

Maiden Speech of Hon Sudheer MAUDHOO Minister of Blue Economy,
Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping on Monday 24 February 2020

Mr Speaker Sir...

I feel greatly honored to speak before this august assembly, in front of many astute and experienced members. However, I must confess a degree of trepidation in speaking here for the first time.

The trepidation is not due to the kindness and warmth shown to me and my fellow newcomers to this House by all Members, officers and staff, but by the requirement to be both within the allotted time and uncontroversial.

I seize this opportunity to congratulate you Mr Speaker Sir, as well as His Excellency Prithvirajsing Roopun, for his election as the President of the Republic of Mauritius.

I can assure you all, that I will do my best to uphold the dignity and traditions of this House.

And yet, I look forward to your counsels, and that of the leader of the House, the Hon Prime Minister, whenever, you deem it, that I require them. I will wholeheartedly welcome your counsels.

I say this, in all humility and sincerity, because I am not “MYSSYE KONN TOU”—Mr know all--. I am not also one who holds the monopoly of all knowledge, either about politics or parliamentary principles and practices, like some politicians feign to.

I am here to learn, understand, and act in the greater interest of the country; so I am ready to learn.

For me, the country and its people take precedence over everything--a non-negotiable principle repeatedly reminded to me by my leader, the Prime Minister,

Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who encouraged me to stand for election, and gave me the opportunity to serve in what I believe is a great, reforming government, what I sincerely think, is under an outstanding Prime Minister.

He is outstanding, I say, because he never falters from the chosen path of virtuousness, of dharma, and of what he considers is right for the people and the country.

He never breaks a given promise.

For him, promises made are promises kept. I need not expatiate on this. Examples are too many and too well known by the population and members of this House. I better skip.

Mr Speaker Sir

Allow me also to pay a special tribute to a great son of this soil, a great soul, a man who shaped the destiny of this country with an iron fist, the architect and builder of modern Mauritius, and the first-ever recipient, outside India, of one of the highest civilian awards, the Padma Vibhushan Award by the Republic of India for exceptional and distinguished service.

The man with the iron fist is no other than Padma Vibhushan Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who has now retired from active politics, only after ensuring that the helm of the country is in the safe hands of a right and trustworthy person.

And has he not himself often said, “Mo Kone Pravind pou fer bien, li pe fer pli bien ki mwa” -
-Pravind will do better than me; he is doing better than me.

Mr Speaker Sir

I am a product of that school, a school of Mauritian political thought led by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, a man, to put it in the Mauritian language, *pa ti ena kachakacha.*, no hanky-panky business.

He is the man who taught and shaped a generation like us, to be just, yet firm, to be impartial, and never to do anything that goes against the principles and practices of the

Constitution, that disregard spiritual values and mores of our society. What SIR Anerood Jugnauth has given us , remains even today, our hopes and aspirations what we can achieve together, ANSAM, for the country.

Sir Anerood remains for me a man of his word, a man of high integrity, firm in his action, a man of no retreat, no surrender , and a man who knows the value of a promise.

Monsieur Le President,

Sir Anerood Jugnauth reste toujours un homme de principe avec des convictions. Pour lui, parole donnée, c'est parole sacrée.

Après les élections de 2000, vous souviendrez, malgré une campagne communale féroce et acerbe des adversaires, l'alliance MSM/MMM remporta les élections.

En 2003, malgré toutes sortes de pressions externes et internes, Sir Anerood Jugnauth cède le poste de Premier Ministre à Paul Bérenger pour 2 ans comme promise.

J'en suis sûr le MMM n'oubliera pas si vite cette grandeur d'âmes et la générosité de Sir Anerood envers le leader du MMM de sitôt. C'est la seule fois que le leader du MMM devint Premier Ministre pendant toute sa carrière pendant 50 ans comme politicien.

En 2012

Voyant la descente aux enfers avec le gouvernement PTR, A 82 ans, Sir Anerood Jugnauth quitte le Reduit pour sauver le Pays.

Mais survient ensuite, l'épisode de faire Mange Gato, la plus grande trahison de l'histoire politique de l'île Maurice.

Sir Anerood formed his government and went on a last battle on the international forum. He went to complete a last task which for him was injustice: The Chagos Archipelagos. And in 2017, Sir Anerood put the destiny of our country in someone to pursue the works he started.

And that person cannot be anyone rather than his own son, our actual Right Honorable Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

The opposition used to call it deal Papa-Piti. Cet argument n'a jamais tenue la route, tout comme la plupart de leurs arguments. Car Pravind Jugnauth emboita les pas de son père et alla dans les élections générales en Novembre dernier pour accroître un nouveau mandat de 5 ans. Et C'est, sans équivoque que la population mauricienne dans son ensemble a plébiscité Pravind Jugnauth comme le nouveau leader exemplaire.

Mr Speaker Sir

I come from a small village called Lallmatie, in the district of Flacq, that a well-established journalist from the same village once described it as “ *le village de mon extase*” --the village of my ecstasy inspired by the famous work of local poet and writer Marcel Cabon, *KelibeKeliba*.

My interest in politics began way back from my college days.

I read voraciously about what was going on at the local, national, regional and international levels. I listened to debates, talks by politicians and non-politicians.

All these helped me to reach informed decisions and reinforced my desire to join politics.

I entered politics in the late 80s. I was elected to the village council, served at the district council and also served as Adviser in a Government led by Sir Anerood.

These provided me with the much needed experience to understand how local and national governments operates.

However, I do not pretend to know all that one has to know about the workings of Government. I have still a long way to go, and with your timely advice, I feel I can contribute positively to the development of this country.

Until now, however, I must add, not everything has been smooth sailing for me. I have known many ups and down.

The political road so far had been, uneven, bumpy and at times full of potholes.

I still remember, in 1998, while I was campaigning for Sir Aneerood for the by-election in Constituency Number 9, Flacq/Bon Accueil, from where I am elected, the then Labour Government under Navin chandra Ramgoolam, had me and my 70-year old, ailing father, arrested and thrown in Alcatraz.

That arrest has left a bitter taste and a deep scar in my heart that refuses to heal.

I saw my father lying, crying, helplessly on the floor, almost dying. I cried, but could do nothing.

My father is no more. The weight of the arrest was too much for him to bear. After our release, my dad always wanted to know the reason of the arrest and the treatment we underwent. He could never know it. The case was struck out in court and I still do not know the reason for throwing me and my dad in Alcatraz.

During that hard time, I never stop believing in divine justice. It did come, albeit belated.

Those who tried to dig holes for me and my parents, are today themselves in the 6 feet six inches political hole from where their political soul will never escape. And yet, I bear no one any grudge.

Like Narendra Modi Ji, Prime Minister of India, I quote:

“Each one of us has both; good and evil virtues. Those who decide to focus on the good ones succeed in life.... You can see the change you want to, be what you want to be “: Unquote

Mr Speaker Sir

In spite of all that I underwent, I thank the almighty; I am still around, to serve my constituency and the country. I live and grew up in the constituency. I know each and every home and most people by their first names.

I am Sudheer, they call me Sudear because I am so dear to them. I am one of them, no honorable or minister. I will stay like that always, a friend to everybody, to those who voted for or for those who did not even vote for me.

I am everybody's MP in my constituency where I stood as candidate for the general election in November last year, for the first time, and I was elected. My sincere thanks to all my constituents

Mr Speaker Sir

This country has known free and fair elections since 1948. The majority of the people have been voting ever since and everyone has been, in all humility, accepting the verdict of the electorates.

The international observers and community are all praise for our electoral machinery that ensures no hanky-panky business during voting time.

And yet, what do we hear after the results of the last November poll were announced....

*election mardaille...election coquin...*and a host of shameful phrases and qualifications to deliberately cast a slur on the excellent democratic principles and practices that this country has enjoyed so far.

Shame on such people who try to dirty their own linen to eventually wash it in public and start crying wolf. Shame on these prophets of doom.

Mr Speaker Sir

When I hear the hollow, baseless and vitriolic assertions by such doom and gloom prophets, I am reminded of what the British philosopher and political economist, John Stuart Mill says in his treatise, Utilitarianism, and I quote:

“It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is only because they only know their own side of the question.” Unquote

Mr Speaker Sir

A French author and member of the Académie Goncourt, most famous for the works *'Poil de carotte'* (Carrot Top, 1894) and *'Les Histoires Naturelles'* (Nature Stories, 1896) once said, and I quote:

"La vérité vaut bien qu'on passe quelques années sans la trouver. --that is, Truth is more valuable if it takes you a few years to find it."

And I unquote.

Fortunately, it didn't take much time or many years for our population to know the truth and the vicious, sullied intention of a Machiavelli LION to cause harm to our national prestige.

In any case, Mr Speaker sir, I do not hate such people, I pity them for they know not what they are in their unquenchable thirst for power by hook or crook.

Mr Speaker Sir

Let me tell the members, my colleagues on the other side of the floor, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth is the last person who will ever do any unlawful or unethical act for his personal interest.

He has on so many occasions proved that he is a man of high morals, discipline and convictions. Most of you know this.

Unfortunately...

Quelques membres de l'opposition, ici et ailleurs, ne peuvent toujours digérer leur défaite lors des dernières élections générales. Je dirai à tous ces gens-là, les élections sont maintenant derrière la porte, rassemblons nos efforts pour faire avancer le pays vers des nouveaux horizons.

For like British Politician, Jeremy Corbyn, let us all understand that, I quote :

« Parliament is supposed to be serious. It's not a place for jingoistic cheering, » I unquote.

No jingoistic cheering henceforth please.

Let us join our competencies to create a new political demand and supply curve because, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji says:

I quote: “*We walk together, we move together, we think together, we resolve together, and together we take this country forward.*” I unquote.

I am not asking you to leave your party to join us...though that would have been most welcomed. All I am saying, let’s work together for the welfare of our people and our country.

This is also the wish of the population outside. In one of the local daily, one writer had this to say:

Je cite « C'est votre rôle en tant que membres de l'opposition de critiquer les actions et inactions du gouvernement, mais il convient aussi de faire des propositions constructives afin d'aider notre pays à progresser. Vous, qui avant les élections aviez (enfin si l'on croit en votre sincérité) tous les remèdes et solutions à tous nos maux et problèmes vous seriez beaucoup plus utile ; je pense, au pays et selon l'expression de votre formule favorite « dans l'intérêt supérieur du pays » de faire profiter au Pays vos recettes et solutions bien gardées de comment vous alliez faire si vous étiez au pouvoir afin de :

- 1. Augmenter la croissance.*
- 2. Réduire l'endettement.*
- 3. Diminuez le déficit budgétaire.*
- 4. Créer des emplois productifs pour nos Jeunes.*
- 5. Baisser les prix des commodités même si leurs cours au plan mondial sont en hausse.*
- 6. Augmenter les pensions.*
- 7. Réduire la pollution sous toutes ses formes.*
- 8. Accroître le pouvoir d'achat des travailleurs.*
- 9. Combattre la Corruption.*
- 10. Combattre le trafic de Drogue.*

11. Réduire le nombre d'accidents.

Et j'en passe.

Croyez moi, la nation vous aurait été plus que reconnaissant et vos efforts certainement plus productifs que de boycotter le discours-Programme»...Unquote

This is why I say, like the market *Supply and demand curves that will intersect* at one point, the equilibrium point, to indicate the price at which we would predict the market will operate.

Let us also, as members of this house, plot our own graph of vision and ideas--a demand and supply graph of political vision and aspiration with its equilibrium point where both sides of the house can operate in the best interest of the country.

We may not agree on all that comes in our way, but, with debates and civilised discussions, we may reach the equilibrium point, to help the country move ahead.

Let us rise above party politics and petty interests.

Let's join hands and work for the betterment of our people and the prosperity of our nation.

Mr Speaker Sir

I now wish to turn to the Government's programme 2020-2024. It underscores inclusive development to accelerate growth of the Mauritian economy. People also want more inclusive development.

Having said this, Mr Speaker, Sir, as I am addressing this august assembly, I am motivated by a deep sense of honour, dignity, pride and above all a strong "sense du devoir". I am conscious that the expectations of the population from this Government is very high and in the years to come we are condemned to perform and give the desired results.

This reminds me of what Winston Churchill once said - I quote: “it is no use saying we are doing our best You have got to succeed in doing what is necessary” .

Mr. Speaker, Sir

This new Government has been elected on only one basis this is: RESULTS. Results that triggered actions and actions that produced achievements. That is why we need to continue on the same track.

But we need new ideas, innovative policies, creative plans and inclusive programmes that will take into account the increasing exigencies of our people, their legitimate aspirations as well as the emerging challenges facing us all as a nation.

The Government Programme 2020-2024 is the official blueprint of the Government with a triple objective of converting Mauritius into an inclusive high income country while ensuring that we remain united as a nation and our environment is preserved and protected.

Thus it has set the tone and pace within which our country under the visionary and exemplary leadership of the Prime Minister will continue to progress to carve its niche in the league of nation.

I should also mention here the underlying principle that characterized the Government Programme 2020-2024 which is continuity with farsightedness, novelty, inclusiveness and togetherness 'It is, indeed, daring and caring. It is aimed at bringing more happiness, prosperity and peace of mind to one and all. Economic, social, cultural and ecological development should touch each and every Mauritian.

No one should be left behind. Allow me here to quote Mahatma Gandhi who said -I quote “Power comes from sincere service” unquote.

We should provide our people with genuine services, facilities and privileges so that there is a level playing field and the gap between the haves and the have nots is shortened.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I am very grateful to the Honourable Prime Minister, who has entrusted me with the Ministry of Blue Economy, Marine Resources, Fisheries and Shipping. It is indeed a large portfolio - as vast as the ocean.

But the ocean and the marine lives have always fascinated me and I am amazed to look at the potential that the blue economy represents to our nation. My Ministry, has as mission “To fully optimize in a sustainable manner the immense potential of our Exclusive Economic Zone and develop the blue economy as a new pole of growth”and is thus called upon to play a very important role in the future economic development of Mauritius.

It is no coincidence that my Ministry has been mentioned for more than a dozen times in the Government Programme 2020-2024.

Mr Speaker Sir,

The Blue Economy is a concept of the 21st century which gained momentum since Rio+20 (Summit on Sustainable Development in 2012) where the need was recognized to conserve oceans as “sustainable development spaces” to meet the demands of the present without damaging the interests of future generations. The main Blue Economy resources include fish, other living organisms, aquatic resources, minerals and other non living substances.

It also extends to offshore energy and a number of marine services namely, transport, tourism and communication.

We know that over the year, the oceans have been used to meet the many essential needs of humanity. But we need to make a judicious and responsible use of its resources. Sustainability is the key factor when we talk of Blue Economy.

As a new Minister, I am aware the blue economy can contribute to our food security and alleviate many of the difficulties that we are going through.

I think that our fishing industry and our local fishermen should play a major role in the development of this blue economy. I look forward to their unstinted cooperation.

I, therefore, take the commitment here, in this august assembly, Mr Speaker Sir, to do my utmost best in my capacity as Minister, to help the fishermen community.

The Fishermen Community can rest assured that they would always be on top of my agenda and I will always be *'a leur ecoute'*.

The Government will help them in improving their daily life and in improving the conditions of living of their families.

Mr Speaker Sir

Mauritius is a coastal Island with 2.3 million km² of Exclusive Economic Zone.

Yet, we are still importing 60% of fish for local consumption, amounting to around 23,000 tons annually.

This is a paradox that I want to address. I remember last year, the Hon. Prime Minister once rightly said, we should reduce our imports of fish and increase our local production. Yes, I fully concur with his views.

Mr Speaker Sir

Today we have some 1700 local registered fishermen, and I firmly believe that with bold decisions and joint collaboration with the government, they can help us in tackling this issue.

We should only keep on empowering them and giving them the right incentives and the right equipment to venture at sea or for land based production.

Mr. Speaker Sir

We cannot speak about developing our Blue Economy without including one of the major actors: our local fishermen. Currently, our fishermen are benefitting from different incentives.

For instance, the Bad Weather Allowance has been increased from Rs 210 in 2015 to Rs 365 in 2019.

Since 2015, the Government has disbursed more than Rs 260m for the payment of Bad Weather Allowance. Decision has also been taken decision to empower fishermen to start fishing off lagoon.

Let me also remind you that Fishermen cards and training for fishermen had gone into oblivion from 2005 to 2014. This is no longer the case today.

My Ministry has introduced the Canotte Scheme and the semi-industrial off-shore fishing scheme, whereby more and more fishing boats are being acquired by individual fishermen and cooperative associations.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I sincerely feel it is unacceptable that foreigners keep on fishing our Tuna, within our fishing zone, and selling them abroad at high prices while paying us peanuts for the fishing licence to fish in our EEZ.

I intend to review the conditions of Fishing Licences given to Foreign Boats. Foreigners can't take what is more precious in our EEZ while our local Fishermen continue to suffer. Our local fishermen should have their own boat to fish in our EEZ.

This is what this government wants to achieve and this is the aim of the Semi-Industrial Boat Scheme.

The key objective for the fisheries sector is to support the transition to off-lagoon operations by transferring the required knowledge to small fishers by building up a semi-industrial and industrial fishing industry.

Mr Speaker Sir

I am happy to inform the House that the Government, through the Mauritius Ports Authority, will be constructing a Port de Pêche to the tune of Rs 2.5 billion at Fort William.

This Port de Pêche will be a modern and well equipped one which can accommodate around 120 fishing vessels.

There will be a cold room, ice machine maker and all other facilities for fishing vessels to unload their catch in Mauritius. We want local fishermen to become entrepreneurs.

My Ministry will, therefore, invest in empowering the Fishermen. We cannot offer to them grants and then let them deal with the projects on their own.

We will have an information desk at the level of the Ministry to help them. Furthermore, we will train our local fishermen for this type of fishing.

My Ministry will recruit a Fishermen Master to educate our local fishermen and provide them training in long line fishing.

In the same endeavor, the Government, with the assistance of the Government of Australia, has acquired a new Multi-Purpose Support Vessel.

This new multi-purpose support vessel of 18.6 m in length, has been jointly funded by the Government of Mauritius and the Government of Australia under its Australian Food Aid Programme.

The vessel has been constructed and commissioned in Australia at the cost of Rs 57 million rupees. It is expected to be in the Port Louis harbor by the end of this month.

All going well,

The launching ceremony will be held by the Right Honorable Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth on 05 March 2020

With the help of this vessel, several projects have been identified to develop the fisheries sector such as deep water shrimp fishery, Swordfish fishery, deep demersal slope fishery and long line fishing fleet for tuna, which will increase our local production.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I wish to point out that at present there are four cooperative societies benefitting from this scheme with a grant of Rs 4 million each for the acquisition of a Semi Industrial fishing boat.

Two boats have already started fishing in the banks. Up to 10 tons in one fishing campaign. They are doing very well, with fruitful campaign at sea.

Today we have around 50 semi industrial local fishing boats fishing in our banks. Our vision is to increase the number further.

This would enable them to fish in open sea, increasing their catch levels while preserving endangered lagoon species.

Succeeding in this project would mean that our imports of fish will surely go downward and our local production will surely increase.

This is the only way we could generate revenues in the Blue Economy for now.

Mr Speaker Sir

The Seafood Hub remains the most prolific sector. We have the Princess Tuna generating a turnover of Rs 16 billion, representing 25% of Mauritius exports.

Moreover, this sector contributes 3% to our GDP Growth. The Private Sector is doing well in our region.

The government intends to attract investors to develop this sector with more technologies.

Mr Speaker Sir

The fishermen community is among one of the most important stakeholders of the Ministry.

Fishermen have always been placed at the center of development of the fisheries sector.

My Ministry is very conscious about the fishermen community and its contribution to the economy and has provided many incentives and introduced many schemes with a view to assist them and increase their contribution to the sector.

To this end, the Fishermen Welfare Fund will be revisited. My Ministry will increase the scholarship offered to children of fishermen. They can't be deprived of their shares.

Since 2014, the Government has disbursed more than Rs 2.5 million for the Scholarship to children in primary, secondary, tertiary and even post graduate.

Other facilities include: Fish Aggregating Devices are set and maintained to encourage fishing in the off-lagoon. Training courses are and will be provided to artisanal fishermen at the Fisheries Training and Extension Centre.

Moreover, fishermen were granted ice box, safety jackets since 2014.

The Government intends to increase these facilities to fishermen by providing them more equipment.

My Ministry will launch tender for the supply of a mobile phone to every registered fishermen, so that we can locate them through GPS.

We also intend to come up with a scheme helping fishermen to buy all their equipment from the Federation of Mauritian Fishermen who will be authorized to import nets, hooks, ropes and other fishing accessories for their members.

Moreover, the Seafarer's Welfare Fund will be reviewed to ensure that the fund is being use to promote the welfare comfort and recreational facilities of the Seafarer's.

As from February 2020, the monthly grant offered by the Seafarer's fund to the Mauritius Sailors Home Society has increased from Rs 100,000 to Rs 300,000 monthly for them to meet their expenses.

The office of the Seafarers Welfare Fund as well as the two associations which cater for the welfare of seafarers namely, Old Sailors Association and the Professional Seafarers Association, will be accommodated at the Seafarers Centre at Mer Rouge (Trevessia House), with a view to providing welfare and recreational facilities to both local and foreign seafarers under one roof.

Mr Speaker Sir,

The prime strategy to reduce our imports and to increase food security is by increasing our local production.

Under Section 82 of the Government Programme 2020-2024, the Government has announced that it will support the development of a sustainable aquaculture and fishing industry through capacity building for semi-industrial and industrial fisheries and also for artisanal fishers.

Mr Speaker Sir

The Fisheries and aquaculture sectors have high trade potential and socio-economic impact. From 2017 to 2018, the total fish production increased by 28.7 %.

This increase was attributable to the production of other catch and to the production of fresh coastal fish catch.

There is an urgent need for Mauritius to diversify its export market to move away from preferential access to global competitiveness.

Mr Speaker Sir,

The strategy will be to consolidate the current market share of the country in the traditional EU market, while gaining market share in emerging markets.

Mr Speaker Sir,

My Ministry will look into the mass production of fingerlings to promote backyard aquaculture for small scale fisheries farming to improve food security among all the people of Mauritius.

To this end I would like to share a success story of a Mauritian Citizen with you in this house today.

Mr Khemraj Persandis a genuine entrepreneur residing in the north, producing oyster through aquaculture, since more than 10 years now.

Normally, a juvenile oyster needs three years to be consumed. 8 or 9 years ago, this person started this production and waited 3 years to harvest for the first time.

His passion pushed him to learn more about oyster. He went abroad and mastered himself in this field.

Gradually he went on to enlarge his business bearing all costs himself with the technical help and guidance of the AFRC.

Today, he is producing more than 600,000 units per year and intends to extend his production in this sector.

All hotels around Mauritius run after him today to buy these oysters.

This is the future Mr. Speaker Sir. We want to encourage more and more fishermen and investors to embark in such projects.

Furthermore, besides oyster production, my Ministry will promote the production of crabs, fish, camaron and prawns through aquaculture.

The Aquaculture Division of the Albion Fisheries Research Centre (AFRC) aims to promote and develop aquaculture to meet growing demand in fish through the development of the following projects for culture of high value species:

Sea cucumber production, hybrid grouper production, female freshwater prawn production, lobster would be undertaken.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I am sure everyone is fond of seafood in this house. I would like to stress on the production of local Prawns in Mauritius, I am sure everyone did taste the ‘Rosenbergii’ we all buy in supermarkets.

Did you know that the Albion Fisheries and Research Centre produces juveniles of these prawns and then sells them to farmers for aquaculture at the price of Rs1.25 per unit?

It takes 8 to 13 months for these prawns to become adult and to be marketable. Today half a kilo of these same prawns is sold between Rs 200-Rs 300 on the local market.

My Ministry will encourage farmers in this endeavour and will increase the production of fingerlings each year.

Additionally, seaweed cultivation and value addition could lead to a viable business model providing jobs and wealth creation to the Fisherman community.

Mr Speaker Sir,

Our aquatic resources are under severe stress and heavily affected by climate change, global warming, human activities, pollution and depletion of habitats.

The achievement of sustainable development of our maritime space depends on an effective governance system steered and managed by public and private actors at every scale.

We need coordinated action and cooperation due to the complex and trans-boundary nature of ocean-related economic issues and challenges.

Providing social and economic benefits from the ocean is one of the greatest and defining challenges of our age. Our focus will be on:

1. Strengthening our research agenda to advise policies in the sector,
2. Providing incentives to investors in this field.

3. Creating an enabling environment to encourage fishers and the public to participate and contribute in this Blue initiative.

At the same time, we need to restore, protect and maintain the quality of our marine ecosystem.

One of the most important components for a healthy lagoon is our coral reefs which act as a protective barrier and an essential habitat for marine organisms.

There is more than 50 % coral reef mortality in the Seychelles and the Comoros and in Mauritius 20% of our coral are still alive. We must act unequivocally.

Other measures are being undertaken by my Ministry to protect corals through the implementation of several projects.

Mr Speaker Sir,

My Ministry has already started many projects related to coral plantation in our lagoon. The Mauritius Oceanography Institute has embarked on an extensive community based Coral Culture Training Programme in different parts of the island and coral gardens are flourishing with the help of coastal communities. We intend to extend this venture by roping in partnership with hotels.

And we want the local Fishermen to drive this project as it is the case at Grand Gaube, Bel Ombre, Quatre Soeurs and La Gaulette.

We want them to roll up their sleeves and help us as partners and stakeholders in this project. It is the fishermen themselves who built up the coral farm in our lagoon and they are contributing in the process of growth of these corals.

Our fishermen have indigenous knowledge of the ocean and we would like to tap on this significant resource in the development process of the Blue Economy.

Moreover, I am delighted to announce that hotel groups have already notified our Ministry of their interest in participating in such Public-Private-Projects.

As mentioned in the Government Programme 2020-2024, the Government of Mauritius is committed to increasing our marine protected areas and ultimately increase the biomass of our marine life.

The Republic of Mauritius has, so far, proclaimed 18 Marine Protected Areas, which has been classified as Marine Parks, Marine Reserves and Fishing Reserves.

Mr Speaker Sir

We are coming up with stringent measures to combat illegal fishing in our forthcoming amended Fisheries Bill

The fight against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is high on our agenda.

It is an area where the combination of science, technology and international cooperation hold the key to success.

As rightly projected in the Government Programme 2020-2024, the setting up of a marine biotechnology hub will bring in numerous benefits to the country.

It will include job creation, potential avenues for medicinal products and research development amongst others.

Mr Speaker Sir,

Marine science and research have crucial roles in determining how successfully we manage many long-term challenges and opportunities.

Science has indeed a key role to play in developing policy and industry.

Mr Speaker Sir,

I am coming forward with an amended Fisheries Bill that will ensure that proper management and sustainable development of our marine resources. It will also tackle the problem of illegal fishing in our lagoons with new regulations.

Mr. Speaker Sir,

Unfortunately, as rightly pointed out by Jacques Yves Cousteau, the Oceanographer and I quote

"The sea is the universal sewer and the culprits are us humans who are dumping millions of tons of garbage everyday into the oceans. The ocean is getting sicker every year". End of quote.

I would like to make an appeal to my Hon. Colleague, the Minister of Environment, Solid Waste and Climate Change, Hon Kavi Ramano.

He has set the trend and adopted a prompt and laudable approach in this fight. Please see to it that the amount of waste, leachates, biocides and plastics reaching our lagoons from land decreases.

We need to work together to tackle the problem of plastics in our lagoons.

This should be a wake-up call Mr speaker Sir. Who remembers what happened in the Atlantic Ocean? How the ocean was polluted and overfishing was at its peak. We don't want the same destiny for the Indian Ocean.

If we do not treat the oceans with respect, man will become extinct. When we protect our ocean, we are protecting our future.

I would like to conclude by reading a message of the ocean to us humans from

Harrison Ford.

“I do not owe humans a thing...I give, they take it but they take more of their share.

They poison me, they suffocate me and they expect me to feed them. If the ocean is not kept healthy---humans won't survive. It is as simple as that. The oceans are not too big to fail, if they die, so you will, so will us.

I believe with this government we will transform Mauritius in a sustainable way with the guidance of our Right Hon Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth.

During the Maha Shrivratree, I came across two sayings from our holy scriptures namely Bhagvat Gita and Ramayana.

In the first one, Lord Krishna says to Arjuna, I quote: “Ek Sahi Neta Wohi Hota Hein Jo Karma Ko Pradhan Maanta Hein”

Which means a Leader who believes in action is a true leader

While in Ramayana, Lord Ram said: I Quote, Raja Ka Param Dharma, Apne Praja Ke Sikh, Suvidha aur surasksha ka dhyan rakhna hai”

Which translates into the Prime duty of a king or a leader is to care for the well being of his people.

Today I attribute these holy qualities to our Right Honorable Prime Minister, Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, who has always been caring and proved to be a very good leader.

Together we can..Together we will...ENSAM
TOU POSSIB.

And I would suggest members on the other side of the house to join us in this mission otherwise for the next general election, again,

ENSAM NOU PIK ZOTTE OURITE.

I Thank you for your attention

