of a modern hospital, the construction of a technology park, port development, and the acquisition of a new multi-purpose cargo vessel to serve Rodrigues and other outer islands.

The additional Rs1 billion allocated to different Ministries on top of the Rs3.575 billion allocated to Rodrigues Regional Assembly, making it to a sum of more than Rs5 billion, therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will allow the people of Rodrigues to make full advantage of all the measures announced by the Prime Minister. And just to name where we will have that Rs1.5 billion distributed in various Ministries in Mauritius, one example is the money which we will use for subsidising holiday package and airfare from Rodrigues. It is about Rs152 m., which we will take from the National Budget, from the NEF, Youth and Sports, the Police Force in Rodrigues, just to name a few.

On this note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I thank you for your kind attention.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sawmynaden!

(7.33 p.m)

The Minister of Technology, Communication and Innovation (Mr Y. Sawmynaden): Merci, M. le président. Encore une fois de plus, c'est avec fierté et satisfaction que j'interviens pour commenter un budget présenté par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. Le budget 2018-2019 est à l'image de notre Premier ministre et ministre des Finances : juste, moderne et responsable.

Tout d'abord, le titre « *Pursuing our Transformative Journey* » s'inscrit dans la continuité du précédent, qui évoquait une nouvelle ère de développement. Ce titre témoigne de la mission que le Premier ministre a fait sienne : moderniser notre pays et en faire une économie à haut revenu ; une société qui avance, mais qui ne laisse personne sur le bas-côté ; un pays qui a encore une forte attache à ses valeurs - celle de l'entraide ; un pays où la modernité et les valeurs traditionnelles font paire ; une société où chaque composante apporte sa contribution, et plus important encore, où tout le monde avance « *lamé dan lamé* ».

Pour ses 50 ans d'indépendance, l'île Maurice est plus que jamais un exemple d'harmonie, de bonne gestion économique, et ce pays, petit point dans l'océan Indien, vogue vers son nouveau destin, avec à la barre l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth comme capitaine. D'ailleurs, il n'y a qu'à voir le nombre de travaux d'envergure qui sont entrepris à travers l'île pour comprendre que nous avons affaire à un homme d'action, un homme qui tient ses promesses. Il faut remonter aux années 85-87 sous Sir Anerood Jugnauth pour voir autant de projets. Bref, l'île Maurice est devenue un immense chantier.

Il n'y a pas que de gros chantiers à Maurice. Il suffit de traverser nos localités telles que Piton, par exemple, Bambous, Chemin Grenier, Dagotière, Curepipe, toute l'île Maurice, pour voir, pour constater des travaux de réfection des drains, le remplacement des tuyaux de la CWA et le goudronnage des routes, et cela partout à travers l'île. Tout ceci prouve que tous les Mauriciens sont égaux pour ce gouvernement.

A cet effet, ce budget ne déroge pas à la règle ! Pas moins de R 37 milliards prévues pour l'amélioration de nos infrastructures au cours de trois prochaines années. Un *National Regeneration Scheme* veillera au « *upgrading* » de nos collectivités locales avec R 1,2 milliards consenties à la construction des drains et une enveloppe de R 5,6 milliards pour mener à bien plus de 1,150 projets de la National Development Unit (NDU).

A nos détracteurs qui parlent d'un budget « *labous dou* », je leur réponds ceci : N'est-ce pas le rôle d'un gouvernement responsable, d'un gouvernement qui travaille pour le bien-être de la population et qui a comme priorité d'améliorer le quotidien des Mauriciens les plus mal lotis ?

On se rappelle que lorsque Pravind Jugnauth était ministre des Finances en 2003, on a qualifié son budget de « coup d'essai, coup de maître ». En 2004, « *beyond expectations* », qui allait faire de Maurice un *duty-free island*. Hélas, ce projet novateur ne trouva pas grâce

aux yeux du prochain régime. Qui sait où Maurice serait aujourd'hui si nous avions pris ce chemin à l'époque !

Heureusement, malgré les détracteurs qui adorent critiquer pour critiquer, les indicateurs économiques nous donnent raison, car la croissance est au rendez-vous. Les Mauriciens savent que « *we mean business* » et que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, avec ses trois derniers budgets, a relancé l'économie et a surtout toujours misé sur l'allègement du fardeau des Mauriciens avec des mesures telles que la baisse du prix des carburants, de la bonbonne de gaz et diverses mesures fiscales visant à augmenter de manière significative le pouvoir d'achat des Mauriciens.

M. le président, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth fut l'homme à la base de la réforme du secteur sucrier. Il avait semé, à l'époque où le Protocole sucre disparaissait, les germes de l'industrie cannière. Aujourd'hui, une fois encore, alors que le prix du sucre chute dans les cours mondiaux, notre ministre des Finances et Premier ministre vient de l'avant avec la mise sur pied d'une centaine de fermes afin que les agri-preneurs puissent produire localement ce que nous importons. C'est un véritable coup de maître !

Alors que beaucoup disent que nos jeunes délaissent la terre, notre gouvernement, pour renverser la vapeur, vient de l'avant avec ces fermes et des mesures incitatives telles que l'exemption de la taxe sur les bénéfices pendant 8 ans ou des emprunts à un taux préférentiel de 3%. Et dire que certains pensent que 8 ans d'exemption de la taxe n'est pas grand-chose. Pour des milliers de petits entrepreneurs, c'est une mesure extrêmement louable, parce que pour eux chaque roupie compte.

En même temps qu'il tente de relancer l'agriculture, le Premier ministre et ministre des Finances prouve aussi qu'il a une considération pour les éleveurs porcins. Ces derniers voient leurs dettes être rayées auprès de la DBM. Décidément, ce grand argentier a du cœur.

M. le président, dans sa politique d'ouverture au monde, l'île Maurice ne peut plus compter que sur ses belles plages de sable blanc. Il était impératif d'introduire des mesures ambitieuses. Ainsi, en vue d'optimiser notre attrait comme, non seulement une destination touristique mais aussi comme une destination de tournage cinématographique, le *Film Rebate Scheme* a été étendu et un *Film Promotion Fund* créé avec un capital de départ de R 500 millions.

De plus, en vue d'attirer les étrangers qui ont de l'expertise en matière de nouvelles technologies, comme le *Blockchain* ou l'Intelligence artificielle, l'*Economic Development Board* pilotera un *Foreign Manpower Scheme* via lequel un permis d'occupation pourra être délivré en l'espace de 5 jours.

Ce sont là des mesures significatives dans notre quête de poursuivre la transformation de notre société. Je note aussi que l'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances a voulu garantir nos *start-ups* de solides assises.

L'histoire montre qu'un pays devient moderne lorsque ses *start-ups* passent un cap pour devenir des entreprises globales. Ça a été le cas aux États-Unis dans le passé avec Apple, Microsoft, Oracle, Google, Facebook. Et, plus récemment, avec des entreprises telles que *Creative Labs* à Singapour ou Skype en Estonie.

Afin d'augmenter nos chances d'avoir nos propres entreprises globales un jour, ce gouvernement met à la disposition de nos entrepreneurs, hommes et femmes, jeunes et plus âgés, pas moins d'un milliard de roupies sous la forme de prêt à 3% de taux d'intérêt. C'est un effort plus qu'appréciable pour booster ces entreprises qui ont le potentiel d'employer un maximum de personnes.

M. le président, je viens maintenant à l'Education, un domaine où nous continuons à investir pour l'avenir de ce pays. Notre Premier ministre et ministre des Finances alloue plus de R 17 milliards aux multiples mesures devant améliorer un secteur que ma collègue l'honorable Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun a eu le courage de réformer en profondeur. Cette réforme est notre passeport pour un avenir meilleur, un futur où chaque enfant mauricien aura une chance de s'épanouir et d'atteindre ses aspirations et ses rêves.

Ainsi un système de repas chaud sera mis sur pied sur une base pilote. La distribution des tablettes tactiles sera étendue aux élèves de *Grade 3*. 264 enseignants seront recrutés et pour finir, comme s'il fallait encore prouver le désir de ce gouvernement de miser sur l'éducation tertiaire, les familles ayant des enfants étudiant à ce niveau vont maintenant pouvoir déduire jusqu'à R 200,000 au lieu de R 135,000 sur leur fiche d'impôts.

A ceux qui doutaient encore de ce '*caring Government*', applaudissons la mesure à l'intention des enfants autrement capables. L'honorable Premier ministre et ministre des Finances l'a fait en donnant des pensions à ces enfants-là et maintenant il a su être à l'écoute de ces parents en détresse.

La création d'un *Special Education Needs Authority* sera salubre, tout comme l'extension du service de taxi aux enfants à mobilité réduite du primaire et du secondaire.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to some of the measures pertaining to the main pathways announced in this Budget which concern my Ministry. Growing the digital economy requires skilled human resources. This is why I am very happy to see that the National Skills Development Programme will be used to train 3,000 of our youths and the scheme is being enhanced with particular emphasis on our very young children within the age of 17 to 25. They will be equipped with the soft skills and work ethics so important in today's world, especially to face the challenges of this complex world. They will be awarded a *Certificat de compétence* and that will be a testimony of the skills they have acquired. Additionally, the National Apprenticeship Programme will target 3,500 youths.

Graduates under the SME Employment Scheme will be given a stipend of Rs14,000 over a period of 2 years. This will give the opportunity to SMEs to employ IT people to drive the Digital Transformation, which is so critical for competitiveness today. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, creating an IT business requires the right skills, computer equipment and Internet connectivity. Skilled people can then work from anywhere.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Lepoigneur!

Mr Sawmynaden: This of course applies to working from home. In the modern world, it is possible for someone to create and run a business from home, using the power of the Internet to promote and sell products and services. It is also a favoured lifestyle for those who prefer to dedicate more time to their family and their children.

To support the concept of Work at Home, Government is giving incentives to employers like tax credit of 5% for three years and investment in computers. There is no doubt that this measure will encourage more women to enter the workforce without having to neglect their family.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to the second pathway of this Budget, which is about creating opportunities for private investment. Here, the focus is on technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and FinTech, Internet of Things, 3D printing and many others.

The proposed setting up of the Mauritius Artificial Intelligence Council is indeed a laudable initiative. And, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this would be the ideal platform for the synergy of the public and private sectors and international experts for the development of an AI roadmap for Mauritius.

Furthermore, to support the increasing demand of high-level competencies in ICT in Mauritius, Government will introduce a new scholarship scheme of 50 university students specialising in emerging technologies, including AI and block chain. Similarly, the intake of students in Computer Science and Software Engineering at the University of Mauritius will be doubled.

As regards coding at primary and secondary school level, the National Computer Board, which operates under the aegis of my Ministry, will train some 2,000 students in primary schools and 2,500 students at secondary level. This initiative builds on the successful training of 2,000 primary school students by NCB last year. A number of studies show that the jobs of the future will be technology-based. It is, therefore, imperative that our children are introduced to STEM subjects at a young age. STEM, which is Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths, is the key to the future. Learning coding, also known as computer programming, definitely gives our youngsters an edge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being conscious that digitalisation is necessary to modernise our Public sector, the Prime Minister's Office will spearhead a steering committee to drive this initiative. It will ensure that there is timely implementation of projects and within budget.

My Ministry, through the services of the Central Informatics Bureau, the Central Information Systems Division, the IT Security Unit and the National Computer Board will be supporting this digitalisation process. We are today living at an important juncture in the strengthening of the IT infrastructure of this country. International Internet connectivity is currently being provided by two submarine cables, the Safe and Lion - not shark.

As from the end of 2019, we will see the coming into operation of two more cables, IOX and METISS cables, which will increase international Internet bandwidth and we anticipate new businesses and business models to emerge. This much increased bandwidth has the potential to make Mauritius a Connectivity Hub. We foresee that Data Centres as well as Disaster Recovery Centres will flourish. Supporting such initiatives requires a strong enabling environment. The Central Electricity Board will, therefore, provide special rates for electricity to these centres.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to highlight the importance of one of the most critical IT infrastructure, that is, the Government Online Centre (GOC), and also the Data Centre of the Government of Mauritius which falls under my Ministry. The GOC provides Government services to citizen of Mauritius, business persons, Government officers and non-

citizens abroad. Operational since May 2005, the GOC has constantly been revamped to international and data centre standards. The GOC hosts the Government Web Portal and more than 150 e-services which are used daily by our citizens and foreigners.

In addition, the GOC also hosts the MNIC, the Safe City Project, the e-licensing platform, LAVIMS which is a Digital Cadastral Database, a data backup service for the Mauritius Revenue Authority and the Financial Intelligence Unit, amongst others.

Being the hub of Government wide IT activities, we are now setting up a Disaster Recovery (DR) site for the GOC itself, which is of capital importance in the event of a disaster.

Last month, I was invited to launch the Cybersecurity and Digital Forensic Laboratory where young Mauritians and people of the region shall be trained during the next decade. And this is the first in this part of the region.

As goes the saying, “prevention is better than cure” hence, cyber-attacks need to be detected and acted upon as early as possible and this requires this new generation of cybersecurity specialists.

This is an initiative of a foreign company who chose to establish itself in Mauritius because of our technical environment and our fully-updated legal framework.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a few months, Rodrigues will be connected to the Internet through the MARS and IOX cables. This will give to our compatriots in Rodrigues an Internet speed comparable to what we have today in Mauritius. We should not forget that, since we took power, Rodriguans have benefited from an increase in Internet speed through broadband.

Moreover, in our effort to provide good Internet access to all Mauritians, for the very first time, Agalega will be connected to the Internet via satellite as from September 2018.

This shows that the hon. Prime Minister and Minister of Finance is the Prime Minister of all Mauritians, irrespective of the island of the Republic they live in.

As we all know, transacting online poses many risks, and cyber criminals are on the lookout.

Let me now elaborate on some initiatives adopted by my Ministry concerning cybersecurity.

The Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-MU) of the National Computer Board, will set up a Cyber Threat Monitoring System to better monitor and respond to cyber threats at the national level. Our objective is to detect potentially devastating cyber-attacks as early as possible and respond on time.

The system will position Mauritius as a leading and secure location in the region and I would like to reassure the House that in no circumstance this system will infringe our data protection and privacy legislations.

Furthermore, under the EU Cyber Resilience for Development Programme (Cyber4D) “to protect critical Infrastructure and cybersecurity”, the European Union has selected Mauritius to be one of the five regions to be a model of cyber resilience to showcase in East Africa.

Consequently, it has been agreed that a Regional Capacity Building Centre for Cybercrime will be set up in Mauritius and provision has now been made in the Budget to kick-start the project.

The objective of the centre is to serve as coordination and a focal point for the countries in the region and it has three components, namely capacity building, harmonisation of legal framework and international cooperation.

I am glad to report that such initiatives have already been approved by SADC and COMESA. In addition, at the last “Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting” held in London in April this year, a Cyber Declaration was adopted by all including Mauritius and this gives more impetus to go ahead with the project.

In addition to the setting-up of this Regional Capacity Building Centre, we are also looking at the setting-up of a Certification Authority which will operate within the National Public Key Infrastructure of Mauritius.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to talk about our new Data Protection Act which was proclaimed in January this year.

This Act incorporates international best practices and is aligned with EU’s General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). We are in fact the first country in the world to have introduced such a legislation. This legal instrument strengthens our Knowledge Process Outsourcing (KPO) sector to be able to continue to service clients from the EU.

The ICT sector in Mauritius has already started its transformative journey. In 2003, this sector was born, in part, on the basis of Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) with call centres giving employment to school leavers.

Today, the ICT sector is mostly made up of KPO (Knowledge Process Outsourcing) employing ICT professionals, qualified accountants, legal experts, medical doctors and other professionals.

There is room to double the number of employees in that sector, from 23,000 to around 50,000 people. But to reach there, we need innovation and skilled labour in latest technologies.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now talk about initiatives meant to trigger innovation. One of the major enablers for innovation to happen is access to data, most importantly open data.

Open data, especially open Government data, is a tremendous resource that is as yet largely untapped.

My Ministry, in line with the e-Government Strategy and the Open Data Policy, has implemented the National Open Data portal which houses some 100 datasets of various Government agencies in an open format.

This initiative empowers citizens and businesses for carrying out data-driven initiatives such as development of mobile apps, data analysis, creation of innovative products and research among others. The Open Data portal allows the Government to promote transparency, service improvement, innovation and efficiency.

We will be working together with all Ministries and Departments to scale up the data set availability and also include geospatial data. I make an appeal to the private sector to collaborate with us to release their anonymised data sets.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to move to the next level of digital Government, principles like data sharing need to become widespread within Government. This will significantly contribute to achieve openness and transparency while allowing for informed decision-making.

In this regard, the InfoHighway and Data Sharing Policy have been established to govern and enable sharing of data amongst Government agencies.

As at June 2018, InfoHighway has enabled 80 connections between Ministries, departments and parastatals which have allowed our citizens to access 275 new e-Services. We are proud that the InfoHighway was awarded the WSIS (World Summit for Information Society) Champion 2018 prize in the e-Government category by the International Telecommunication Union.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, most of our citizens own smartphones and are familiar with mobile apps.

This is why in March this year, three smart mobile apps were launched, namely Smart Police, Smart Traffic and Consumer Rights, for the increased convenience of citizens.

The Smart Police app will help citizens to locate and call emergency services whenever needed. The Smart traffic app will provide information on congested routes, and the actual situation on the road.

And the Consumer rights app will enable citizens to report poor customer service, wrong prices and defective products by a simple tap on their mobile devices.

My Ministry will shortly launch four new mobile apps, that is –

- the Search Gov app;
- the Emergency Alert app;
- the School Companion app, and
- most importantly, the Family Welfare app where people will be able to report cases of domestic violence or child abuse instantly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry is working in close collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and we will witness next year a pilot E-Health System at the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital before the system is deployed.

In the Judiciary, we are coming up with the computerisation of the revenue collection system for all Courts. We will also ensure that the e-Judiciary and the digital Court recording system are revamped.

As regards citizen facilitation, my Ministry in collaboration with the Economic Development Board has successfully rolled out the Building and Land Use Permit system. The system will soon be ported on the e-Licensing Platform.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, soon the payment of road tax as well will be online.

My Ministry is finalising two strategies namely, the Digital Mauritius 2030 and the Digital Government Transformation Strategy 2018-2022. On one hand, the Digital Mauritius 2030 Strategy document lays emphasis on recommendations for an innovative and sustainable ICT sector and at the same time establishing an enabling environment for business facilitation development.

On the other hand, the Digital Government Transformation Strategy 2018-2022 paves the way for accelerated public sector digitalisation efforts to provide better service to citizens, businesses and Government institutions. I hope that I have answered to all the queries of my friend, hon. Jahangeer.

(Interruptions)

Such strategies advocate innovative concepts including Digital-by-Default, Inform Once and E-Participation.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, la Vision 2030 du Gouvernement est de transformer Maurice en un pays à revenu élevé. Nous ne voulons pas d'une Île Maurice à deux vitesses avec d'une part, des personnes aisées et d'autre part, celles au bas de l'échelle. Nous avons la conviction que tous les Mauriciens et les Mauriciennes doivent pouvoir aspirer à vivre mieux, à avoir une famille épanouie, à pouvoir obtenir un emploi à la mesure de leurs ambitions et pouvoir obtenir assez de revenus pour pouvoir contempler l'avenir avec sérénité.

Notre Gouvernement a l'intime conviction que ce but va être atteint parce qu'à travers les quatre budgets présentés à la nation, l'alliance MSM-ML a toujours adopté les mêmes principes -

- l'innovation à tous les niveaux ;
- l'investissement massif dans notre capital humain ;
- le développement de nos infrastructures techniques ;
- le renforcement de notre cadre légal, et surtout
- la bonne gouvernance et la transparence.

Ce budget, présenté de manière magistrale par notre Premier Ministre, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, montre clairement l'ambition de ce gouvernement de faire profiter à l'ensemble de la population les fruits de notre développement.

Est-ce que ce Gouvernement a mal fait en introduisant une série de mesures pour soulager les citoyens et rendre leur vie meilleure ? À écouter certains de nos détracteurs, ce gouvernement -

- n'aurait pas dû baisser le prix de l'essence et du diesel ;
- n'aurait pas dû baisser le prix des bombonnes de gaz par R 30 cette année après une baisse de R 60 l'année dernière, ce qui représente R 90 d'économie par bombonne ;
- ce gouvernement n'aurait pas dû réduire le taux d'imposition pour ceux qui gagnent moins de R 50,000 mensuellement ;
- ce gouvernement n'aurait pas dû introduire le salaire minimum ;
- ce gouvernement aurait dû augmenter le tarif d'eau et ne pas donner de l'eau gratuitement pour 6 m³ d'eau utilisée mensuellement ;
- n'aurait pas dû étendre les allocations pour la dalle à plus de nos concitoyens ;
- ni rayer les dettes de ces éleveurs porcins,
- et ni permettre aux banques de proposer un prêt à 100 % de la valeur d'une maison.

Ces mêmes détracteurs peut être se plaignent que le gouvernement a imposé R 500 pour ceux qui possèdent une piscine !

(Interruptions)

Ces mesures ont pour objectif, M. le président, de permettre à nos concitoyens de bénéficier de plus de marge dans leurs finances.

(Interruptions)

Cette augmentation du pouvoir d'achat est annonciatrice de ce que le Gouvernement ambitionne pour tous les Mauriciens et Mauriciennes pour les années à venir : « faire de Maurice un pays moderne, riche et inclusif où chacun se sent libre d'avoir ses propres rêves et désirs ».

L'opposition qualifie ce budget d'électoraliste. Laissez-moi les rassurer que les élections générales ne sont pas pour demain. Je comprends qu'ils ont peur car ils savent très bien de quoi s'attendre au prochain budget de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

À la population...

(Interruptions)

À la population...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Sawmynaden: À la population de juger qui sont ceux qui ont à cœur leur intérêt et celui de leur famille.

Je tiens encore une fois à dire merci au Premier ministre pour ce budget si humain et visionnaire qui fait l'unanimité pas juste parmi les membres de la Chambre, mais aussi parmi les syndicats. Une première! Merci.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Sawmynaden rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

MOTION

THE CONSUMER PROTECTION (CONTROL OF PRICE OF TAXABLE AND NON-TAXABLE GOODS) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2018

&

THE RODRIGUES CONSUMER PROTECTION (CONTROL OF PRICE OF TAXABLE AND NONTAXABLE GOODS) (AMENDMENT NO. 14) REGULATIONS 2018 – DISALLOWANCE

The Honourable Leader of Opposition (Mr Xavier-Luc Duval) – “This Assembly resolves that the Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Non-taxable Goods) (Amendment) Regulations 2018, published under Government Notice No. 55 of 2018 and the Rodrigues Consumer Protection (Control of Price of Taxable and Nontaxable Goods)

(Amendment No. 14) Regulations 2018, published under Government Notice No. 56 of 2018 and laid on the Table of the Assembly on 22 May 2018, be disallowed.»

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members the motion of the hon. Leader of the Opposition has lapsed in accordance with the provision of Standing Order 31 subsection (1).

ADJOURNMENT

The Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 19 June at 11.30 a.m.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(8.05 p.m.)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Rutnah!

Mr S. Rutnah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a matter that I have already raised on the last occasion.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mahomed!

(1) SEETULSING & GAYASING STREETS – PATHWAYS

(2) FRERE FELIX DE VALOIS STREET – ROAD RESURFACING

Mr Osman Mahomed (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I have two issues to raise. The first one is some issues that the inhabitants of Seetulsing and Gayasing Streets, in Port Louis in my constituency, are facing. These problems concern two hon. Ministers. The first one is the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands for which there are some incomplete works on behalf of the Municipal Council of Port Louis, pathways. And, these pathways are causing school children to walk on the street and the street is very jammed because of the nearby school.

My second request is to the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport to request the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit to consider converting this road into

a one-way street, if possible, or to ensure Police presence there when school starts and finishes at the end of the day because otherwise children might get toppled over and injured by passing vehicles. I am going to table two copies of the same letter signed by 11 families living there because the problem is a pressing issue.

The second issue concerns the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands for people at 12, Frère Felix de Valois Street, it was a huge chunk of land, but has been parcelled over the years. In a document signed, some 20 families living there have requested the Municipal Council of Port Louis to take custody of the road and to have it resurfaced because the resurfacing has not been done for more than 10 to 15 years now and it is in a deplorable state.

So I am going to table a copy of the letter signed by the families requesting the Municipal Council of Port Louis to take custody of the road and to do the needful work there. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands!

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo): I will look at both issues and communicate to the hon. Member some practical solutions.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister!

The Minister of Public Infrastructure and Land Transport (Mr N. Bodha): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will raise the matter with the TMRSU and the Police and we will come back to the hon. Member as soon as possible.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea!

RODRIGUES – LIVE CATTLE - IMPORTATION

Mr A. Ameer Meea (Second Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Tonight, I shall raise the issue of importation of live cattle from Rodrigues Island. As the House is aware the banning of importation of live cattle from Rodrigues has recently been waived and presently when cattle from Rodrigues

Island reach mainland Mauritius, it goes directly to the Meat Authority to be slaughtered in two, three, four or five days.

So, my request, today, to the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security is that this measure be extended for the forthcoming festival of *Eid al-Adha*, that is, when the cattle reaches Mauritius, it goes directly to the Meat Authority to be slaughtered for this festival. Why this request tonight? Because the last communiqué of the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security mentioned that the Meat Authority will only slaughter animals from South Africa and Australia which, to my opinion, favours the existing cartel.

So, my request tonight to the hon. Minister is that this facility be extended to cattle coming from Rodrigues, as it is the case presently for domestic purposes.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security!

The Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security (Mr M. Seeruttun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I take note of this request and I will look into it and see whether this can be extended as requested for.

At 8.10 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 19 June 2018 at 11.30 a.m.