

MAURITIUS FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

FIRST SESSION

Debate No 13 of 2009

Sitting of Saturday 30 May 2009

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

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

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MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

First Session

Debate No. 13 of 2009

Sitting of Saturday 30 May 2009

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

CEB – PEAK DEMAND, CONSUMPTION, PRODUCTION

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities whether, in regard to electricity, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Central Electricity Board, information as to –

- (a) the peak demands in 2007, 2008 and 2009 to date, indicating the total production capacity and quantity produced at the peak times;
- (b) how consumption and production are expected to evolve in 2009, 2010 and 2011;
and
- (c) where matters stand concerning the –
 - (i) two 15 MW plants at Victoria;
 - (ii) wind park at Bigara;
 - (iii) CT Power Project;
 - (iv) Gamma-Coventa Project, and
 - (v) Expression of Interest for the new power plant on a BOO scheme of a total capacity of 100 MW.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Renewable Energy and Public Utilities (Dr. R. Beebeejaun): Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank the hon. Leader of the Opposition for giving me the opportunity to put a few facts in front of the House and I will make further comments on Tuesday on the Budget Speech. Mr Speaker, Sir, the phrasing of the question leads to a slight ambiguity between capacity and quantity. The unit of capacity is Megawatt. Production is Megawatt multiplied by time and is expressed in Megawatt, Kilowatt or Gigawatt Hour. I presume that the hon. Leader of the Opposition when referring to production and consumption has in mind production capacity and peak demand. In case, the hon. Leader of the Opposition is interested in consumption at specified peak times, I would be pleased to provide the information to him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) of the question, the peak demand in 2007, 2008 and 2009 as at today and the capacity of production were as follows –

Peak demand

2007	367.6 MW
2008	375.1 MW
2009	to date 389 MW

Capacity

The capacity to meet the demand was -

2007	504MW
2008	504MW
2009	to date 504MW

This capacity, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must stress, includes allowance for maintenance and breakdown reserve and an additional 10% of spinning reserve. I am saying this so that we all know what the issue we are addressing is.

With regard to part (b) of the question, the forecast of peak demand is 404 MW in 2009, 421 in 2010 and 443 MW for 2011. The capacity needed to meet that demand is as follows –

2009	504 MW
2010	534 MW
2011	649 MW

This will be met by the 30 MW of the new Fort Victoria Power station which will be commissioned in 2010 and projects such as Gamma-Coventia, CT Power and others.

As regards part (c) of the question, regarding the two 15 MW plants at Fort Victoria, I am informed that the CEB has awarded the contract for the design, supply, installation and commissioning of two 15 MW plants at Fort Victoria on 03 April 2009. Works have started on 30 April 2009 and it is expected that the units will be commissioned by October 2010.

Wind Park at Bigara

As regards the wind park project at Bigara, this is the first wind park project being implemented in Mauritius. I say wind park because in the distant past there was a wind project which did not last very long. A Transaction Adviser, CRISIL LTD from India has been appointed by my Ministry to carry out a feasibility study and assist in the procurement process for the setting up of a 25 MW to 40 MW wind farm on a PPP basis. The Transaction Adviser has started his assignment this month and is expected to complete it within 44 weeks. After the feasibility study, a potential investor will be selected through tendering process and it is expected that the plant will be commissioned by the end 2010. The plant will provide intermittent, but not firm power. The Bigara project is a Government initiative. However, there are two other project proposals from Aerowatt at Plaine des Roches and Mon Desert Mon Trésor at Britannia which are being considered.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the CT Power Project, this project of 110 MW is expected to be commissioned in 2011. The project will use pulverized coal technology. The project was started following the letter of intent issued by the Board of Investment in April 2006. Negotiations with CT Power started in 2006 and were completed in 2008. The Power Purchase Agreement between the CEB and the promoter was signed on 23 December 2008. I must stress, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the agreements are subject to the promoter obtaining an Environment Impact Assessment licence.

With regard to the Gamma-Coventia Project, it is expected that the plant will be commissioned in the third quarter of 2011. This project for the generation of electricity for a capacity of 20 MW was initiated following a letter of intent issued by the Board of Investment on 05 May 2006. Since then negotiations are being carried out with the CEB on a Power Purchase Agreement. In parallel, a Project Implementation Agreement Committee comprising representatives of the State Law Office, Ministry of Finance & Economic Empowerment, Ministry of Local Government, my Ministry and CEB are negotiating the Project Implementation Agreement. A number of other side agreements are also being negotiated between the promoter and other authorities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the CT Power and Gamma-Coventia projects are the subject of much public debate, which the Prime Minister has followed closely with great interest. The Prime Minister has asked Professor Joël de Rosnay for his advice on these two projects. A final decision will be taken in the light of advice of Professor de Rosnay. Mr Speaker, Sir, consideration is also being given to request Professor de Rosnay to review the level of pollution from existing power plants.

Regarding the Gamma-Coventia Project, Professor Joël de Rosnay has insisted that there should be appropriate filters incorporated in the project with state-of-the-art technology and this should be mandatory. I am given to understand that the promoter has taken a commitment to meet this requirement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, part (v) relates to Expression of Interest for 100MW. With a view to ensuring security and reliability of electricity supply to meet future demand, the Technical Committee on Nurturing Resilience chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet and Head of Civil Service and comprising private sector representatives recommended that a Request for Proposal be invited from potential bidders for the setting up of a plant of total capacity of 100 MW in sub units - this is important - not exceeding 50 MW giving flexibility for the proposal. On 04 February 2009, my Ministry issued an Expression of Interest inviting eligible private developers to indicate their interest in setting up this power plant on a BOO scheme, based on open technology.

By the closing date of 20 February 2009, 25 applications were received out of which 10 were from local promoters. The proposed technology ranges from coal, bagasse, heavy fuel oil,

wind and solar. In view of the fact that the project will be implemented on a PPP scheme, Government has decided to appoint IFC as Transaction Adviser for this project. The PPP unit of the Ministry of Finance is liaising with IFC on this matter to finalise the terms of reference for this assignment.

The House may wish to know also that following the agreement signed by Government and the Mauritius Sugar Producers Association in April 2008, providing *inter alia* that Government and MSPA will appoint jointly an independent expert or entity of international repute to review the energy sector with regard to the Independent Power Producers.

In November 2008, an international bidding exercise was carried out jointly by Government and the MSPA. I can now inform the House that an independent consultancy firm Hunton Williams LLP, based in USA has been appointed. The Consultant is expected to start the review on 08 June 2009 and will submit a report after twelve weeks.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister has submitted figures that I will have to look at carefully, but one thing - if I heard him correctly - which strikes me is that the peak demand from 377 went down to 335 in 2008, from 377 in 2007 and then jumped up to 389 this year.

Dr. Beebeejaun: I will read the figures. Peak demand in 2007: 367.6 MW; 2008: 378.1; 2009 to date: 389 MW.

Mr Bérenger: I will have to look at it even more closely. His predecessor of that Ministry said that the intention of Government - the target rather of Government - is to bring down that peak demand by some 25MW at horizon 2010, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he agrees with me that we are going in the wrong direction instead of bringing down by 25 MW, or whatever figure, we are going up.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, bringing peak demand down is one of the objectives of Maurice Ile Durable as far as it is possible and this will come through energy efficiency and energy savings rather than through decrease power production.

Mr Bérenger: The figures are there. I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister was right in saying that I am very worried about peak demand and whether our capacity with the required safety margin will be there to meet that demand this year, next year and in 2011. I will have to

look at the figures as I said. We have just been provided with the written answer which was in the Library today and the Ministry, itself, says that if we do not take the two 15 MW units - and the Minister confirmed that this will come into operation only in October 2010, probably, a bit later - therefore, we will have a tough 2009 and 2010. Will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister confirm that, in fact, we are already in the danger zone because the deficit for this year is already of 11 MW, as per what the Ministry has provided us with today, and will climb to 30 MW in 2010; then the two new units 30 MW in all will come into operation in October, November, December or slightly later. With those figures - we are already in 2009 - we are already struck with the 11 MW deficit which will climb to 30 MW in 2010, will the hon. Minister agree that we are already in the danger zone?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, navigating in the danger zone has always been one of the problems of CEB for generations - CEB and other production units. I can assure the hon. Leader of the Opposition that, the Cabinet, the Prime Minister and I, we have been looking at the energy production very closely.

Today, we are talking about minus 11 - did the hon. Leader of the Opposition say capacity margin minus 11? This takes into consideration 70 MW being taken out either for breakdown or for maintenance and 10% spinning reserve. I can assure the House that the CEB has prepared and looked very closely at all the potential production units so as to be able to make allowance for this. As for the two 15 MW projects of Fort Victoria, there will be no delay it will be October 2010 or before but not later. I have obtained from the CEB the assurance that, from now till end 2010 and beginning of 2011, whilst navigating in difficult waters, we will have no major problems using the experience of the CEB technicians to be able to accommodate, close, shut down, use the other units and so on and so forth.

Mr Bérenger: Since he has mentioned it, can I ask the hon. Deputy Prime Minister whether he has the details of the units that will run out of their lifetime this year and next year? They are very old units that cost a lot to the consumers and to the CEB. What are the units that are going to be taken off?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House knows, every generation unit has got a lifetime and the one at Fort Victoria, the Murlies, is expected to be phased out by 2012. We talked about production, over production, under-production but taking into account that the older

engine will be removed from service. I don't think, at any time, we will be at *super, super production d'énergie*.

Mr Bérenger: I think I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister give the figures. Am I right in hearing that in this Expression of Interest for two 15MW plants, there are proposals for wind and solar energy? Are there proposals for two units of 15MW to produce from wind and solar sources?

Dr. Beebeejaun: No, it has been in the pipeline for a long time. Proposals for wind park at Bigara - as the Leader of the Opposition well knows, between 2000 and 2005, there was a project which somehow did not materialize and we have started again on the project. At Britannia they are quite serious about it, but they won't be ready for another eighteen months to two years. It is the same for Aerowatt. We are looking closely at these three measures and I will talk more about them on Tuesday. I hope the House will have a better profile of the energy production, its demand and our plan for the future. I can assure the House that we, too, give precedence to renewal energy, but it will be in the context of technologies existing at the moment. So, for the time being, we have Bigara. We have two other sites which have been identified, but they are not for this year, maybe next year, but certainly the year after.

Mr Bérenger: With regard to part (c) of my question, that is, the different projects that are planned, we have talked about the two 15 MW plants at Fort Victoria and the wind park at Bigara. The next one is the CT Power. I am sure the hon. Deputy Prime Minister will agree with me that more and more coal plants are out throughout the world. I am sure he is aware of the latest Union Nations report on global warming and within that, the damage caused by coal plants is again underlined. Professor Joël de Rosnay has already given an opinion on that. Is Government still thinking, therefore, of going ahead with the CT Power which is going to use one of the worse coal technologies?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I wanted to keep this for my Tuesday's intervention, but I'll come on this. Much has been spoken about the use of coal. Let us agree on one thing. Every country worldwide is talking about renewable energy. Every country is trying to expand its renewable energy project. Some, which had barely any, are able to double and treble it easily; others like us, which are already on a 20% production, will have to strive and wait for the new technologies to come in and be sure that we can incorporate them in our transmission system.

That is the first point. The second point - the United Nations on environment; I agree with it, this is a policy which has evolved, which will be a follow-up over the next twenty years. No country in the world today can afford to say that we are not going to use coal. No country! China is going to use it more and more. Swaziland is going to use it. We had the distinguished visitor from Swaziland and he was telling me that they have a lot of coal; they are going to use it. The real issue about climate change is pollution from carbon dioxide. This is the real issue and today, we have different types of coal technology. The ancient one, the disgustingly polluting one which is being used at the moment – I will say more about it later. It is a greater coal technology, inefficient, dirty, badly disposed of; I will come on Tuesday. The technology that is being used today is the pulverized coal technology which is the newest, but there is another one which is the fluidized coal. It is for the future, it is not for today. I don't know any country in the region or anywhere elsewhere which is using it on a big scale. The fluidized coal is still experimental. So, this is about coal. The essence of coal is to use a technology, the latest one that can be accepted. We talked about carbon capture and carbon sequestration. It is easily said, but who is doing it on a commercial scale? No country! They are being investigated by America. Britain has said they are going into the CO₂ capture, but having talked to eminent personalities at the Carbon Trust in London two months ago, they have warned me that there is a lot of talks, but little to show. Carbon dioxide capturing is for the future, it is not for today; it is not for the five years to come, it is experimental. So, there we are, Mr Speaker, Sir. We must be careful. For the CT Power, we may have objection. I'll wait for Professor Joël de Rosnay, he has expressed his views and I hope he will come, he will look at it and he will give his advice. I can assure the House, we will go by his advice.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister seems not to be aware that, at least, the UK Government has taken a firm decision about three to four weeks ago that there will be no new coal plan without carbon capture - definite decision that there will no new coal plan except with carbon capture. Is he aware of that?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, no coal, what else? No fuel oil, no fossil fuel! Atomic energy - they are able to do it! Can we afford it? Have we got the skill for nuclear energy? This is nuclear energy I am talking about and I hope that no one here is going to tell me to install a nuclear energy plant somewhere around the island or on one of the islands.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Deputy Prime Minister is aware. It is not only UK with their financial power, but China also. China is bent – they have just announced last week a plan over a ten-year, fifteen-year period, I don't have the figure in mind - to reduce the share of coal produced electricity by gas drastically. So, is he aware that it is not just the rich countries? Countries like China and others which mean to be serious about global warming are taking decisions.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, we are talking of countries with which we cannot compare. The energy production of China, as we all know, is mostly based on coal today, so they are making the required effort and I have looked at the projection for the next ten years for China, it is coal plus other forms of energy. They have not dismissed coal. All I am saying - I am not advocating in any way the usage of coal – is that we are stuck with coal for a while until we can improve the technologies and get carbon capture on a commercial basis.

Mr Bérenger: On the CT Power project, I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say that an agreement was signed between CEB and CT Power in December 2008, but subject to the EIA licence being obtained. Can we know where matters stand as far as the EIA licence is concerned?

Dr. Beebeejaun: For the CT Power, the EIA licence is yet to be obtained it is in process.

Mr Bérenger: In the case of the next one, the Gamma-Coventa Project, in fact, I understand that the EIA certificate was issued, but it is being challenged before the Appeal Board. Can I know where matters stand as far as the appeal is concerned? I heard the hon. Deputy Prime Minister say that, according to his information, Gamma-Coventa has committed itself to introducing the required technology, filters and so on as requested by Professor Joël de Rosnay. Can I know, therefore, where matters stand, and whether Gamma-Coventa has made that commitment in front of the Appeal Board?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there have been several postponements for hearing the appeal, and I understand - my colleague probably will confirm this with me - it will be heard by the end of June, and any new submissions will be taken into consideration.

Mr Bérenger: My next point, Mr Speaker, Sir, if you will allow me. If I heard correctly, there were ten local ventures that have come forward when the Expression of Interest

was issued. Can I know whether there have been any international offers and how many relate to wind and solar?

Dr. Beebeejaun: The response has been fairly vague. There has been no sort of specification on the megawatt to be produced. That's why we have appointed the Transaction Adviser, Mr Speaker, Sir, so that we can firm it up a bit more. For me, the interest in this invitation is to give us flexibility as well as security for 2011.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will put one more question before I will have a final one at the end. Is Government totally committed to do as much as can be done as far as producing electricity both solar and wind, either through Expressions of Interest that come forward from the private sector, CEB or Government sector itself?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the answer is firmly "yes". I will come again on that. I will give a full explanation on Tuesday, but I will say the answer is firmly 'yes', taking into account the upfront costs, the running costs and the tariff structure. I also understand that we are getting help from France. President Sarkozy has given our Prime Minister the understanding that he will accompany us on this very difficult transition. It is not as easy as people think it is, but the answer is yes, there is a firm commitment.

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Speaker, Sir, just to get an insight from the Deputy Prime Minister about the use of coal. Can he tell the House what has been the increase in the import of coal for existing coal/bagasse technology that has been used since the time of inception, that is, the first time we started using coal and how it has evolved until now? If he does not have the information, I would like to have it in his speech on Tuesday.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member is stealing my thunder for Tuesday. So, I will give it on Tuesday.

Mr Lesjongard: As it is, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are walking on a tight rope with regard to production of electricity. We are already in the orange zone concerning the spinning reserve. Doesn't the Deputy Prime Minister feel that if the power projects, which have been identified by Government, do not materialise by the year 2010 and 2011 we might be running very short of spinning reserves which is unacceptable at a time when we might recover from the economic crisis.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has put his question; will the hon. Deputy Prime Minister give the answer?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole point of my answer was to say that 2009/2010 is secure. In 2011, we'll come up and we are making provisions that we do not run short in 2011.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, in the light of the deal that was struck between the Government and MSPA, the hon. Prime Minister stated that shareholding of workers of the sugar industry would be increased in both future and actual IPPs ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, it does not relate to the question.

Mr Jugnauth: It does because the hon. Minister said in his answer...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Deputy Prime Minister stated that an expert has been appointed to look into the agreement insofar as the cost of production of the power is concerned, he has not talked about shareholding as such.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will make an appeal to the hon. Member. Let the consultant start and then I will give all the details because it is a subject that has been agreed upon by both parties.

Mr Bhagwan: I have not heard the Deputy Prime Minister giving us any hint on hydropower. Can we know from him whether there is any increase in the hydropower unit and whether he is satisfied that all the units of our existing hydro plants are maintained properly? Sometimes we have water, but the engines are broken down.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, as has been mentioned elsewhere, there are two small units being looked into. One is commissioned already and the other one is in the pipeline. I will take the point of the hon. Member about maintenance of equipment. It applies not only to the hydropower sector, but also to the other sectors that engines be properly kept and maintained.

Mr Ganoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, can the hon. Deputy Prime Minister respond to the exercise which the CEB made recently about the electric saving bulbs? What has been the outcome? Has there been any impact of this?

Dr. Beebeejaun: If a substantive question is put, I will answer it fully, but the outcome has been very satisfactory. We have almost exhausted the one million target, but there is a problem - and I think we have to address it – in that people should actually know where to use it best. We are trying to educate the consumers to use the bulb where it is on for a maximum time and not just in a corner where it will be switched on and off. I again stress that with energy efficiency we can achieve a lot. I'll address this issue on Tuesday and it will probably remain the subject of my intervention.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister mentioned the consultancy as regards the agreement between the MSPA and the independent power producers. Can he enlighten the House as to the terms of reference of that consultancy and, secondly, whether there is a time frame for the submission of the report?

Dr. Beebeejaun: I will lay the terms of reference on the Table of the Assembly. There are three paragraphs. There is a time frame and it is very short.

Mr Dullooo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister indicated that about 20% electricity is being supplied to the CEB from renewable energy sources. This probably would be mostly the sugar industry. Can we know whether it is a continuous supply or this would include intermittent or continuous supply also? What would be the projected increase from renewable energy sources by 2010/2011?

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a 64,000 dollar question. What it will be in 2011, we don't know! But having said that, most of the power today is 24 hours, 7 days, 12 months, it is continuous. It is only 4 megawatts that is intermittent during crop season only. The rest is power for all the year round.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, in a great country like South Africa next door, there also, the authorities, over the recent years, have said that there is no problem, no danger on the horizon, everything is cool. *Tout va très bien Madame la Marquise!* And then, they ran into very big trouble with blackouts, cuts in electricity supplies last year and it is continuing this year.

The hon. Minister has given guarantees, it is on record. He, himself, says in reply to the PNQ - it is on record - that we already have a capacity deficit of 11 megawatt this year which would climb to 30 megawatt next year and then the two units will come into operation. Will the hon. Minister agree with me that we are already in the danger zone so much so that two of those projects, CT Power and Gamma-Coventa, are meeting with a lot of trouble? There will be appeals here and there and so on. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether Government will see to it that alternative and as cheap as possible sources of supply of electricity are available, that we don't just wait and see and then we have to rush through these two 15 megawatt units which cost a lot to consumers and to the CEB? They cost a lot, much more than other alternatives which should have been considered in the past. Therefore, can I ask whether Government will see to it that we don't run into the kind of situation that South Africa met with and secondly, that alternatives at the cheapest cost possible will be made available to the country.

Dr. Beebeejaun: Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that today the cheapest form of technology is diesel, the fuel oil. No doubt about it! The Victoria Power Plant 15 times 2 Megawatts will produce electricity at less than Rs3.50 per Kilowatt. That's an option! You see, one option excludes the other. Cheapness, value for money, environmental consideration - they don't all match, Mr Speaker, Sir. Solar power to produce electricity is very expensive. How much of it we will be able to take up in the years to come, we will decide as we go along. We are praying for new technology, cheaper technology that will come along the line and I hope that what President Obama is doing will bear fruits and we will be able to benefit from that. Thank you!

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Sir, 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.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2009) BILL

(No. IX of 2009)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2009) Bill (No. IX of 2009).

Question again proposed.

(12.11 p.m)

Mr D. Boodhoo (Second Member for Piton and Rivière du Rempart): Mr Speaker, Sir, I rise before this august Assembly with great pride to share my views on the 2009 Budget. Before I actually turn to my main analysis of the Budget, I would first like to address some of the criticisms levelled by the hon. Members from the Opposition. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must admit I had a lot of difficulty in finding real and justified criticisms of the Budget by the Opposition. Most of the arguments made by the hon. Members from the Opposition side of the House were mere rhetoric and pure demagogy. I will give a few examples. I start with hon. Navarre-Marie. I was quite surprised by her speech actually. I mean she was trying to blame all the social problems of the country on hon. Sithanen's Budget. I think that was a disgrace. Hon. Barbier observed that the Budget is antisocial, pure rhetoric again. I will come to that later. Hon. Bhagwan talked about Pepsi Hungama while commenting the Budget. As you can see the Opposition has no argument. Hon. Allet said the Budget *est une boîte vide, présentée dans un bel emballage*. What a lot of nonsense! I will come to measures taken later to prove the contrary. Hon. Bodha said: *«pas assez pour les gens au bas de l'échelle»*. Again, just partisan, antigovernment, rhetoric! Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe we have no lesson to learn from the previous MSM-MMM Government in particular when they say that this Government is not doing enough for the poor and those at the lowest rung of the social ladder. The House should not forget that the previous Government raised VAT by 50% while there was no economic crisis as compared to today. Who suffered most when VAT increased by such a huge proportion? It is evidently the poor because VAT is a regressive tax and the poor pays a higher proportion of VAT as

percentage of their income compared to the rich. Where were then the Members of the Opposition? Secondly, what about the Illovo deal? Rs6 billion were handed over to 5 families. Was it not antisocial, Mr Speaker, Sir? Surely, this was a unique occasion to democratise ownership of land to the population at large. Thirdly, Mr Speaker, Sir, what about sending SSU to beat poor women who just lost their jobs? The Leader of the Opposition even said that SSU “*pas donne biberon tibaba*”. Was this not antisocial? We can go on and on with such antisocial behaviours by the outgoing Government. Coming back to the main criticisms levelled by the Leader of the Opposition, there were only two main ones which were worth noting. The first one is that the increase in salary is not enough and the second one concerns the delay in the implementation of projects. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Dr. Sithanen, had to strike a balance between salary increase and job preservation and this has been well canvassed already. The equation is very simple as the Minister of Finance rightly put it. Job preservation is equal to preservation of enterprises, which is equal to cost control. If you ask anyone what he or she would prefer, that is, to have Rs200 salary increase, the risk of losing his or her job or a little increase but keeping the job? The answer would be resounding: to keep the job! The Opposition has to be sensible and patriotic in such a severe economic downturn which the country is facing. The second argument raised by the Leader of the Opposition was about the delay in the implementation of projects. That is a point well taken and the Government has announced a series of measures to tackle the bottlenecks. I will make my own suggestions later. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the House will gain more by listening to the observations made by independent and unbiased stakeholders about the Budget. I will quote a few. The country leader of PricewaterhouseCoopers, Mr André Bonieux observes that the country will support this Budget because it is a well drafted Budget. Pierre Dinan, who is a well recognised and respected independent Economist, said that this Budget is an Action Plan and will render results. KPMG observes that the Budget is pursuing an expansionary fiscal policy which is indeed commendable. Even the JEC *a observé que plusieurs mesures du budget vont dans la bonne direction*. The President of the Mauritius Bankers Association Limited, Mr Antony Withers *se dit être impressionné par la façon dont le gouvernement mauricien a anticipé les problèmes qui surgissent par ces temps difficiles*. Mr Ahmed Parker, director of MEPZA dit: «*on est très satisfait du budget*». Mr Speaker, Sir, all the independent stakeholders have commented this Budget as true patriots.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Can we have some silence, please!

Mr Boodhoo: These independent stakeholders have reached the conclusion that this Budget is a very good one which goes in the interest of this country.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Members are disturbing the hon. Member. He is a Member of Government; they have to listen to him.

Mr Boodhoo: I will now provide my own appreciation of the Budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe, if one has to give a proper assessment of the Budget and economic performance of the Government, one can look at the following three criteria to pass a judgement. Firstly, we have to look at the macroeconomic fundamentals; secondly, the business environment, and thirdly, the social equity which the Budget brings about. I will start with the macroeconomic fundamentals which, in a way, reflect the end result of how the economy has been managed by the Government in particular the Minister of Finance. Mr Speaker, Sir, when I look at the latest monthly bulletin published by the Bank of Mauritius in April, the Minister of Finance said - it is good to emphasise it again - that the previous Government's average annual GDP growth rate from 2001 to 2005 was only 3.9% whereas for the first three years 2006 to 2008, this Government's average annual GDP growth rate was 5.3%, it is much higher. The second criterion is the unemployment rate. In 2005 we inherited an unemployment rate of 9.6 % and at the end of 2008, it stood at 7.2%. I understand in March 2009 it has fallen to 7%. At the end of 2005, we inherited an inflation rate of 4.9% and, at the end of this calendar year inflation is estimated to fall to 4%, it is better than what we inherited. Budget deficit, Mr Speaker, Sir, the average deficit rate between the years 2001 and 2005 was 5.9%, whereas for the first three years of this Government, between 2006 and 2008, it is only 4.3% and it is due to fall to 3.3% by the end of 2011. Public sector debt, July 2006 to 2009, the average was 60% whereas the previous Government had an average of 71%. FDI, Mr Speaker, Sir, last year, it was Rs9 billion which equals the total of the 5 years of the previous Government. I think the only macroeconomic fundamental which we need to worry about is the balance of payments deterioration but, then again, this deterioration is due to the world economic downturn and, as the recession recedes, the balance of payment, I am sure, will come back to a surplus again.

A second criterion which we have to look at, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the business environment which this Government has created. Investors use to invest money and create wealth in a good business environment. Concerning the ease of doing business index, which is compiled by the World Bank, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was pleasantly surprised, very flattered and happy that Mauritius is 24th in the world, higher than even Germany, Netherlands, Austria, France, South Africa, Botswana, Spain, Portugal, Luxembourg, Kuwait, Turkey, Taiwan and Italy. Mr Speaker, Sir, this shows that Government has done a lot to bring a better business environment. This is the reason why the economy has done well so far and will continue to do well despite this severe recession which the world is facing.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the OECD list, Mauritius is in the white list, tax regime is one of the lowest in the world: 15%; interest rate is very low, it has fallen by 2.5% under the last six months. Foreign exchange rate is very stable. There is availability of skilled and versatile workforce. We have a stable Government; we have got good infrastructure and communication facilities. The sea and air link is good. Consumer confidence is there and so is business confidence. Talking about business confidence, Mr Speaker, Sir, the investors and the general business sectors have given thumbs up to the Budget. One will be presently surprised to note that since the Budget was presented last Friday the Semdex has risen by 7.6%; MCB shares, despite Government putting a solidarity levy on MCB, rose by 12%; SBM shares rose by 6.7%; New Mauritius Hotel's shares rose by 5%; the Sun Resort's shares rose by 25%; Naiade by 12%, and Rogers by 10%. That shows that the private sector, the business sector, has really welcomed the Budget and has given thumbs up and I don't see why we should listen to partisan people who put our economy and country down.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the third criterion which one would choose to assess the performance of the Government is social justice, I call it social equity. Mr Speaker, Sir, when I started my speech, I mentioned some of the disgraceful remarks made by some of the Opposition Members like this Budget is anti-social. Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to remind the House that the Labour Government has given us free education, free health care, universal pension system, social aid, free transport, scholarships for students who come from low income groups. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Finance for raising the threshold of the low-income group from Rs7500 to Rs10,000 a month which means that a larger number of students will be able to get the scholarship. I would like to remind the House that the Government pays all the

registration fees of a student studying at a University, plus other costs. This amounts to around Rs40,000 a year, it also gives a monthly stipend of Rs3000 a month over the three years period, which is a tremendous help to poor students coming from poor families.

This Government has introduced social housing. Rs60,000 for casting of slabs and Rs40,000 for material for low-income groups, sale of land to ex-CHA tenants, unemployment benefits for those losing their jobs, free training scheme for the unemployed, eradication of poverty scheme. Government has set up a Trust Fund for the Social Integration of Vulnerable Groups which has spent almost Rs500 m. to help the poor. This Government has also written off loans and interests of small entrepreneurs who were facing hardship. This Government has also introduced a fund to help those victims of sale by levy. There are various schemes to help small planters and recently, we have had subsidies on the solar water heater.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to highlight just a few other measures which were announced by the Minister of Finance in his Budget speech which, I believe, is groundbreaking and go a long way in helping our fellow citizens. There is a training scheme for 6,000 employees who were to be retrenched. Government is proposing that they go two days a week for training so that they work part-time and the employers don't lay off these people. I think this is a great scheme and it will help a lot of people in preserving their jobs.

The new campus of the University of Mauritius - Rs600 m. – will cater for 8000 new students; that again goes in the general framework of a socialist and caring Government of the Social Alliance. Mr Speaker, Sir, there are just too many measures. I would also like to mention the 2% levy on the CSR, the solidarity levy on banks and telephone companies, the integrated social development project at Bambous, business schemes so on and so forth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the projects announced by Government will help to tackle the economic slowdown that the country is currently facing. If implemented quickly and promptly, and managed properly, I am sure Mauritius will easily ride out this economic recession. I am really looking forward to the Harbour Bridge, the Ring Road, the Terre Rouge-Verdun-link road, the Verdun-Ébene link road, the Bus Rapid Transit System and the East-West connector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to make a few observations and proposals of my own. The first issue which I would like to raise, Mr Speaker, Sir, is residential land ownership for the working class and the lower middle class. I believe a typical family in Mauritius earns around

Rs12,000 to Rs13,000 a month. If you set aside 40% of that income to pay a mortgage, which is around Rs6,000 a month; you will probably get a loan of Rs600,000. Mr Speaker, Sir, I believe, with Rs600,000 no one can really buy a land and construct a house. I would like to seize this opportunity to urge Government, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Housing and Lands and, in particular, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to find ways and means to create a residential land bank so that working class and lower-middle class, young people, first time buyers, in particular, can acquire land, let's say at Rs20,000 a *perche*, which means 12 *perches* at around Rs250,000. I think that will help a great deal in providing decent accommodation to our young people. The second observation I would like to make is about the education system, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. Bodha raised some of the points, I think, 10,000 young children fail at CPE level. I think this is a disgrace to our country. I would urge the Minister of Education to look into how to reduce this percentage of failure because it creates a stigma at our youngsters. I sincerely believe that it is one of the reasons why we have poverty in Mauritius and lots of other social problems which are occurring. I think that the percentage of huge drop-outs - 10,000 young students failing CPE level every year - is unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The second point, hon. Bodha had already raised it, but I would like to mention it anyway. I believe private tuition is a scourge which should be eliminated. We cannot imagine that, at this age - we all have our sons and daughters or nephews and nieces - these kids have no time; from Monday to Sunday it is private tuition. Even on Saturdays and Sundays, kids are taking private tuition twice for the same subject. It shows that our education system is failing us. I always judge things by the end result and if students are taking private tuition all the time, it means that in our education system there is a lot of improvement to be done. The third point, hon. Nando Bodha mentioned, which I would like to stress upon is our education curriculum. It is too academic. We cannot narrow our education by just learning Mathematics, English, French, Science and Geography.

The other point I would like to raise, Mr Speaker, Sir, is share ownership. In Mauritius, we do not have the culture of people investing in shares and in stock exchange. It has been proved that, in the long term, - basically we have three ways of investing - one is investing in properties, is putting money in the bank and is investing in shares. In the long-term it has been proved that investing in shares gives better returns as compared to the other two investments. In Mauritius, people, who invest in stock exchange, are either investment professionals, that is, fund

managers or educated people, but the mass people do not know the benefits of investing in shares, mainly in shares with higher returns. Dividend is tax-free and so is capital gain; when you sell it, there is no tax. I think Government has to do something about it because it seems that the Stock Exchange of Mauritius, the brokers - we do not have FSPA now - and the FSC are not doing enough to propagate this investment mechanism for people. As I mentioned earlier, in the last seven days, the Sun Resorts prices rose by 25% as an example. Mr Speaker, Sir, the fourth observation and proposition I would like to make relates to the implementation of projects. Basically, there are three bottlenecks namely red tape, lack of management manpower and lack of motivation. They are holding a quick and successful implementation of projects. Concerning red tape, I think the Government is already setting up committees to look at it. The Budget has also mentioned how to tackle the issues of manpower, but I believe that, concerning this lack of motivation of civil servants, - I am talking of civil servants management, people who manage projects, the quantity surveyors, the engineers, the consultants - Government has to find a new way and we have to learn it from the private sector. I believe it will be something quite revolutionary. Why don't we have a performance bonus scheme for civil servants who manage big projects? Supposedly, there is a project of Rs1 billion, I do not think that it is a big deal paying Rs500,000 as bonus to the top 10 people managing the business. Just like in the private sector, I think, this motivation means that people will work overtime, harder and with more sincerity. There will be less corruption, because they know that they will be getting something out of it. This is my suggestion for the quick and proper implementation of projects.

Mr Speaker, Sir, very quickly, I will make one more proposition; I said it last year, but I would like to repeat it again. I think Government should once for all come out with a policy that guarantees a job for all the long term unemployed, especially those facing hardship cases. I do not think it is a big deal in a small country of 1.2 million population for Government to find a way of guaranteeing a job for them, of making a database for those people who face hardships and who are unemployed.

My final observation, Mr Speaker, Sir, - I mentioned it last year again - is that I would like to see a business park just like in Rose Belle and Ébène in the North. I heard somewhere that BPML has a plan of making a business park in Arsenal. I believe Arsenal is not the right place, because it is just too far for the East. I think Pamplemousses would have been a better place to build a business park which can cater business and BPO.

The final proposition which I made last year and which I will make again is that I would like this Government to go ahead and announce the North Eastern highway because I think the North Eastern region is underdeveloped.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to thank Government for the various projects in my Constituency. There are plenty but, in particular, I would like to thank the Minister of Public Infrastructure, hon. Bachoo, for extending the new railway road up to Schoenfeld road and eventually to Poudre d'Or Hamlet. I think this will ease a lot the traffic congestion in Rivière du Rempart and will link Rivière du Rempart, Roche Noire and Plaines des Roche to the north.

Mr Speaker, Sir to conclude, I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Prime Minister, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his team, the whole Government for this well-inspired Budget. God bless Mauritius! Thank you.

(12.40p.m.)

Mr G. Gunness (Third Member of Montagne Blanche and GRSE): Let me come to one or two points that my good friend, hon. Boodhoo, said and then I'll come on the Budget speech. First of all, on the question of VAT, I think we have to set, once for all, the records straight because very often it is said in this House that the previous Government raised the VAT by 100% or what not. Let's set the records straight!

Mr Speaker, Sir, in 1997, hon. Bunwaree knows something about that, Sales Tax, which was 5%, was raised to 8%. From 8% it was changed into 10% VAT, which means it was more than 100%. When we changed Sales Tax to VAT it means that we enlarged the base, the increase was more than 100%. So, stop saying 100%! This is the truth. Under the Labour Government of 1995 to 2000, that is, in 1997, in this country, Sales Tax changed to VAT was raised by more than 100%. They should now put an end to their demagogy.

Secondly, Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friend, hon. Boodhoo, talked about SMF, SSU and what not. We have to remind them that one or two months ago when Parliament was sitting, what was not done to the trade unionist, Mrs Jane Rughoo concerning the sales by levy? How were the poor ladies treated? Before we say SSU, SMF we have to see what was not done when

we were in Government. Think of the recent past! What was done one month ago? My good friend also talked about how this Budget was welcomed by the Mauritius Bankers Association Limited, by the J.E.C. and by Mr Ahmed Parker, but he avoided completely the association of consumers, the trade unionists, the consumers and the population. The people out there, he forgot them completely. He only talks of those who have ‘caviar’, but forgets those who have ‘Glenrick’. They see only those who eat ‘caviar’ and said that the budget is a very good one. My good friend, hon. Boodhoo, was stating that these people are happy! Obviously, they will be happy, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, in general, what people are saying?

My last criticism is on what my good friend, hon. Boodhoo, said according to the macroeconomic fundamentals. At least he was serious on one thing, on the balance of payments, on the deficit in the current account, but, it is not because of the recession. Since last year, in the last budget, we said that this deficit in the balance of trade is becoming alarming, serious, and we have to see how to tackle it. Nothing had been done! Now my good friend talked about inflation, he said: *c'est de la malhonnêteté intellectuelle*. He said that when we left Government in 2005 inflation was 4.9% and that, at the end of this year, it will be 4%, but he forgets to say in calendar year 2006 it was 8.9%; in calendar year 2007, it was 8.8% and in calendar year 2008 it was 9.7%. We know that when the Labour Government was here, inflation was 33% in 1979/1980. These are official figures: 1977/1978 - 10.1%; 1979/1980 - 33%; 1980/1981 - 26.5%, 1981/1982 -13.4%. These are records which we will never reach again. Never! So, stop talking about inflation!

(Interruptions)

ki la grève si ena 10.7% en 2006-2007; 8.8% en 2007-2008.

(Interruptions)

la grève là cote zotte même! This is what I had to say to my good friend, hon. Boodhoo, on some of the points that he raised and I just wanted to set the records straight.

Mr Speaker, Sir, true it is - we do not deny - that this year's Budget has been presented in a context of world economic recession. This is a fact that everybody recognizes, but it is as well true that since the end or early 2007, we, the Opposition, were saying that the economic storm is on the horizon, but the Minister of Finance denied it. At that time, he said: “Mauritius is resilient,

we are not getting and will not get into that trouble, the Opposition is panicking the people of this country.” When now he is faced with this reality - he is a bit late, you know, because he became doctor a bit late - he starts panicking and he is losing control of the situation. Mr Speaker, Sir, I must remind the House that it was the MMM who spoke first on the problem of food security. When we talked about food security, what did the Secretary General of the Labour Party say in a press conference? Go and see. The secretary general of the Labour Party said that the MMM is frightening people about the food security. Only two months after we spoke about this problem of food security, that is, in the last year’s Budget, the Minister of Finance came with measures to tackle the problem. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is alright for this year’s budget there is recession, but what the population does not understand is why is it that, in his two previous budgets, the Minister of Finance talked of early harvest, of bumper crop. At that time, when he talked of bumper crop and early harvest, the same people, who thought that their life would change in the famous hundred days, were being squeezed with all sorts of painful measures.

I think it is worth reminding the House and the population of some of these measures when we were having the bumper crop and the early harvest. Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the end result of the closing down of the DWC? Let me quote what the Director of Audit said when we closed the DWC.

(Interruptions)

Pas coze sa trop boucoup ena ‘case’ lors toi lors là ! The Director of Audit says: “Before closure, consideration was not given to the following degree of completion of projects, time to complete projects, availability of contractors willing to undertake completion of projects, possible financial impact on re-award and urgency of projects. Some projects were re-awarded at higher contract prices. As at September 2000, contracts of some of the projects, included those nearing completion, were not yet re-awarded.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in May 2009 and most of the projects, which were being carried out by DWC, have not yet been awarded. My good friend, hon. Lormus Bundhoo, knows it very well. They are now looking for a contractor for the construction of a football ground at Mont Ida. This is what is stipulated in the Director of Audit’s Report.

(Interruptions)

Forget about Highlands! I am talking about the hon. Member's Constituency. The construction of a football ground at Mont Ida is specified in the Director of Audit's Report. It is said that the contract value was Rs12 m., 60% of the work was completed and Rs8 m. were paid at the end of 2005. We are now in 2009 and the tenders are being floated. It is the same thing concerning the construction of the 13 Community Centres around the island – Rs142 m. contract was awarded. All the Community Centres were nearly completed and up to now there has been no handing over. It is said in the Director of Audit's report that provisions for security services at the Community Centres were extended up to August 2008. An amount of Rs3.2 m. was paid for security services. I repeat it, Mr Speaker, Sir, up to August 2008! This is wastage of public fund and the people were not given the necessary facilities. I will later come back with the Community Centres in the different constituencies, mainly in my Constituency. While this Government is talking of bumper crop and early harvest, we see closing down of the DWC, wastage of money, projects nearly completed and it is only now that the Government is looking for contractors. This is not good governance, Mr Speaker, Sir.

As regards the introduction of the National Residential Property Tax, it brought to Government Rs232 m. Do you know how the hon. Minister of Finance tried to convince people about this National Residential Property Tax? To a Parliamentary Question put by hon. Labelle in April 2008 - and probably to convince his own colleagues from the Government side - he announced the following projects: the construction and upgrading of market fairs at Curepipe, Quatre Bornes, Rose Hill, Rivière des Anguilles, Centre de Flacq, Rose Belle and Abercrombie; the development of a Waterfront at GRSE and a marketing infrastructure for fishermen at Grand' Baie. Where are the fairs, the Waterfront and the marketing infrastructure? Rs232 m. has been collected and big projects have been announced. The inhabitants at GRSE are still waiting for the Waterfront, which was mentioned in two Budgets and in various replies to Parliamentary Questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. It was not sufficient to squeeze the people, he now went on imposing tax on interest from savings. He taxed sugar planters and raised the exemption on the 60 tonnes of sugar. He removed duty-free facilities for small planters and it is only last year that he reinstated these duty free facilities. He removed the subsidy on the examinations fees. Hon. Boodhoo talked about education, on which I will come later on. Subsidies cannot be removed without any study. It is a trauma for the parents when the time comes for them to pay examinations fees. They have to queue up at the Ministry of Social Security.

Government is talking of bumper crop and early harvest! How can the population understand when now Government talks of recession? Obviously, they will not understand. This year there is a recession, but when there was a bumper crop and an early harvest, it was taxing these people. On one hand, the population was heavily taxed and, on other hand, the corporate tax was brought down from 25% to 15% and Government wants the people to understand! At the same time, the negotiations on a tripartite basis were dismantled and a National Pay Council was introduced. Mr Speaker, Sir, during three consecutive years, this Government had paid wage compensation less than inflation rate. In the very first year, when the Minister of Finance presented his Budget, a miserable Rs135 was given to the pensioners and the workers. Last year, they were given less than inflation rate and, this year, 5% is given even to the poor and the handicapped!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to read a letter from the Sugar Industry Pension Fund Board concerning the retired persons. They are getting less than the inflation rate. Let me read “*la circulaire aux pensionnés*» –

«Le Sugar Industry Pension Fund Board a le regret de vous informer qu’il n’a pas été possible d’octroyer une augmentation aux pensionnés cette année après évaluation actuarielle effectuée pour l’année se terminant au 31 décembre 2008. Le conseil d’administration a aussi décidé qu’il n’y aura pas de règlement du 13eme mois en décembre 2009. »

These sugar industry workers have worked hard and contributed a lot. At least, necessary funds could have been given to the Board so that they do not stop the payment of the *13eme mois* and necessary adjustments could have been provided for the pensions of these sugar industry workers, Mr Speaker, Sir. To add insult to injury, it is from the *circular* that the sugar industry workers learned that they were not going to receive an end-of-year bonus and an increase in their pension. I think a few million rupees could have been provided to this Fund Board to avoid this decision.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, on one hand, a percentage less than inflation rate is paid as compensation and there is no payment of the end-of-year bonus. On the other hand, employees in the private sector are asked to deduct 1% of their salary as a result of the Employment Rights Act. We have

dismantled the Termination of Contract Service Board. We have seen the type of treatment given to the employees of the Mauritius Telecom, who were doing their work as trade unionists and who they were sacked. Parliamentary Questions were put in the House concerning this matter.

At 1.00 p.m the sitting was suspended

On resuming at 2.01 p.m. with Mr Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Gunness: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before we break for lunch, I was saying that the people of this country will not understand. We speak of bumper crop and early harvest and, at the same time, they are being squeezed by a number of measures which I have listed. They also announced one or two measures in favour of the poor people which, unfortunately, were never implemented. I will take one example. In the very first Budget 2006/2007, at paragraph 270, land for social housing - it was a big announcement – and I quote –

“The Empowerment Programme will address the issue of housing for families with modest income. To this end, it will acquire around 2,000 to 3,000 Arpents of land across the country near existing agglomerations. Part of the land will be developed into serviced housing lots of 50 to 60 toises to be sold at affordable costs after infrastructure development. In this new scheme, landless families earning less than Rs 8,500 a month will become owners of these serviced lots on a cost recovery basis.(...)”

Where are we four years later? There were good measures announced in favour of the population, but which have never been implemented. For example, 2,000 to 3,000 arpents - 50 to 60 *toises* of land would be in favour of small income people - have never been developed into serviced lots. I think we must stop fooling the population. The slogan “Putting People First” has become “fooling people first”. We must stop this gimmick of fooling people. We have to tell people what can be done and not just *leur vendre des rêves*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now deal with a few sectors for which measures were announced in this Budget. Let me first take the public infrastructure. I think that, instead of taxing the interests of poor people and putting all sorts of taxes, the Minister of Finance could have taxed his own repetition he would have received enough money to finance his own Budget.

On 15 June 2007, he presented the 2007/2008 Budget - I am talking two years back now. Paragraph 58, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is on infrastructure - investing for more fluid traffic. I quote -

“We will address the problem of land transport and traffic congestion as a priority (...) these projects include, the South Eastern Highway, access roads at Réduit Triangle and at Riche Terre, the Terre Rouge Verdun Link Road, the bus lane along M1, the signalisation of Caudan Roundabout (...)

All these were announced in his 2007/2008 Budget on 15 June 2007. These projects were not implemented. One year after he came back and presented his 2008/2009 Budget on 06 June 2008. This time he devoted five paragraphs - paragraphs 100 to 105 - on the same project. I quote paragraph 101, at page 15:

“Regarding road network the focus will be on traffic decongestion.”

He changes a few words. These projects include Terre Rouge-Verdun and he adds Trianon. Previously, it was Terre Rouge-Verdun and now it is Terre Rouge-Verdun-Trianon Link Roads. He goes on with the resurfacing of M1 -

“a 12 kilometre Port-Louis Ring Road will be constructed on a PPP basis(...)The Harbour Bridge will also be a PPP project.”

“a 25 km bus-way corridor between Curepipe and Port Louis;”

“a 12 km bus-only lane along the existing motorway M1 (...)”.

This was mentioned in his second Budget. He then presented his third Budget! Listen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! It is no longer Terre-Verdun-Trianon Link Road. This time Trianon is out! It is Terre Rouge/Verdun Link Road, East-West Connector from Flacq to Flic-en-Flac. What a dream! Since 2007, he announced a lot of measures which were never implemented. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is east-west connector from Flacq to Flic-en-Flac a priority? He should have solved the problem of congestion in Quatre Bornes, Sodnac, Réduit and St. Pierre. When people leave Flacq to go to school or to work at Quatre Bornes or Rose Hill, they use to get stuck at Quartier Militaire, St. Pierre and Camp Fouquereaux!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the Minister of Finance announced these series of measures on television, poor people were listening to him and surely they were saying: what a Minister!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there will be a linking road from Flacq to Flic en Flac. Parliamentary Questions were put in this House concerning the South Eastern Highway. What has been done at Ferney? People are charged a fee to visit the Ferney Valley. The sugar barons have already a constructed road and now they are charging a fee. Concerning the resurfacing of the road from Bel Air to Plaisance Airport, nothing has been done. The eastern regions would have been decongested: Kewal Nagar, Bel Air, Sebastopol, and Montagne Blanche. I am sure my friend, hon. Bundhoo, will not say the contrary. It was announced that there will be new roads from Plaisance to Bambous Virieux, Quatre Soeurs, and Deux Frères and, instead of doing that, there will be now an East-West corridor. Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we must know what we want to do in this country. It is most dramatic. There is a lack of transparency. When the hon. Minister of Finance announced his series of measures he should have informed also that there would be a *péage*.

It is only when hon. Minister Bachoo was questioned by journalists that he comes and says: 'yes, we are working on that'. Come the Budget, it is announced that there will be Rs26 billion worth of projects, but people should have been told that they would have to pay for these projects, that a Road Development Company will be set up to undertake – supposedly - projects to the tune of Rs26 billion! We know that these projects, even of R1 billion worth, will not be done. We already have a Road Development Authority and now there is another one - the Road Development Company which will not be accountable to Parliament. When questions will be asked, we will receive the same answers like the one asked the other day to Minister Dulull on the line 150. We wanted to know how much money Mauritius Telecom receives, he replied that Mauritius Telecom is a company, he could not tell us and that we should read the annual report. He also added that if we could not understand the report, we would find the information required in notes of the financial report. Tomorrow, I am sure it is this company which will collect the *péage*, the money that people will have to pay. This company will be responsible for the construction of roads; public finance will be put in, but there will be no accountability. Can we call this good governance?

This reminds me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of the STC saga. They use public funds from the State Trading Corporation; STC provides seed capital and they form a company called State Trading Company. The Director-General of the State Trading Corporation becomes, at the same time, the Director-General of the State Trading Company. Today, we see the saga. I'll come a bit later on that saga of the State Trading Company. What have we not seen? Diamonds business! There is even horse racing business now! This is the second company. We had a State Trading Corporation, now we have a State Trading Company. We already have a Road Development Authority, now there will be a Road Development Company. Therefore, there is no parliamentary scrutiny; Members cannot put questions in Parliament; the companies are not accountable here, and Government is draining public money in those companies. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we really want our country to move ahead, this is not the way to go forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the sugar cane planters are the ones who are most hit today by the reduction in the price of sugar and the massive rise in the price of fertilisers. The small planters were expecting, at least, that the Minister would restore that exemption for tax purposes on the 60 tonnes of sugar which had been removed. Unfortunately, once again, the Minister has not done so. People were expecting that the Minister would come forward with that National Residential Property Tax, would review or do away with it, but, unfortunately, he has not. On the other hand, what have we seen? There has been a small reduction in cess, which, as the Leader of the Opposition said, does not bring big money, but only a saving of Rs1,000.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know that millions of rupees have been received from the European Union for accompanying measures, but, how much did the small planters get? When the previous Government was carrying out the VRS I for the first time, it asked the sugar barons to take loans and then to carry out the VRS. What has been done this time? The money received for accompanying measures from the European Union is given to the sugar barons to make infrastructure and then to do the VRS II. This is the difference between what we did and what they are doing. For small planters, peanuts! We don't say that the VRS must not be carried out or that the reform must not continue. They were criticising the reform when we brought it, but now, when they have the opportunity to do it; money received from the European Union is given to the sugar magnates to carry out the process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the education side, it is very unfortunate to see how this Government stopped a reform which was working very well. Luckily, there has been a change, a Cabinet reshuffle. We have a new Minister today. With the reform which took us five years to implement, we eliminated that - criminal - rat race at the CPE level. As a teacher working in a secondary school; I know how difficult it is for a child aged eleven to be put under a fierce competition. We did away with that. We constructed 40 beautiful colleges around the island to accommodate more children. The pressure was reduced completely on the small children. I don't say that private tuitions were eliminated, but the pressure was reduced. Today, I listened to the speeches of hon. Boodhoo and hon. Bodha; they are right. We should ask ourselves why this virus of private tuitions for CPE students? Is it because of this rat race? In the national colleges, there are about 1,000 and there are 30,000 children sitting for the CPE exams. Obviously, the parents may be poor, but they will try to pay tuition for their children even though it means making sacrifices here and there. At the end of the day, only 2,000 children will get admission to those national colleges. This is a crime vis-à-vis the children of this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Rs100 m. subsidy given on SC and HSC examination fees has been abolished and they say 'Putting People First'. Today, we have two categories of children in secondary schools. There is one category where parents will receive a subsidy from Government, but we know what trauma they will undergo when queuing up at the Ministry of Social Security. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the policy to have one pre-primary class in each primary school should be continued. Since the last five years, no single pre-primary class has been constructed in the compound of a primary school. It is left in the hands of the private sector. We have different standards of pre-primary schools ranging from a five-star pre-primary school to a one-star pre-primary school. How are we going to remedy that? What about the university/tertiary education, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Last year, we were told that all students who qualify for universities will be admitted. It was in the last year's Budget, and I said then: "Stop bluffing, you don't have the capacity". We know that they cannot accommodate all students, even though they are qualified, but we were told: 'if they are qualified, they will get a seat'. No, it is not like that! The year before what was said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The year before, on 15 June, we were told that the SLDC will construct a University of Technology (Mauritius) and a University of Mauritius at Côte d'Or. This year again, they came with Rs600

m. It is the best idea if we can have it, but they cannot come and just throw ideas like that. I can give them ideas of 200 projects, but I must know whether I can do it or not. If I cannot do it, I just do not announce projects which will not be implemented. It is beautiful on paper. I can come and tell: 'hon. Members I will invest Rs1 billion for a second university', but I must do it first. After nearly two years, only one secondary school is under construction. It is the Quatre Bornes State Secondary School. This project had been announced since two years, and not even one secondary school is ready up to now. We have constructed 40 beautiful colleges like that around the island for our children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll now come to parastatal bodies in the Budget of 15 June 2007, at paragraph 135. Let me quote it, because it is so beautiful -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, we will this year start a programme that will reengineer the parastatal sector. First, key performance indicators will be set including general indicators for all parastatals on financial performance.”

Where are the key performance indicators? Instead of the key performance indicators, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what do we see in the Director of Audit's report? The Director of Audit's report tells us, about good governance, that we are very far from laying the Annual Report of Statutory Bodies before the National Assembly. 272 financial statements already certified have not been laid on the Table of the National Assembly. Some have been laid at the Ministry, but none has ever been brought to the National Assembly and they are talking about key performance indicators of parastatal bodies! Let's take a few examples: the STC saga, the hedging losses on petroleum products which amounted to nearly Rs3 billion. Consumers are paying Rs3 per litre today, which makes Rs15 per gallon. Because of mismanagement at the STC, because of hedging losses, consumers have to pay in the price structure. Up to now, nobody knows in this House - even backbenchers of the Government - about the contract between Mangalore Petroleum and the STC, but the country is paying for that! Nobody is aware of what is included in that contract. Officers went to Madagascar to certify good quality of broad beans and, today, they even make hedging on broad beans. Where have you seen that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? There is the creation of the State Trading Company to do business in diamonds, in wood! Is this the function of the State Trading Company? I have a lot of documents

concerning STC. I have a letter offer dated 12 January sent to a local company for the purchase of a tanker vessel for petroleum products –

“Please refer to your Expression of Interest dated 27 March 2008 on the above subject.”

A contract is given to a local company for 15 years! It is said at the last paragraph that –

“The STC will provide the joint venture Betonix ESM private Ltd. of Singapore, the guarantee of a 15-year captive cargo.”

We know who was the then Minister. Apart from that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is shocking in that business? In this letter it is said: “Please refer to your Expression of Interest dated 27 March 2008.” Hon. Ganoo put a question about when the Expression of Interest was publicized, and hon. Gowressoo replied that it was in 2007, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but in the letter addressed to that company, it reads: “Please refer to your Expression of Interest dated 27 March 2008”. They made a contract for 15 years. At what rate had the contract been done? Who were the bidders? Were there other companies in that business? STC Board approved it, but the letter goes out from the Ministry of Public Infrastructure. It stinks. We will be coming with this again. It is serious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when you talk about the parastatals.

Concerning the hedging losses at Air Mauritius, Government guarantees up to Rs11 billion today. When do you start selling the jewels of the crown? When do a family start selling bangles and chains? *Quand oune faire faillite!* This is what is happening to Air Mauritius today. It started selling the Head Quarter, helicopters, Cotton Bay Hotel, which means that, today, they are in a financial mess. This is where we are.

Concerning the CNT, it incurs losses up to Rs500 m. Nearly 80 buses that have exceeded the age of 16 years need to be replaced. We have the “Pepsi *Hungama*” saga, “*Hum Tum Hum*”, “*Tum Bhi*”, and all these sagas at the MBC. When you read the papers, you will see they have again made a contract for films for three years. I think they like making contracts for three years, five years and ten years. They have made a contract for films – *penkor même tourne film là là-bas!* How can you expect these things? The hon. Minister of Finance is saying that they don’t have the right to travel, but the guy involved in “Pepsi *Hungama*” is in China, and the Director-General is in Macau, China.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know about the scandals at the CEB, CWA, Ports Authority, and all the other parastatal bodies. Today, the hon. Minister of Finance is talking about the upholding of parastatal bodies in his Budget Speech, about key performance indicators being set, including general indicators for parastatal bodies. Stop bluffing with this country, when we know what is being done in these parastatal bodies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will have a quick glance at the projects in my Constituency. We know, and my good friend, hon. Minister Bundhoo, knows about the playground at Mont Ida. Four and a half years have elapsed. We have three community centres, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There was one in Olivia and one at Pont Lardier, which was meant to be a community centre. Let me tell it loud and clear. When we made the 14 community centres, we got the agreement of the Ministry of Social Security that they will take them over. We got that in the file first, we had the commitment and then we constructed the community centres. So what did they do to the community centre of Pont Lardier? They transformed it into a women centre. Now, I give a warning to my friend, Lormus Bundhoo, the Minister, to be careful with the community centre of La Nourrice. I know what I am saying. We are having information that it is intended to give it to the District Council, *pou faire bal*. Be careful! This is a deprived village, where we invested because we wanted to do something for a deprived village; a village which had no facility. The intention was to have a community centre proper with all the facilities that a community centre needs to have. Rumours are going on - *il y a pas de fumée sans feu* - that it will be handed over to the District Council and that the latter will do *bal*. I suppose that you have seen the banner there, which reads “*Attention pas touche nous centre communautaire. Attention malheur!*” Therefore don’t do *hungama!* Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we know, between 2000-2005, that Constituency was a *chantier*. We have not done politics! For the SSR Memorial Park, Kewal Nagar, we invited hon. Boolell for *la pose de la première pierre* and even for the inauguration. We must give credit to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, because on both occasions he insisted that the present Prime Minister be invited, as well as members of the Labour Party. We did it because that’s history and we invested. We did it. There were projects like the SSR Memorial Park, the upgrading of river banks; the construction of community centres, football grounds, roads from Kewal Nagar to Bel-Air. It was a *chantier*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it was announced in the Budget, on 15 June 2007, that Government will invest in the upgrading of the coastal walkway at Trou D’eau Douce. We are still waiting for this. At

paragraph 271, mention was made of a mini waterfront at GRSE. Where is that mini waterfront, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? In the pipeline! It will remain in the pipeline. With regard to Mont Ida, it is only at tendering stage, but for Medine Camp de Masque I have not seen anything yet! At Petit Paquet, where my good friend has...

(Laughter)

We could have taken the land from him.

(Interruptions)

The land is available my friend! Four acres of land are there. Where is the tender? Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everywhere projects were announced, but no action; *effet d'annonce*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everywhere the Minister of Finance says that there is no alternative. His only alternative is a private sector driven Budget to satisfy his bosses out there, but, for us, a Budget has to focus on the social and human development. The economy must not operate at the expense of a vast majority. Today, with this Government, the middle class people are being squeezed. Instead of climbing up the social ladder, they are coming down. The gap between the rich and the poor is widening, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Any country which adopts such policies where the person of the country is not part of it is deemed to fail, and it is very dangerous for the social cohesion. The four Budgets have proved to lack a human dimension. *Tous les budgets du présent gouvernement sont des budgets pro capitalistes, antisociaux, sans cœur et, surtout, nullement à visage humain*. People of this country are not fool. They have been fooled once with the slogan “putting people first”, but this time the people will fool you, my good friends because they know that you have given *caviar* to your good friends and the vast majority have got only *glenrick*.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(2.35 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment and National Development Unit (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me, if I may, to make a few comments on what has been said by the previous orator, namely hon. Ajay Gunness. He took some time and quite lengthily made a few

comments on the do's and don'ts. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to bring him down memory lane.

When they were in power for five years, they mentioned about the Bagatelle Dam. In fact, there isn't any dam at Bagatelle, and they are already in the Opposition. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to road networks, which my friend, hon. Guinness, has been quoting quite extensively, what is mentioned in the Budget? May I remind him that, if he has some time, he can go back to the four or five Budgets that they presented when he was either a PPS or Minister; he will find how many times the Phoenix-Beau Songes bypass was mentioned, but, nothing was done.

May I, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remind him of the Macondé Bridge? Year in, year out, they were mentioning the Macondé Bridge in their Budget Speech. Today, I am sure, knowing the spirituality of hon. Ganoo, that when he stands up, he will thank this Government to have realised the dream of the Macondé Bridge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with regard to the Light Railway Transport (LRT), allow me to quote the 2001/02 Budget –

“The final report of the consultant of the Light Rail Transport and the bus way options has been received and is being examined. Government will choose one of the two alternatives after consultations with all stakeholders, taking into account the long-term interest of the country. I am providing Rs20 m. for preliminary works on the ex-railway track.”

This is an ex-project which has stayed an ex-project. Here, I would like, with your permission, to take one of the terms of the Leader of the Opposition: *c'était du bla-bla-bla* for the last five years.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, you have just gone to the Budget of 2001/02. I think it is now time to get back to the Budget of 2009. Thank you.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, I am coming on the Budget in a minute. When my good friend was talking, he was making reference, and I am sure you will give me some leeway to make some reference too. Rest assured, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in a few minutes I will come back to the very Budget of this year.

With regard to the Competition Bill that we introduced in this House, only this Friday, at Cabinet, the Prime Minister appointed the Commission, with the President and all the other people sitting on it. This Friday only! Let me quote from the 2001 Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir -

"Mr Speaker, Sir, we want consumers to obtain value for money. They should be able to buy products and services at fair and competitive prices. Government is putting the final touch..."

For five years, they have been touching and going, until such time they are already out of power.

"...to a well thought through Competition Bill that will provide for a Competition Tribunal and an office of Fair Trading and promote a healthier trading environment in general."

They have been touching and going until such time there is nothing to touch now. Thank goodness, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: Let's now touch the current Budget, please!

Mr Bundhoo: I am coming to the Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Thanks goodness, we have done it!

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as the White Paper on Health Sector Reforms is concerned, *toujours du bla-bla-bla!* Nothing has been done! As regards the pension reform, we did it, we negotiated it. Hon. Mrs Bappoo brought the Bill to Parliament; she commented on it so many times, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The only thing they achieved is that they traumatised our old-age pensioners.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards the new Electricity Bill, nothing has been done; as for the new passenger terminal, there is nothing. It is this Government that has done the new passenger terminal in the harbour, and we are already starting the enlargement and reshaping of the new passenger terminal at Sir Seewoosagur International Airport.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as the market fair at Rose-Belle is concerned, I am sure that hon. Pravind Jugnauth is proud that this Government is holding the pledge. We are already constructing the market fair at Rose-Belle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, lastly, I would like to mention the Equal Opportunities Bill - and I will stop on that. Give me this chance to quote on that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Give me an equal opportunity in order to enable democratisation of speech. This is what they said, and I quote –

“Another issue that is fundamental to the democratisation process is quality of opportunities. Government will introduce the Equal Opportunities Bill in the House.”

We introduced the Equal Opportunities Bill in this House, and we have held our pledge. We said that we were going to do it, and we did it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Guinness mentioned the National Pay Council. I must congratulate hon. Pravind Jugnauth despite all, he had the courage. When hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger was Minister of Finance, he did not chair the tripartite meetings for two or three consecutive years. They have the guts now to comment on the National Pay Council, when they refused to chair the national tripartite meetings. They spent most of the time in the Opposition, supposedly fighting for the workers, but when they had a chance to defend the workers, they sat in their armchair, in the comfort of a Prime Minister's office, just looking towards another direction.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my friend, hon. Ajay Guinness, also mentioned school fees, but he forgot to mention that, simultaneously, this Government has introduced free transport for every single student in this country, irrespective of race, colour, location, and this is costing Government Rs1 billion. If this is not 'Putting People First', if this is not putting students first, then I wonder what they want us to put first!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Bundhoo: Let me remind the hon. Member, hon. Ajay Guinness, that there was the introduction of 5% VAT in 1982. The very concept of sales tax was introduced by hon. Paul Berenger. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they doubled it from 10% to 15%. He mentioned sale by levy, but they did nothing. We called Parliament on a special day, in January, and voted the amendment, and provision for a sum of Rs100 m. has been placed in a specific fund for the sale

by levy. Those who did nothing should not be commenting now. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hadn't there been a bumper crop, how come we would have paid the PRB at one single go?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a few comments have been made with regard to the NDU and the Ministry of Environment by my good friend, hon. Ajay Gunness, for whom I have got lots of respect and by a few other Members also.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bhagwan!

Mr Bundhoo: Some of them were questioning who the PPS in their own Constituency is. Let me remind the House that the whole Government is a green Government, with an evergreen Prime Minister. Environment is the business of every Minister. The Prime Minister came up with the concept of *Maurice Ile Durable*. It is not the matter of a single Minister, but that of every single individual in this House, Opposition, Government, the population at large and every citizen, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

When we introduced the concept of renewable energy and of *chauffe-eau solaire* through the DBM, the whole idea was to move away from fossil fuel. When we introduced the concept of electric bulb, subsidising it, again, the whole idea, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, was to enable people of this country to reduce their dependency on fossil fuel and, more so, to enable the population at large to reduce their electricity bill. This is environment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the whole idea of this Government. We are a green Government that wants to have green investment, and we want every single Minister to be environmentally-friendly; we want every single Member of Parliament to be environmentally-friendly. We want to develop a culture of environment; we want to develop an environmental literacy; we want environment to be the business of every single citizen in this country.

(Interruptions)

My good friend says he is happy to hear me. Do you know why? It is because he has only been reading '*Le Militant*' newspaper; that is why he could not hear me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to make some general comments on the Budget itself. Over the last three years, that is, since July 2005 to date, we have witnessed the tremendous efforts of this Government to re-steer and re-engineer the economy. When we came

in Government in July 2005, all, if not most of the economic indicators were in the red. It is only the enlightened and visionary leadership of Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, coupled with the bold and courageous measures taken by hon. Dr. Sithanen, that have placed Mauritius back on rail to economic prosperity until recently.

Unfortunately, what was not even the least anticipated and totally unexpected has struck the world economic system. The world economic downturn and trade deficit is so sharp, that the world most powerful political leaders, economic pundits, trade analysts are all still in the dark, as to both its intensity and longevity.

However, thanks to our bold fiscal and monetary policies implemented since July 2005 and with additional stimulus package, in the face of challenges of the double economic and climatic crisis, little Mauritius, Rodrigues and the outer islands are still on their feet, walking through the storm, while major economical powers are on their knees, even after having poured billions worth of financial resources through “salvage mechanisms”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in view of the precarious economic situation, both locally and internationally, we now how to act with greater vigour and demonstrate extreme caution and *clairvoyance* to navigate and keep afloat through the torrential economic waters, ferocious financial tides and gloomy trade deficits, which are unfolding.

The 2009 Budget presented on 22 May proposes, both in its philosophy and design, a matrix of instruments designed to face the challenges of today for the generation of tomorrow.

As from July 2005, this Government, the *Alliance Sociale* Government, has again demonstrated its ability to emerge as a rescue team. In spite of all difficulties, both the Prime Minister and the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment have demonstrated their patriotic zeal and that of their team.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from the very beginning of our mandate, we took the pledge of “Putting People First” and endeavour to be a “Caring Government”. Despite a reduction in revenue in both direct and indirect taxes, fall in tourist arrivals and income, decline in export earnings and reduction in FDI, we have maintained the Welfare State, and we are proud of it.

Subsidy on rice, flour and cooking gas are being maintained. Free transport for old age pensioners are not being touched. Similarly, free health care services are not only being

maintained, but are being upgraded. In fact, every component of the population, the vulnerable, the workforce, the private sector, the artists, the single women and children are being taken care of. In short, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we “practice what we preach”.

The private sector, including both manufacturing and services, are the strong pillars of our economy, and major generators of both wealth and employment. This Budget provides every possible means to support and assist industries to shield them against the “looming storm”. Our aim is to preserve jobs, jobs and jobs.

The SME sector can be very vulnerable in this testing time, and this Budget makes provision to enable them not only to survive but also to fully play their role in our economic landscape.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our comments and observations will remain incomplete, if we do not highlight the strategy of Government in initiating a sustained process of public investment in order to catalyse the level of economic activity to keep the momentum ongoing, capitalise in the present situations to invest heavily in infrastructural projects, preserve jobs by supporting industry, and to provide training and reskilling, and develop an inclusively green industry by attracting green investment to ensure a sustainable recovery in line with the cherished concept of this Government “Maurice Ile Durable”.

Kindly allow me, now, to comment on the Ministry of Environment and National Development Unit and, specifically, on the eve almost of the World Environment Day, which the whole world will be celebrating on 05 June, and a specific focus on Mexico. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is not only giving real help to the needy and putting businesses back on track, but it also paves the way for a sustainable future. The Minister of Finance has, through this Budget, reflected the fact that providing stimulus to the economy and protecting the environment are not mutually exclusive. Quite to the contrary, giving priority to spending on green measures can substantially help to stabilise aggregate demand in the short run, thus contributing to a quick recovery of the economy, yielding economic returns in the medium and long term. I rejoice at the fact that this Budget reinforces the three pillars of sustainable development, which are Economic, Social and Environmental.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today, environment protection is no longer an option; it is simply a must. Do or die. Clean air, safe water, fertile soil, natural beauty, scenic landscape,

sandy beaches, lagoons, coral reef ecosystems, our mountains and our islets contribute significantly to our economic growth, and make Mauritius one of the most environmental tourist destination. This Budget makes provisions for the maintenance and enhancement of these natural assets. It seeks to strengthen the resilience of Mauritius so that it remains a unique tourism destination, a sector that contributes about 8.5% to GDP. However, the numerous and environmental challenges cannot be overemphasised. As a densely populated and fast developing small island State, Mauritius is called upon to be a model of a socioeconomic and an environmentally sustainable island. By engaging in development activities with sound and environmental management, some of these activities may impact on the environment by damaging environmentally sensitive areas, flooding, excessive land and coastal erosion, pollution, with impacts on health and quality of life, degradation of lagoon water quality, loss of biodiversity, and degradation of habitat and proliferation of eyesores.

Added to it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to manage the unavoidable, that is, the impacts of climate change. While the world economy is in temporary decline, dangerous climate changes pose a permanent and a far more serious threat to human development and prosperity. In Mauritius, we are already experiencing the effects of climate changes in the form of unexpected unusual rainfall, flash floods, droughts, storm surges and uncomfortable summers. There is need, therefore, to have a massive shift in investment patterns in a wide range of sectors, such as power generation, industry, construction, coastal zone, waste management, transport sector, agriculture and forestry. This Budget addresses these issues to a large extent, as part of the effective green stimulus it provides through green investment and promotion of green industry. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has spared no effort to mainstream environment in the development process. In fact, sustainable development underpins the national environmental strategies, approved by Government early this year. The Environment Investment Programme, which operationalises partly the national and environmental strategies, comprises 28 projects to be implemented in the short and medium terms. During the last financial year, a number of policy measures and actions have already been taken by my Ministry to protect the environment.

Some of these are -

- (a) Government has decided to stop the importation of diesel with sulphur, at 2,000 parts per million. Diesel imported will now contain 500 parts per million of

sulphur. This will substantially reduce emission from vehicles, save energy and reduce air pollution;

- (b) the National Environmental Laboratory is now certified ISO 17025 since 2005 meaning that the tests carried out are of international standards;
- (c) the laboratory is now equipped with new air monitoring equipment that can trace fine particles;
- (d) the Environment Protection (Industrial Waste Audit) Regulations, which came into force this year, has been kept in the drawer by the previous Government for the last five years. This National Industrial Waste Audit will ensure proper management of solid, liquid and gaseous waste at industrial level;
- (e) hotels are now statutorily required, under the EIA, to resort to compulsory composting of their green waste and adopting green measures like energy management and the use of renewable energy sources like wind, solar; and
- (f) an Inter-Ministerial post EIA monitoring Committee has been set up to ensure compliance with EIA conditions.

Regulations against plastic banners and affixing of posters have been made in July last year and are being implemented. No more plastic and *affichage sauvage*.

Here, I would like to thank all those who have participated in the by-elections of Constituency No. 8. We have almost followed the rules and regulations. I would like to commend the actions of some of the politicians, especially our good friend who got elected in this by-election. On Monday he got elected and, on Tuesday or Wednesday, he was in Constituency No. 8 clearing all the sites and all the *affichagees*. I must commend him for that to have abided to the regulations and, to all of us, I must say; we did a fairly good job with regard to that.

If we want to make sustainable development seriously, it is imperative that we gradually rationalise the use of our resources and bring about the much needed change in lifestyle to alter unsustainable consumption and production patterns. Allow me to borrow from Albert Einstein to say, and I quote:

“We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.”

Our mode of consumption and production engenders resources depletion which is not sustainable and viable. This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, makes provisions or, at least, gives us a chance to use our resources efficiently because we have to make it our way of life.

To this end, my Ministry has prepared a National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) for Mauritius, which was approved by Government in August last year. It focuses on five priority areas, namely-

- (a) resource use efficiency, including energy;
- (b) solid waste;
- (c) sustainable public procurement;
- (d) enhancing market demand for sustainable products, and
- (e) education and communication.

The National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production encompasses 44 projects under 22 leading agencies. The implementation of the projects, estimated to cost around Rs35 m. over a period of five years, has already started since November 2008.

My Ministry is also finalising, within a fortnight, the Development Framework for Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) and Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs). The ICZM will provide a framework to manage all coastal and marine resources in an integrated manner with hub to optimise use of our coastal and marine resources, whilst preserving its integrity and thereby minimise consequences of climate change. The ESAs, that is, the Environmentally Sensitive Areas includes our mountains, caves, beaches and lagoons, coral reefs, wetlands, mangroves, rivers, surface and wet ground water, islets, forests amongst others. All these are also prone to be negatively affected by climate and climatic changes.

One of the most visible and serious impacts of climate change is the severe coastal flooding and erosion which incidentally happens to be one of the most important elements in our Tourist Industry. You will recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the severe flooding that occurred at Rivière des Galets. The high storm surges resulted in the flooding of several houses and heavy material damage. That issue was raised yesterday by hon. Babajee. Coastal protection works, costing some Rs20 m., have already been implemented to take care of such unusual weather conditions since January 2009.

Rehabilitation works have also been undertaken over some 800 metres at Flic en Flac, Trou aux Biches and Bain des Dames for some Rs10 m. during the years 2008 and 2009. I am pleased to announce that more rehabilitation works will be carried out over the coming years in areas including Grand' Baie, Mon Choisy, Trou aux Biches, Bras d'Eau and others.

In spite of the difficult economic situation, it is critical that we continue to upgrade and maintain our physical environment. I have to see to it that upgrading projects are implemented throughout the island and not in a few privileged regions. Moreover, some 24 rivers over a length of 29 kms have been dredged to ease the flow of water during heavy rains and flash floods. Several river banks have been uplifted and cleaned to avoid vector-borne diseases such as Chikungunya. Additionally, some river banks have been upgraded to contain soil erosion. We have also catered for green spaces and leisure corners in more than 15 localities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, allow me to turn to the National Development Unit and one of its most important roles is the continuous socioeconomic development of our country. Faithful to its mandate to bring development to the doorstep of the Mauritian population without losing sight of some 800,000 tourists who visit us annually, the NDU has continued to forge ahead in its endeavour, providing new infrastructural facilities while upgrading existing ones.

Besides the provision of these basic infrastructural needs, I would like here to point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the NDU has the responsibility to implement an effective drainage network all over the island under the National Land Drainage Programme.

In order to cater for the needs of our younger generation, since 2005, the NDU has upgraded several football grounds and more are in the pipeline. Youth centres have been put up at St. François, Port Louis, Bois Chéri, and Chemin Grenier. Sports complex and leisure parks have been provided at Poudre d'Or, Richelieu and other localities. The construction of volleyball/basketball pitches and a children playground at La Source, Quatre Bornes, has also been completed.

Furthermore, during the period of 2008-2009, to improve the road network and also to provide new access where there are none, the NDU completed some 159 projects related to resurfacing of roads, and contracts for 106 new roads have been awarded. Much is being done to

speed up matters with regard to implementation of road network, comprising new and resurfacing works to enable the NDU to perform, as I said earlier, its socially-driven mission.

The NDU is pursuing the implementation of the Land Drainage System. The rapid infrastructural development across the island on one hand and the significant change in the trend of rainfall, as mentioned earlier, on the other hand, has made the struggle against flooding even tougher.

A climate change report of March 2009, issued by the Meteorological Services, foresees an increase in heavy downpours, with increased risks of flash flood and also an increase in the number of intense cyclones. Indeed, the flash flood of 26 March 2008 was a strong signal that flood management requires a holistic approach, taking preventing measures to address the causes of flooding along with corrective measures already being taken.

Out of the 146 critical sites identified under the Emergency Rehabilitation Programme, more than 50% has been attended to. Three bridges have been reconstructed in Mont Gout as well as bridges at ex-Golden, Pointe aux Sables, and a footbridge at Belle Rose. Further, towards the east, the reconstruction of the bridges at Argy and Hermitage is nearing completion. To address frequent flooding situation, the NDU is soliciting international expertise through the World Bank assistance for a study on specific catchment areas, not only to update the survey of the Land Drainage System of the Island of Mauritius carried out by Gibb (Mauritius) Ltd. in association with Water and Power Consultancy Services (India) but also to adopt watershed management principles in defining solutions to flooding problems. Over the last four years, the amount spent under the Land Drainage Programme is Rs528 m.

The Management Audit Bureau (MAB), in its report, submitted in January 2009, underlined the lack of engineers as compared to the workload and made recommendations for the reinforcement of the Technical Unit of the NDU. The Fact Finding Committee presided by Justice Domah on ex-Lola flooding has also recommended the reinforcement of technical staff at NDU. I am pleased to announce the House that remedial action has already been taken to address the issues by both the MAB and Justice Domah reports.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the role of my Ministry is to mitigate the effect of floods, as underlined by Justice Domah, in his report on ex-Lola flooding. One of the recommendations of the Domah Report is to formulate an Integrated Flood Management Strategy which we have

already taken on board by seeking World Bank assistance for a study to look into the whole issue of flooding. To conclude on the Domah Report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quote the following lines from the very report itself:

“The facts have revealed that the NDU has been just everywhere stepping in where others have either failed, defaulted or demonstrated limitations. Its pragmatic role can be understood and even commended”.

I would like, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at this stage, to comment the important role played by my good friends, the eight Parliamentary Private Secretaries, who act as the link between Government, the people and all the 20 Constituencies in bringing amenities to one and all. Parliamentary Private Secretaries - our hon. Members - are attentive to the needs of the people; they identify those needs which are then transmitted to their colleagues in Government. They also help in overseeing the implementation of the projects. I have here to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have eight splendid very active PPS. God willing, we shall continue to work hand in hand for the benefit of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would mention the commendable work being done by the Citizens Advice Bureau (CABx) to decimate information on Government services to the population at large. The 35 CABx across the island provide a powerful network to connect people to service providers. Institutions like SEHDA and the Trust Fund for the Vulnerable Groups make full use of the CABx to bring services to the people. The latest development is the opening of a window of opportunities by the Consumer Protection Unit under the able leadership and guidance of my good friend, hon. Tang, through CABx, to better service and serves the interests of consumers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we must reckon the NDU's importance as Government's technical arm to execute its policy of improving the quality of life of our fellow citizens. In terms of amenities and infrastructure, during the last financial year, we have spent some Rs235 m. to attain this objective. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget translates the effort of this Government to consolidate the Welfare State by maintaining free education, free health services and social security among others. It strengthens activities geared towards poverty alleviation through safeguard and creation of jobs even at this time of crisis. The Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment have

masterminded not only a way of this recession, but the way to economic prosperity. They have empowered us, Ministers, to act. They have given us the necessary resources and tools to act responsibly in order not to slip into some sort of infernal cycle. They are wise men, they see far into the future.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote Martin Luther King, in his book “Strength to love”. I quote:

“The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.”

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have known where to stand at this time of challenge with no comfort. I have no doubt that the measures in this Budget will stand the test of time and these two men will go down in history as champions and, one day, the future generations will recall that those were two illustrious men that successfully steered Mauritius through testing times.

With these words, I commend the Budget to this House.

(3.18 p.m)

Mrs S. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, je dirai d'emblée que le budget, qui a été présenté, pour les six prochains mois, est un ‘non-event’. Il laisse une impression d’un travail bâclé, avec des répétitions de ce qui avait été annoncé dans les budgets précédents, et le Additional Stimulus Package. Finalement, c’est du ‘cut and paste’. Mais le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances, fidèle à sa conviction, a gardé le même fil conducteur depuis qu’il a présenté son premier budget en 2005: it's the private sector bias.

After having heard hon. Babajee last night, I cannot help reminding him and this House of the numerous measures taken in favour of the private sector, and those which have caused the poor to become poorer. Yesterday, hon. Babajee talked about striking the right balance and, since hon. Babajee and some of the others Members chose to go down memory lane, let me also refresh their memories. I won't go as far back as 1982, but I will go to some two or three years back.

Let's see first how much the private sector has benefited.

(Interruptions)

We need to refresh your memory since you chose to go back down memory lane.

- (i) in 2006/2007 – Rs10 billion through the massive depreciation of the rupee to those operating in the export and tourism sectors.
- (ii) Rs3 billion through reduction of corporate tax from 25% to 15%.
- (iii) Rs2 billion over a period of two years in terms of salary compensation at a rate lower than that of the inflation rate.
- (iv) Rs5 billion to the sugar industry to finance VRS II and centralisation from EU Funds.

On the other hand, what did the most vulnerable groups get?

- (i) in 2006, subsidies on rice and flour to the tune of Rs425 m. were withdrawn. Yesterday I heard the hon. Members saying that subsidies on rice and flour were increased. What they did was that they withdrew totally the subsidies, came back with it, and said they have increased it.
- (ii) subsidies on fees for SC and HSC examinations were removed.
- (iii) a tax of 15% on interests was introduced.
- (iv) another financial burden, the NRPT, was introduced, and
- (v) less but not the least, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the school feeding project for the most vulnerable was abolished.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me put it clearly that, we, on this side of the House, do not have anything against the private sector. On the contrary, all Governments need to work in close collaboration with the private sector – that synergy is important – but what we are saying is that there should be an equilibrium. Hon. Babajee, as I said, spoke last night of the Minister of Finance striking the right balance in his Budget, but, looking, once more, at the figures I have just mentioned, can we say that this is what is meant by striking the right balance? I leave it to the population to appreciate.

Having said this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my intervention will be mainly on agriculture and, time permitting, I'll talk about certain problems relating to my Constituency.

Let me start with a good note. Allow me to give a bonus point to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having taken the decision to reduce the cess amount payable by planters by 20% for each of the crop seasons 2009/2010 and 2010/2011. Although I consider that this measure is not sufficient, I, however, acknowledge that it is, at least, a starting point. What about the reforms of cess funding institutions? *Aux grands maux, les grands remèdes!* As far as I can recall, a report had been prepared and handed over to Government by KPMG since two years now, but no action has been initiated for these reforms to take place. Small planters continue to bear the brunt, and *le gouvernement regarde avec une certaine indifférence la mort lente de cette communauté.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just said that I appreciate the measure taken regarding cess, but I fail to understand why Rs60 m. have been drawn out of the Food Security Fund for this purpose. Is it because of lack of projects from the Food Security Fund? This Fund, which was initially set up with funds to the tune of Rs1 billion, is finding its funds being reduced drastically without its main objectives being fulfilled.

At paragraph 55 of the Budget Speech, I note that, just as for other Funds, an amount of Rs350 m. is being drawn out for contribution to the Stimulus Package. I just mentioned that Rs60 m. is going towards cess. We have, therefore, the impression that Government has run out of ideas to ensure food security in this country. There is nothing mentioned concretely on projects which will be carried out under this Fund except vague words, and I quote the Budget Speech – ‘The Food Security Fund will contribute Rs350 m. to fund various projects - we don’t know which projects - that will benefit small farmers, breeders and fishermen.’

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I have just said, we have the impression that Government has run out of ideas with regard to agriculture. Let me prove it. At paragraph 81 of the Vice-Prime Minister’s Speech, he states, and I quote:

“Government is introducing a Food Crop Insurance Scheme for small food crop planters. The scheme will cover some 27 food crops including potato, onion, and tomato (...)”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I could not believe my ears when this was being announced. ‘Government will introduce’ - *mais quel culot!* I feel that, instead of making progress, we are regressing, *on revient sept ans en arrière.* In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Small Planters

Welfare Act was passed in this august Assembly by hon. Pravind Jugnauth when he was Minister of Agriculture. I am going to quote what he said then. I quote:

“Since it has been observed that planters, other than sugar planters, are not insured against natural calamities, and suffer substantial losses during droughts or after cyclones, it is considered that the Board should, as a matter of priority, come forward with a Crop Insurance Scheme. That scheme would be targeted mainly to small planters other than sugar cane planters, as the latter are already insured with the SIFB and are already beneficiaries of compensation for losses suffered during droughts, cyclones, excessive rainfall and fire.”

A Crop Insurance Scheme was, therefore, worked out with SICOM and became operational for crops, such as potatoes, carrots and tomatoes. Planters were happy and fully subscribed to it. How is it that, now, in the Budget Speech, we mention again that a Crop Insurance Scheme will be introduced?

Planters were happy, as I said, and fully subscribed to it, except one, on which I am going to talk in a few minutes. You would be surprised to learn that the Opposition then, those who are in Government today, chose not to be present when the Bill was presented. They did not have any arguments and preferred not to take part in the debates. Noting the absence of the Opposition on that day and observing that when he presented the SIE Bill, a few weeks back, the Opposition was again not present, hon. Pravind Jugnauth stated, and I quote –

“Je commence à croire que l’opposition est allergique à la communauté des planteurs et au secteur agricole.”

Deuxième fait marquant, M. le président, il y avait un soi-disant planteur, qui avait, pendant des années, demandé la création d’un *Small Planters Welfare Fund* mais quand il a vu ce projet se concrétiser sous un gouvernement MSM/MMM, il a voulu dérouter les planteurs et dévier leur attention de ce moment historique. C’est ce qui a conduit l’honorable Pravind Jugnauth à dire, et je cite -

‘I have observed that only last week the president of the Growers’ Association has tried to create confusion in the mind of the planting community by stating that the

Ministry of Social Security has agreed to set up a special fund for planters. This is totally false".

Ridicule, M. le président, le refus de voir la vérité! Pourquoi je dis cela? C'est parce que ce monsieur, qui a été récompensé, est aujourd'hui *the Chairperson of the Irrigation Authority*. Il gère des milliards mais continue à faire des frasques. Il est encore au centre d'un scandale qui n'a pas été élucidé jusqu'à ce jour. J'ouvre ici une parenthèse pour dire que ce monsieur, en tant que *Chairperson of the Irrigation Authority*, s'était arrogé le droit de créer un comité pour s'octroyer des droits qui ne lui appartiennent pas. In reply to a Parliamentary Question, last year, on the conversion of land in NPIP2, the Minister of Agriculture confirmed, and I quote -

'I am made to understand that the IA had, through a committee, which was set up at the level of the IA, excised some of the lands which fall within an irrigation zone and that also without any mandate.'

The Minister also confirmed that the committee exempted the excised portion from payment of Land Conversion Tax. To a further question, as to whether the Chairman benefited from these exemptions, the Minister said that it was perhaps on the basis of a wrong interpretation of the law. My point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that Government has acted very rapidly in the case of *métayage*; the laying off of the Director of the Mauritius Sugar Authority. Why is it that, up to now, no action has been taken against the Chairperson of the Irrigation Authority, who is still being paid from cess money?

With regard to the non-sugar sector, we are disappointed by the measures announced as they do not reveal any strong political will to promote a reorientation of that sector so as to modernise agriculture in line with the development and sophistication taking place in other economic sectors. Instead of proposing new schemes to encourage the adoption of innovative technologies and new production techniques, we see flimsy measures being enunciated. I suggest that Government should enhance the status of planters and encourage a new breed of young agricultural entrepreneurs. Creating a Seed Potato Purchase Scheme or a Onion Seed Purchase Scheme will not really help. The real problem lies in the production as well as the marketing. Timely information should be provided to planters, and crop planning mechanisms should be put across to them. The question of overproduction of certain vegetables should be dealt with by fostering a concept of organised agriculture. This is extremely important as, very often, we see

all planters going for the same seasonal vegetables at the same time, resulting in overproduction. In such circumstances, prices go down to such an extent that it is far less costly for the planters to leave the crops in the fields than to harvest and put them on the market, hence the importance of the market information system. This brings me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to the auction system, the difficulties encountered by planters in the sale of their products to auctioneers, the way the auction takes place and the price reaped through these auctions. Details of reforming the auction system were enunciated in the former Government non-sugar sector strategic plan.

I was glad when I heard the hon. Minister of Finance stating in a previous Budget that a National Auction Market will be constructed, but it was only an *effet d'annonce*. Three years have elapsed, and nowhere is the National Auction Market to be found.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just stated that, if we want to modernise agriculture, we have to adopt new technologies. That is why the previous Government came forward with the proposal to set up a Biotech Institute. At that time, it would have cost us only Rs350 m. We don't know what the cost would be now. I bet it must have doubled or trebled. The former Minister of Agriculture, hon. Dr. Boolell, did not go ahead with it, and I would maintain that he was wrong.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, research is important, so important that it cannot be *le monopole de certains*. We know why the project did not materialise *mais c'est triste d'avoir privé notre pays d'un* Center of Excellence In Biotechnology.

Before I leave the crop sector, I wish to comment on the Agricultural Marketing Board with regard to the importation of onions and garlic. For onions, *dans le processus de la libéralisation de l'importation*, a quota is given to several persons for the import of around 25 tonnes per person for a period of two to three months during the year, whereas for the rest of the period, the AMB, itself, imports onions. On a quota of about 2,000 tonnes, the percentage given to each individual to import is negligible. This is important, and I would have wished the Minister of Agriculture to give, at least, some attention to this. The cost price on importation is Rs14.50 per kilogramme, including the CIF price, but the AMB sells the onions at a price of Rs28 per kilogramme. The cost price being Rs14.50, the AMB sells it at Rs28 per kilogramme to wholesalers. What happens, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that those who are allowed to import, although it costs them Rs14.50 per kilogramme, much prefer to sell it at Rs28 per kilogramme for a period of two to three months, making a hundred percent profit, since after that period, they

will have to come again to AMB and, again, sell it at Rs28. To sum up, the consumers are paying onions at a much higher price. In fact, consumers are subsidising the AMB, whereas if the AMB leaves the bulk of the importation to those who can import, consumers will be able to get onions at a much cheaper price, that is, around Rs17 per kilogramme, instead of what they are paying now, Rs30 per kilogramme. Moreover, AMB has, since 2009, introduced a cess fee of Rs1000 per tonne to the small importer, which again is passed on to the consumers.

The same applies to garlic: Mauritius imports 90% of its consumption. The AMB is the sole importer. If other people in the trade would have been allowed to import, the cost price per kilogramme would have been Rs20 all charges included. Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what is the wholesale selling price of the AMB? Rs55 per kilogramme! From Rs20 to Rs55, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *c'est scandaleux!* At a time when the purchasing power of consumers is being eroded, instead of coming to the rescue of consumers, the AMB is thriving on consumers to subsidise its expenses. I have learnt that consumers are also paying imported potatoes at a much higher price because AMB has introduced, once again, cess fees to the tune of Rs1500 per tonne for importers. I don't know what is that cess fee, what it is meant for, but it is being passed on to the consumer.

Je répète, M. le président, que c'est scandaleux, surtout quand nous avons maintenant un ministre – il n'est pas là - à plein temps qui s'occupe de la protection des consommateurs. Je me demande s'il est au courant de ce qui se passe.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Le ministre n'a fait que changer de place.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: C'est sérieux, et c'est cela qu'on appelle *protecting people*. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, I will say a few words on the livestock sector. As I see, goat breeding is being encouraged. Fine! But we have to establish our priorities and look well ahead. I cannot see Mauritius in the near future or even in the distant future exporting goat meat. For sure, we have a *clientèle* for goat meat, but the market is limited, whereas, in view of the high demand for venison, it is certainly one of the few promising subsectors within the local livestock sector. There is a local *clientèle* for venison, there is a *clientèle* in the tourist industry, since it is an exotic product, and if we conform to international norms, we can export. In fact, at one point in time, Mauritius was exporting venison, but as a result of our inability to conform to EU norms,

we had to stop. So, instead of limiting ourselves to deer rearing in *chassés*, prospects of expansion have to be considered. Schemes can be worked out to encourage deer rearing in feedlots. Why is it not done? I know fully well that some would resist to this suggestion, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I know why. But it is worth giving serious thoughts to it.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now have some few remarks on the sugar sector. There are so many aspects to speak on, but I will limit myself to the regrouping of planters into larger units. Time and again, we have heard the Minister of Agriculture saying that regrouping is a success. If it was, I would have been glad. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the ultimate objective of regrouping is to increase the output of small planters, hence their profits, and make them more viable. At paragraph 104 of the Multi-Annual Strategic Plan, it states that overall sugar yield per unit area would be improved by, at least, 18% to 27%, and production cost reduced to some 20% to 25%. As recommended in the MASS, the management of the fields of the regrouped planters from derocking onwards has been left to the millers who take all decisions on the planters' fields without any consultation with the planters concerned. Furthermore, a certain amount of money, representing costs incurred by the sugar estates, is being paid to the latter. In fact, this is the small planters' share of the EU Funds which is being paid to the miller.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to enumerate some of the problems faced by these planters. First, when they join in the regrouping, they are not aware whether their fields will undergo heavy derocking, coarse derocking or light derocking and whether, ultimately, their land would be ready for mechanisation or not.

Secondly, the planter, who has been cultivating his field for the past 30 to 40 years, is not consulted on the variety of the cane which is being planted in his field. He does not know anything. He has not been consulted. If his field has been derocked lightly, he will be able, in the end, to go for mechanical loading only, not for other operations. It is only for mechanical loading and operations like *dépaillage* and cutting are his responsibility. The problem which arises is that, *si c'est une variété qui a beaucoup de pailles, c'est au planteur d'aller trouver la main-d'œuvre qui lui coûtera plus cher pour faire ce travail, et c'est ce qui se passe. Le coût de la production devient de plus en plus élevé.*

Thirdly, very often, he goes into regrouping with a certain extent of land, but finds that only part of it has been derocked, for no apparent reason.

Fourthly, whereas the MSIRI used to recommend him to use a certain amount of fertilisers at plantation, it is now proposing less, and without any plausible reason. Even with centralisation, the crushing capacity of mills has remained the same, and mills impose a quota per day for receipt of small planters' cane. Sometimes, it is 10 tonnes a day. Even, in regrouping, the quota remains the same. What happens is that canes of small planters remain in the field for several days, with the result that the cane loses weight and its sugar contents. The revenue to be obtained later would obviously, once again, be less. Finally, the planters pay a management fee ranging from Rs2,000 to Rs5,000 per *arpent* yearly to the millers for the management of their fields.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *je n'ai rien inventé*. I have a letter from the small planting community and those who are facing problems, and I am prepared to lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly. I have a letter from a small planter, where he says that his revenue has, in fact, been decreased, and I will lay a copy on the Table of the Assembly. He has even sent me photographs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of his field, which is supposed to be derocked, and the state in which his field is now. I will lay a copy of this also on the Table of the Assembly. Yet, funds from the European Union are being used for derocking, regrouping and for irrigation, and we are being told that this is the share of the small planting community. I would suggest that there should be more transparency in this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have one last word on the fisheries sector. I have several times drawn the attention of the House to the fisheries sector and said that fishermen form part of vulnerable groups. They are poor people, et avec ce présent gouvernement, ils ont été privés de certains privilèges qu'ils avaient bénéficiés avec le précédent gouvernement. Je vous donne deux exemples. Premièrement, ils avaient leurs moteurs duty-free, aujourd'hui ce privilège leur a été enlevé. Deuxièmement, le gouvernement MSM/MMM leur donnait des gilets de sauvetage, des filets, des bouées mais aujourd'hui ce gouvernement ne peut trouver quelques milliers de roupies pour satisfaire ces besoins, pourtant essentiels.

Le secteur de la pêche est en difficulté, et ce que le gouvernement accorde à ce secteur, c'est un plan décousu. If we look at the Budget Speech, il y a deux paragraphes, entrecoupés par un paragraphe sur le secteur porcin. Since two years, Government has been talking about the financing of fiberglass boats for 35 fishers mais c'est encore une fois un effet d'annonce. Two

weeks back, the fishermen staged a demonstration and left a letter with the Minister of Agro Industry, asking for an appointment. Up to now, they are still waiting for that appointment, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Additional Stimulus Package Act was voted and several sectors of the economy had had their share of the packages. Where is the Stimulus Package for the fishing community? I would request the Minister of Finance to consider, at least, to restore the privileges which were given to them by the previous Government, and also remove VAT on fishing equipment *comme l'hameçon, la ligne*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I have run out of time, but I would say that people at the lowest rung of the social ladder cannot fulfil their basic needs, that is, food and shelter. Yet, out of a fund of Rs1 billion for social housing, Rs740 m. have been drawn out to make up for the additional Rs2.5 billion for the Stimulus Package more than two thirds of the amount earmarked and we still say that social housing is a priority for this Government. Except for the social development project at La Valette, Bambous which has benefited only 71 families, nothing has been done. I may be biased regarding my own Constituency but when I see people living in huts *presque à l'entrée d'un cimetière à Camp la Pailles à Bambous, quand je vois des parents et leurs enfants qui n'ont pas d'autres choix que de dormir dans des bicoques où les toits peuvent leur tomber dessus à n'importe quel moment à Choisy, Baie du Cap, je me demande si l'argent qui a été voté under the Poverty Alleviation Programme really trickles down to those who are extremely poor. Je ne fais pas de la démagogie, M. le président, mais au lieu de soulager la souffrance de ces personnes, let us see, with regard to housing where concessions by millions have been given to the rich through the Additional Stimulus Package.*

In reply to a Parliamentary Question asked by hon. Jugnauth two weeks back with regard to construction projects which had started since 01 January 2009 to date, which are eligible to exemptions on land transfer tax and registration duty, the Minister of Finance replied and I quote

—

“Residential development of les Allées d’Helvetia and Moka and the residential development of Springfield Residence at Grand’ Baie”.

So, those two residential developments have benefited from exemption of land transfer tax and registration duty. Now, I ask the question: who are those who will buy a house at Les Allées

d'Helvetia? Who are those who will buy a house in Springfield at Grand' Baie at a price ranging from Rs7 m. to Rs8 m.? Does somebody, who can purchase a house at that price, need to be exempted from land transfer tax and registration duty? C'est un scandale, M. le president, tandis que les plus démunis dorment toujours à la belle étoile.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before I resume my seat, I wish to make an observation. J'ai noté, il y a quelques jours, pendant l'intervention de mon collègue, l'honorable Bodha, que le ministre des finances, when he was in a sitting position, avait lancé à notre égard «zotte pas content moi» Hier encore, l'honorable Dr. Husnoo a allégué que ma collègue, l'honorable Madame Martin, avait fait des attaques personnelles à l'égard du ministre des finances. Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to reassure the Vice-Prime Minister that we do not have anything personal against him. What we criticise is his policy. Nous critiquons sa tendance ultra libérale et procapitaliste because we believe firmly in a fair and just society. Le nom même du MSM - le Mouvement Socialiste Militant - démontre notre fidélité et notre engagement à œuvrer en faveur des plus démunis. Le combat dans lequel nous croyons et l'idéologie pour laquelle nous continuerons sans cesse à militer est et restera le socialisme.

Merci, M. le président.

(3.53 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to commend my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, Dr. Sithanen and congratulate him for presenting yet another tailor-made budget to suit the present socio-economic conditions and pave the way to further resist the world unprecedented economic crisis and put the country back to a steady growth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we assumed office in 2005, the hon. Prime Minister had announced and, I quote –

“Our ultimate goal is to charter a new path, a path that will be more acceptable to our people and that will bring prosperity to the greatest number”.

This present budget confirms that the Prime Minister has kept his words by being consistent in his approach all the way, and his support and guidance for this present budget, despite the economic turmoils, is a clear indication of his determination to make of Mauritius a modern and prosperous nation. Let me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, express my deep appreciation to the hon. Prime Minister for his vision and assure him that all of us on this side of the House are wired to his vision. We hold his vision, we have one vision as a Government and we are working for that vision.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the lady, who intervened just before me, called this Budget a non-event, un travail baclé, a cut and paste Budget. The Leader of the Opposition, in his first reaction when the Budget was read a week ago, on a Friday afternoon, ran out of comments. He ran out of arguments once again and he just said c'est du recollé, cut and paste used by the lady et du bla-bla-bla. If I may remind the House and Members who are present here today, the first budget of this Government was passed back in 2006/2007; I quote from the press conference and the words of hon. Bérenger –

“Beaucoup de bla-bla-bla, des bluffs et des effets d’annonce. Je suis encore une fois intrigué par le body language de cet homme. »

He looks at the body language. He reads body language. This time he was reading the face of the Prime Minister. He was looking at the faces of the Ministers and the Members of this side. He does not read the measures in the Budget, he reads faces, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Second year, Budget 2007/08, I quote again –

« Décevant et fade. Du bluff sur les chiffres de la progression touristique. Beaucoup de bla-bla. »

He missed one ‘bla’, he said ‘bla-bla’ this time. So, he sort of economised in words, he said ‘bla-bla’. Third Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 2008/09, I again quote from his Speech –

“budget sadique et douloureux, a lot of bla-bla-bla - again third time - a lot of bluff.”

Fourth Budget, this time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he not only said ‘bla-bla-bla’ but he repeated it, at least, 15 times, if my arithmetic is right, if I counted properly. Three times ‘*bla-bla-bla*’, again watching the body language of Navin Ramgoolam, ‘*c’était la tristesse, un climat de deuil*’, he said. Usual standard cliché for the past four years, he could not even invent, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, in his words and comments, in his analysis of the Budget, except for the words '*bla-bla-bla*' for the past four years. He is the person who could not invent on his words and comments for the past four years and he is the person who wants to reinvent Mauritius. This is the biggest joke, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. If like the lady before me said: this is bluff; if there is anything which we can qualify as bluff, it is her intervention in this House today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

As and when I develop the subjects, I will come back to whatever she has raised in this august Assembly and I will try to answer to what she has said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I was going through the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Maybe I should start where the Leader of the Opposition ended by his concluding remarks and one of his remarks was clearly an attempt to present Mr Obeegadoo as the father of Education in this country. He tried to make us believe, as if it was the MMM in its two years in power since its creation, that they have developed education here. He said they should come back to put on track again education, economy, fisheries and agriculture as if the country is crying out for the MMM to come back to develop, to vulganise education in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. There can be no greater mystification and denial of historical facts than what has been stated by the Leader of the Opposition; his statement in Parliament tantamounts to historical forgery, if I may qualify it this way.

Let me remind the MMM, that the Labour Government as far back as in 1969, created the first University of Mauritius, the first Mauritian University of International repute today, even before the MMM was born. The MMM is talking of education today and is trying to make the country believe that had it not been for the MMM, the country would have suffered in terms of education, health, economy and all other economic sectors.

Let me set the record right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Education has always stood high on the agenda of the Labour Government even before independence. Even at that time, the Father of the nation, Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam, knew that the promotion of education was the only way forward in the development process of our country. It was also clear in his mind that education was a means to combat poverty and to uplift the socio-economic conditions of the people. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is it not a fact that the Labour Government built primary schools, secondary schools, junior secondary schools, technical colleges, the MCA, the MIE, the

IVTB and the MGI. This is the bilan of the MMM. If there is one thing the MMM is going to be remembered for is les 7 milliards de roupies pour les 5 familles. Technical colleges, primary schools, secondary schools, MCA, MIE, IVTB and MGI - where does the MMM fit in all these, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It cannot be a mere coincidence that, in January 2000, 30 years after, once again, the Labour Government, under the prime ministership of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, opened a second University, that is, the University of Technology of Mauritius and soon another brand new campus will be built for which Rs600 m. has been provided in the present Budget. This will accommodate a further 8,000 new students. This is not a coincidence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the vision of the Labour Party and of its Leader.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is the Labour Party which has written the most glorious chapters of the Book of Education. In fact, the Book of Education was conceived and written by the Labour Party. Let me remind them again, if they have chosen to forget as they often do, that free education was given by the Labour Party, free transport back from 2005 was again extended to all students in this country. Hon. Bérenger wants to reinvent Mauritius. If there is anything that he can reinvent today, maybe it is the MMM. We all know what is the situation there, what is happening in the MMM. 40 years or so after being at the head of the party, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today he cannot even aspire to become the Prime Minister. For a mandate of 5 years, he has voted, himself, for two years or three years at the most, 18 months. This is the MMM, they have to reinvent it because they are running out of ideas, they are running out of ideologists. There is no lesson that we have to learn from the MMM, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Another petty and demagogical remark of the Leader of the Opposition at the end of his intervention, goes as follows, I quote –

“Le pays fait les frais de l’incompétence de l’équipe de l’Alliance Sociale and this Alliance Sociale team is failing the country miserably.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have two questions to put in this august Assembly and to the MMM. My first question is: Is my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance wrong when he says that the *Alliance Sociale* Government has done better in a time hit by unprecedented economic crisis than they did when they were in Government when there was no recession? He has said it so many times, he has repeated it in all the PNQs, in all his interventions in this august Assembly. Yet I have heard nothing in rebuttal from the other side of

the House neither here, nor in the press conference, nor in any other platform, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! The argument on all the Budgets which the Government has presented so far is that ‘we could have done better’ and yet the irony of it is that they do not come with a single proposition. At least, we can understand that, as they have run out of ideas, they do not have any proposition to make. The Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has even challenged them, he had told the MMM: ‘if you have ideas, if you have better alternatives, come with a paper, come with only 50 pages’. He reduced it to 10 pages and still not even a single page has come forward.

My second question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is: is it correct to say that -

- (i) this Government has created more jobs in one year than what they created in five years while they were in power;
- (ii) the country received more FDI in one year than what they attracted in four years;
- (iii) this Government has recorded a positive growth since 2005 and that the previous Government recorded four years of consecutive negative growth?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the admission of mismanagement and incompetence was in the very words of the Leader of the Opposition, then Prime Minister, when he stated publicly, I quote:

“La situation est dramatique et sans précédent, nous sommes en état d’urgence économique”.

This was the situation in which they had dragged Mauritius into. They failed, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they failed miserably at a time when growth of GDP was globally positive, growth in trade was systematically growing year after year; our main markets, that is, the USA and the EU were booming. The average price of oil was around US\$30 per barrel. In fact, everything was set for Mauritius and the previous Government to achieve a higher growth and go further up the way for economic and social prosperity yet they failed miserably and hon. Bérenger has the guts today to call this Government incompetent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The facts are there. Their incompetency smacks on their face and, for them, demagogy and petty politics must prevail over patriotism and national solidarity. It is also a fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this Government inherited an economy which was gloomy and in shambles, with poor growth, dramatically low level of investment and low FDI, high level of national debts, high level of

unemployment. Despite this entire catastrophic economic heritage coupled with the triple shocks, and now with the world financial crisis, this Government has had the vision and the courage to embark on bold economic reforms which have brought results and reversed the negative trend. Indeed, we performed miraculously despite all the hurdles. What a contrast, Mr Speaker, Sir! If there is any team, any Government that has been incompetent, let us look at the figures; they speak for themselves, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me turn to specific activities and performance of my Ministry. Well before the global economic meltdown manifested, Mauritius, and more particularly, the agricultural sector was subject to unprecedented shocks consequent to the drastic reduction in the price of sugar and the soaring prices of food, feeds and agricultural inputs. With the understanding of the population and stakeholders, Government has not only come up with the appropriate reform measures, but has also provided the necessary funds and support to implement these measures. The vision of my Ministry is to revitalize the agro industrial sector. Our plans are ready, be it in the sugar, the food crop, the livestock and the fisheries sectors. Whilst the primary objective is to boost up productivity and enhance our food security and safety to promote SMEs in these sub sectors, these measures will also play a vital role to attaining the three main objectives set in the Budget, namely saving jobs, protecting people and preparing for recovery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the EU sugar reform in 2005, which implied a 36 per cent cut in the price of sugar, left Mauritius with no other option than to bring in bold reforms. Indeed, the dilemma in 2005 was to reform or not to reform, but this present Government opted to take up the challenge. Business as usual was not an option. No reform would have meant the demise of the sugar sector as has been the case in Trinidad & Tobago and in St Kitts & Nevis. Government took prompt action in order to reform the sugar cane industry. A Multi-Annual Adaptation Strategy was prepared after wide consultations which have been hailed as a model by the EU. The hon. lady was speaking of regrouping and preparation of land. In fact, we had many delegations which came from EU and they are happy about the reforms which we have brought and the way it is working out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. 7352 workers have retired under VRS II, ERS and Blue Print as from December 2007 to reduce the operational costs and to render the industry more competitive. Four factories have closed down in December 2007 in the context of centralization, The implementation of field operations, regrouping and irrigation project on

15,000 hectares belonging to small planters is in progress and as scheduled the establishment of clusters for production of refined white sugar, ethanol, electricity and industrial rum.

As from this year, fuel and SUDS will produce and export refined white sugar. The reform has proved to be a viable option for a sustainable sugar cluster and an essential element of the economic reform of the country. We have satisfied all the conditions laid down by the European Union for the reform of the sugar cane industry. Whether it is VRS, training, centralization or derocking and land preparation, all the indicators have been satisfied. The successful implementation of these measures has enabled timely disbursement of 39.8 million euros by the EU under the accompanying measures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have not just prepared a reform plan, we are also seeing to it that the measures are being implemented. Indeed we have met all the targets set and are well ahead on the reform programme. We are not *'en panne'*, as claimed by the Leader of the Opposition. We have actually derocked 2,394 hectares of land belonging to some 2,200 planters against the target of 2,000 hectares. 7,352 beneficiaries of VRS, ERS and Blue Print against 6,000 initially targeted, Government has purchased 35% shares in the refinery on behalf of the small planters and workers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are not only creating opportunities, but we are also opening up the possibilities for all stakeholders, be it labourers, artisans or planters to enjoy the feeling that they are part and parcel of the cluster. We are empowering people. We are protecting them from the turmoils of the international financial crisis. As we are aware, a sum of Rs1 billion for three years was provided for in the last Budget to foster local production and hence mitigate in the short to medium-term the dependency of the country on imported food commodities. A Food Strategic Plan was formulated and approved by Government in December of last year and same was launched in January of this year. The plan aims at reducing the country's dependency on food imports. It is also geared towards empowering small farmers, breeders and fishermen turning them into a new class of entrepreneurs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, under the plan, an additional area of about 1,400 arpents will be devoted to food crop, meat and milk production by 2011. We have so far allocated a total of 342 arpents - 271 arpents for food crops and 71 arpents for livestock production - to groups of small farmers. 103 arpents of Rose Belle sugar estate land and 100 arpents of SIT land have been

allocated, ready for plantation, to 100 and 98 small planters respectively for food crop production. Inputs in terms of planting materials and fertilizers have been provided to them and they have already started cultivation. We have already launched three schemes, namely the Seed Potato Purchase Scheme, the Onion Seed Purchase Scheme and the Food Crop Insurance Scheme.

In less than a week, some 100 potato planters have already taken advantage of the Seed Potato Purchase Scheme for a total of 250 tonnes of seeds. Under the Onion Seed Purchase Scheme, 50 kgs of seeds have so far been bought by planters and these will cover an area of 50 arpents. Under the two schemes, more planters will embark into potato and onion productions as they will need to pay only 20 per cent of the cost of seeds upon purchase from the AMB.

The 80 % left will be provided by the Food Security Fund under the form of an advance which the planters will have to refund at the harvest of their production. If we take the case of potato, for example, the 80 per cent provided for in the form of an advance, will represent an amount of some Rs29,000 per tonne, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is expected that through the Seed Potato Purchase Scheme, production would increase to 16,000 tonnes this year, compared to an average volume of 14,000 tonnes over the past five years.

By the year 2011, the production target is estimated at some 20,000 to 22,000 tonnes of potatoes, thereby attaining 80 % of our self-sufficiency. The production of onion is expected to register this year an increase of some 1,000 tonnes, which will bring national production to 7,000 tonnes, compared to an average of 5,000 tonnes over the last five years. We are targeting a volume of 12,000 tonnes by 2012 against a consumption level of 16,000 tonnes.

Coming to the Food Crop Insurance Scheme, an issue raised by the orator before me, and by the hon. Leader of the Opposition in their interventions, I will give some details on it. The Food Security Fund will finance an Insurance Premium Support of a maximum of Rs3,683 per arpent in order to encourage small food crop planters to protect their plantations against natural calamities, namely cyclones, excessive rainfall, drought, flood. Hence, it will cover to a certain extent their exposure to financial risks in case of crop failure. The difference in the premium rate to be paid will be met by the planters. It is expected that some 2,000 small growers will take advantage of this facility which will cover up to 5,000 arpents of harvested area, representing an annual production of some 32,000 tonnes of food crop worth Rs500 m.

There was a previous scheme, as mentioned by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, which was introduced some time back during their mandate, but, I must say that this scheme never worked out. As she said, the planters were happy, but being happy is not enough, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The scheme did not work out and they never subscribed to it. This is where we are coming up with an altogether new scheme; we are giving a grant to encourage them to subscribe to the insurance. It is only one week since the Budget was passed and we introduced the scheme and today I am pleased to announce that 350 planters have already taken advantage of the scheme. In fact, this is the difference.

(Interruptions)

How many planters had subscribed after the previous scheme was introduced? I must be fair to them; it was not zero, but very close to.

Regarding the marketing of food crops, it was indeed proposed in last year's budget to set up a National Auction Market. My Ministry has meanwhile received representations from the farming community not to go ahead with this proposal since they will still remain at the mercy of auctioneers. They are instead proposing the setting up of a National Wholesale Market whereby the middlemen, that is, the auctioneers, would not be needed. They will expose their own products directly to the wholesalers. A sum of Rs10 m. has been earmarked under the Food Security Fund for this purpose to kickstart the project.

With all the resources that we are mobilizing to boost up local food crop production and to reduce our dependency on food imports, access to agricultural lands should not constitute a constraint. The SIE Act clearly stipulates that sugar estates are committed to rent certain areas of sugar cane lands to small growers for food crop production, that is, for diversification. However, statistics show that the acreage effectively rented out is far below what they are committed to.

I take this opportunity to make an appeal to the MSPA to promptly remedy this situation which has for long been to the disadvantage of small growers and the nation at large, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

When the Strategic Plan was elaborated, one staple, namely rice, was not considered as a strategic commodity though we are totally dependent on imports to meet our requirements. In December 2008, a Singaporean Company, Vita Grain PTE Ltd having expertise, technology and

field experience in rice producing countries, sought the support of my Ministry to set up a hybrid rice seed industry in Mauritius. My Ministry has responded favourably as the rice varieties produced by Vita Grain PTE Ltd have a unique trait. These varieties have a low glycemic index and are of a special value to Mauritius which has a high prevalence of diabetes. In less than five months –

- a MOU was signed to set up a Food Security Development Centre involving MSIRI, FARC/AREU and the Vita Grain Ltd. We are at the final stage of setting up the Centre;
- 22 rice varieties and lines were introduced and grown for field evaluation for adaptability and productivity at the MSIRI. Seeds will be used to cultivate 50 hectares in August this year;
- a MoU was signed with Rose Belle Sugar Estate Board for release of 500 hectares of land;
- a lease agreement for an initial 50 hectares has already been signed and,
- small holders, that is, small planters, who have been contacted, have expressed interest to participate in this venture.

The hybrid seeds will be also used for rice production in the region thereby contributing significantly to our food security. In the medium-term, the promoters intend to grow rice locally and to set up a rice mill in Mauritius. This will make rice readily available here for local consumption hence reducing our dependency on imports. Government has given its full support to this new and innovative venture.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Minister, shall we break for tea and resume for an hour?

At 4.28 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.04 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair

Mr Faugoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, , allow me to continue. I come to the pig sector. There is one sector, in fact, which I wish to dwell upon. As the House is aware, the African swine fever caused havoc to the local pig sector back in 2007. Thousands

of animals had to be slaughtered and culled and the local herd was almost depleted putting at risk the livelihood of so many poor pig breeders. The pig population was reduced to less than 2000 from 18000 heads. With the measures taken, today the population has reached about 13,000 and is expected to reach the same population as at 2007 within 12-18 months, Mr Speaker, Sir. As a responsible Government, we decided to convert the calamity into an opportunity. This is a vivid example of how this Government translated a threat into opportunity through empowerment rather than a mere one-off compensation, as was the wish of so many in this very House, Mr Speaker, Sir. They were saying: why don't we just give them some compensation and lay off, and write off the sector itself? We decided that this is an important economy sector of our country which though small is very important and we could not deprive the people of their livelihood. We decided to give them a chance. We empowered them. In fact, as it has been mentioned in the Budget Speech, a sum of Rs280 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, has been spent to restructure the pig sector. It is a huge amount of money, Mr Speaker, Sir, which has been used for infrastructural works, setting up reproduction farms, and importation of breeding animals. It is the first time in the history of Mauritius that we imported pigs by air. There is also the training of breeders. We have so far given Rs35 m. as income support to pig breeders. All the breeders have been relocated to St Martin and Bassin Requin to operate in a more professional manner. 3,000 weaners and 420 gilts and boars were imported from South Africa and distributed to breeders for fattening and reproduction respectively.

Lands at Médine and FUEL have been put at the disposal of breeders for reproduction. 20 breeders have been trained in '*charcuterie*' to give an added value to their primary products at École Hôtelière, Ebène and 20 additional breeders are being trained.

Over and above these measures, breeders have also been given facilities for loans and grants at the Development Bank of Mauritius –Rs160 m. on concessionary terms and a grant element of Rs53 m., Mr Speaker, Sir. Today, I am proud to say that not only have we set back on track the pig sector, but we have also given to the breeders a new dignity just as we did for the reform of the sugar cane industry. We took the lead for this sector and have ensured that it not only revives, but it flourishes.

I would like to say a few words on the fisheries sector, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 2008, the fisheries and the seafood sector contributed about Rs18 billion to the national economy. The seafood hub had a turnover of Rs8 billion from the processing sector compared to Rs4.8 billion in 2005 and Rs10 billion from the port and related services compared to about Rs5 billion in 2005. The growth in value added from fish processing, that is, in the seafood hub has averaged 16% annually during the last three years. Fish and fish products account for about 14% of commodity exports and the fishing and seafood sector contributes to about 2% of the GDP.

As part of our market access strategy with the European Union under the Interim Economic Partnership Agreement, Mauritius was granted a quota of 3000 tonnes for preserved tuna and 600 tonnes for tuna loins for export to the EU for the period January 2008 to December 2008 as a temporary derogation from the rules of origin. My Ministry has made a further request for a derogated quota with the European Union for the period January 2009 to December 2009. Our mission in Brussels has just informed us that the EU has approved our request for this year.

Moreover, the European Commission has agreed to the issue of private licences by Mauritius to European Commission fishing vessels to fish in the waters of Mauritius pending the finalisation of a Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the two parties. To further consolidate the seafood hub activities, the construction of a Fish Auction Market at Fort Williams, Les Salines, would start by August this year. In fact, tenders are being launched at present. The competent authority is fully operational today, Mr Speaker, Sir. In fact, we had visits from the EU and they are satisfied with all the arrangements we have made in a very short span of time.

Fish production from aquaculture is set to grow even further in the coming years according to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). We are, in fact, in a favourable position in this regard in Mauritius with one marine fish farm already in operation and procedures are under way for the setting up of two marine aquaculture farms in the south east region of the island.

Whilst promoting commercial aquaculture, we have not neglected small scale fish farming where a supply of 200,000 *camaron* juveniles and 30,000 fish fingerlings have been distributed to small scale fish farmers with a production potential averaging around 10 tonnes.

The Fishermen Investment Trust, set up for the benefit of the fishermen, is in the process of acquiring five boats for off-lagoon fishing through which 25 fishers would be direct beneficiaries. Furthermore, a sum of Rs28 m. is earmarked to finance purchase of fibreglass boats for off-lagoon fishing to some 35 fishers. I wish to highlight that the FIT Board comprises three elected representatives of the fishers so it is wrong to say that fishers are under-represented. They, in fact, represent 30% on the Board.

I also wish to clarify the points raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and hon. Barbier with regard to the 35 fishers who will be involved in this project. The Mouvement Autosuffisance Alimentaire (MAA), which is responsible for the implementation of this project

under the Food Security Fund, is devising appropriate criteria for the selection of 35 fishers in consultation with my Ministry.

The Fishermen Investment Trust has obtained funds to the tune of Rs15 m. for the setting up of a fish cage culture project, which would involve about 25 fishermen, in the lagoon near Pointe aux Feuilles.

The Ferme Marine de Mahebourg has, in principle, agreed to extend facilities in terms of supply of juveniles and feeds to the Fishermen Investment Trust for the implementation of the project.

The House may be aware that piracy activities beyond our control have been reported in the region not far from our waters. Unfortunately, this region is not only a fishing zone, but also the sea route of carriers bringing raw materials for our tuna processors in the seafood hub. Government is deploying all the means at its disposal to counteract any act of piracy in our waters, but the task is a daunting one and needs the cooperation of all friendly countries. Only international efforts can combat this scourge effectively. The hon. Prime Minister already mentioned in this august Assembly the efforts being made at local and international levels to combat piracy.

Mauritius has requested that piracy be one of the issues on the Agenda of the forthcoming first Ministerial Meeting of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Ministers in Charge of Fisheries scheduled from 02 to 05 June, this year, in Brussels. The meeting is expected to come out with concrete proposals to address the problem of piracy in the South-West Indian Ocean, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My Ministry has spared no effort to consolidate the contribution of the fisheries sector in the national economy. With regard to artisanal fishing, our endeavour is to empower the fishermen to move to the more productive and revenue generating activities in the off-lagoon areas and, ultimately, to join the mainstream of activities in the seafood hub. Just like we did for the pig breeders, we are also trying very hard, Mr Speaker, Sir, to empower the fishers to go off-lagoon where they can really carry out their daily activities.

Concerning Rodrigues, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Food Security Fund Committee, after consultation with the Commission for Agriculture, Natural Resources & Rehabilitation of the

Rodrigues Regional Assembly, has earmarked a budget of Rs187 m. to give a new impetus to the agricultural sector of the island which is undergoing profound changes.

I am advised that they have already reached an advanced stage of implementation of several projects. Provision of a first instalment of Rs34 m., covering the period ending June 2009, has been approved. Moreover, a further Rs66 m. will be disbursed between July and December 2009.

The measures to be implemented in Rodrigues, over the period 2008-2011, concern –

- the boosting up of milk and meat production;
- the setting up of a slaughter house;
- the setting up of growing areas (villages) for onions, beans, chilli and maize;
- the capacity building in the agro-industry sector;
- the setting up of an incubation centre;
- the rehabilitation of some 300 arpents of abandoned agricultural lands, and
- the rehabilitation of drains and the fencing of the cultivated areas to protect the crops against stray livestock which is a real problem in Rodrigues.

It is expected that the above measures will enable Rodrigues to develop the sector into an economic activity and will empower small farmers, fishermen and agro processors, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Turning to some points which were raised by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, first of all, under the sugar sector, she said she was not too sure if, on the regrouping issue, the regrouping is working well for our sugar sector. The target in the MAAS, Mr Speaker, Sir, was to increase production by 18% to 27%. The first project, if I may call it the pilot project, is the window for the sugar sector, for the reform that we are bringing in the sugar sector. The first project at Queen Victoria gave very positive results, cane yields increased by 25%, Mr Speaker, Sir. When we had targeted 18%, in fact, we got 25% in the first cane yield. The second element, sugar accrued to planters 39% increase we have reported, it is over and above what we expected. Harvest and transport costs decreased by 36% and, as at now, we have already covered 2,179 planters. The hon. lady is here now, she can take note of the issues which she raised and I will

give the answer. All these reforms which are being brought, especially, in this area, at Queen Victoria, are being monitored and audited by the EU, not only at the level of the Commission, but also by EU Parliament. We had many missions which came to Mauritius and gave positive reports on our reform, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mauritius is being cited as a window of reform for reform in the sugar sector in all the ACP countries. Only this year, we were attending a conference in Brussels. My friend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was there with me and some public officers. We met Commissioner Michel and Commissioner Bowell. They both, without reserve, said: Mauritius is the first country which has had a record; we had set the example in the sector, not only in this region, but in the whole of ACP, Mr Speaker, Sir. Everywhere we go - a couple of weeks ago, I was in Ghana, I stopped in Trinidad - as I said, in my speech, Mr Speaker, Sir, they had done away with the sugar cane industry, they could not reform, they did not have foresight. Here, with the help of the corporate sector, of the private stakeholders, it is a partnership, it cannot be otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir; it has to be a partnership between the Government and the sector. We have managed to prove it, it is ongoing. They said, on the other side of the House, that it is *en panne*, but the European Commission is disbursing huge funds. If you do not satisfy the conditions, they will not disburse. It is so simple, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are the first and only country and we are ahead of our reforms, Mr Speaker, Sir. This was the point on sugar sector which the hon. lady raised.

Now I will come back to the Food Crop Insurance Scheme of which she talked so much. Under the old scheme, which they introduced, up to now - my friend was laughing, he was making a joke that it is zero, in fact, there are two zeros - it is only 600. They introduced it some time in 2004; today we are in 2009, they had only 600 subscribers under this scheme. Mr Speaker, Sir, they had the scheme for only one crop for them to be insured. Planters had to pay a full insurance premium. They said that planters have got a problem for fuel as well as for costs of production which are increasing. Besides they cannot afford to do land preparation. Under the old scheme, the planters had to pay over and above all these additional costs. This is why it didn't work out and this is why we are coming with a new scheme whereby we are targeting 2000 planters. We are opening it to 27 crops not one single crop, because when cyclone comes it does not choose one crop. When cyclone comes, everything is flat, Mr Speaker, Sir; it does not choose one particular crop or another particular crop. We are covering 27 crops. Not only that we are covering three particular crops meaningfully per year, not one single. So, if they take a policy, it

covers three particular plantations in one single year and the premium support, as I said earlier, we are paying. It is a grant, it is given free; Rs3683, Mr Speaker, Sir, on one arpent is being paid from the Food Security Fund.

Under the Irrigation Authority, the lady made a mountain out of a mole hill, Mr Speaker, Sir. So many times we have answered here. If she has a problem, she has a complaint; this is *un état de droits*, Mr Speaker, Sir. She has to go the Police station, to the ICAC. If the guy has done something illegal, he should be taken to task! Is the lady not a citizen of this country, take him to task! It is an open country. I had answered to two or three Parliamentary Questions, Mr Speaker, Sir. I had said that the Irrigation Authority was acting erroneously, they were interpreting the law not in the way that it should have been. My friend was there. In fact, there was a Land Management Committee. They are picking on one person, it was not one single person. It is as if the Chairman is, himself, the Irrigation Authority. There was a committee; there was a Board which was working on this. There were several persons. If it was one person, we could have said maybe he did it maliciously; maybe he did in bad faith, but it was not a single person, it was a committee. So, it was a mistake. As soon as we realised that they were doing something wrong, we admitted it as they were doing something which they were not allowed to do. We disbanded that particular committee. We inquired and put things right. They gave papers to so many small planters and there was a distraction of land from bigger portions. As this was illegal, they had to come back to the Land Conversion Committee and whatever tax they have to pay, they will have to pay, Mr Speaker, Sir. What else can we do more?

Concerning the Irrigation Authority, Mr Speaker, Sir, doesn't the lady, who was Permanent Secretary for years at the Ministry of Agro-Industry, . She doesn't know that the budget for the salary of the Chairman of the Irrigation Authority does not come from cess money! That is basic.

(Interruptions)

Pas vrai! The hon. Member said that the Chairman is being paid from cess money. He is not being paid from cess money. She should go and check her record.

Mr Speaker: Perhaps the words are being put in the mouth, later on she can come with a personal explanation.

Mr Faugoo: The hon. Member can stand up on a point of personal explanation if she wishes to. This is what she said. She should go and check the record. She was talking of cess money, Mr Speaker, Sir. She mentioned about cess; that Rs60 m. are going out of cess to provide for the 20% which we are reducing for small planters in their contribution for cess. There are Rs1 billion which has been voted for three years. We are in the first year; we are taking Rs350 m. to develop the food crop sector. She should go and read the Budget Speech. In fact, I had a meeting with the Minister of Finance. I asked him if he is taking it, but he replied that he will give back because Rs1 billion have been earmarked for the Food Security Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir. Where does the money come from for the potato scheme? Rs15 m! Where does the money come from for the annual scheme? Rs5 m! Where does the money come for the insurance scheme which we have started? In one single week, 350 planters have already been registered Mr Speaker, Sir. Rs15 m. are going in a Fund to finance the particular scheme. It comes from the Food Security Fund, Mr Speaker, Sir. Within a year, we managed to have a plan worked out, which caters for three years. It is going to boost up local production.

I spoke about potatoes, onions; she spoke about AMB. We all know that we have to look into the functioning of the AMB. We have asked for a consultant to see how we can improve the functioning of the AMB. In fact, we have asked and received a report. We are going to improve upon what is being done. But let me tell the hon. lady that in the case of potatoes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot liberalise 100%. It is an essential commodity. We have started somewhere. We are heading towards liberalisation at 100%. We have already liberalised 50% of import of potatoes. AMB is there as an importer of last resort when there is a problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. We don't allow imports when the season for potatoes is on because we have to encourage local production. This is exactly what we are doing. We have to boost up local production.

As far as onion is concerned, it is the same again; the price is liberalised, we cannot intervene, it is a free market. This Government is for free market. We cannot intervene for each single product Mr Speaker, Sir. Market forces work for themselves. This is what we have done. The question of monopoly on potatoes and on onions does not arise. The hon. Member spoke about garlic, buying garlic for Rs20 and selling it for, I don't know, what price. I would ask a simple question, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are here for four years. Was the lady not at the Ministry because this is a policy which exists for so many years, Mr Speaker, Sir. The AMB imports garlic and sells to the wholesalers, who, at the end of the day, distribute to the customers. What is

new in there? The margin may be different, but the time is different, the years are different. This is climate change. What can we do about it? It is a free market again, Mr Speaker, Sir. Every time on single issues, they say that we should have done this, but they had the chance. They were there for five years. It was so easy for them to do it, to liberalise garlic in this country. Why didn't they do it, Mr Speaker, Sir? This is the first time, this is history in this country, voting Rs1 billion for the boosting up of local food products, Mr Speaker, Sir. Never had this been done in the past! They didn't have the idea to start with, Mr Speaker, Sir. They had the idea for Crop Insurance Scheme. It was a flop, total flop! When my friend, the Minister of Finance, says he is not a stupid, they don't believe.

I don't know how many are left on the other side of the House to intervene Mr Speaker, Sir. I will ask a simple question: will they come and tell us which figure is better in terms of growth, employment and FDI? Is it the one between 2000 and 2005 or 2005 up to now? Do they not believe in the same institutions today? Do they not believe in figures?

(Interruptions)

We know that they are not economists and they don't understand economists, but don't they understand basic arithmetic and mathematics. One plus one is two, so that the growth of 5.3 is better than 2.3 or 3.3, Mr Speaker, Sir? This is basic. They may come and debate on how we can do better than 5.3. They cannot come and do politics here. This is not *caisse camion*, this should be done in Rose-Hill but not here, Mr Speaker, Sir. You cannot fool the people today. They know the reality and we know what the feeling of the people is today. My friends, coming from a political meeting in Flacq today, came and told us that it is very good. Yesterday, there was one in Port-Louis. Anywhere in this country, they have endorsed this budget, the politics, the vision of the Prime Minister, the vision of this Government and there is no doubt about that, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the agro-industrial sector will have to stay and modernize. We want to turn planters, breeders and fishermen into professional entrepreneurs through empowerment rather than giving assistance. We no longer believe in the mentality of assistance. These were the old days. Our vision is to empower our people. When we say 'Putting People First', we do not say that overnight poor people in this country will become rich. We do not say that fishermen will get airplanes, Mr Speaker, Sir. We say we are going to empower people and this is exactly

what we are doing. This is exactly what we did for the pig breeders, the goat breeders, the cow breeders, the fishers and all the stakeholders in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In these difficult times of economic turmoil, the Government has adhered to its underlining principles of 'Putting People First'. Measures proposed in the Budget clearly demonstrate the consistency of this Government in its approach since 2005. If we want to combat poverty, we have to save jobs. There is no other way, Mr Speaker, Sir. I don't know how they are seeing it. Maybe they are going to make people lose their jobs and then expect these people to get out of poverty. This is not on, Mr Speaker, Sir. We want to empower people and protect them from the turmoil, the international scene which we are witnessing today. We are committed to eradicate poverty. We want our people to receive better education, better health and we want to improve infrastructure. We are maintaining and further consolidating the Welfare State. It was not easy, Mr Speaker, Sir, because here, people want us to double and triple the pension and to make poor people rich overnight, but then, there is a price to pay. We have to take it from somewhere. We could have taken it, for example, from the provision which has been voted for free transport. We stand by our principle. What we put in our manifesto for the election, in fact, is not only to win election, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Government is translating one by one today. I can ask anybody here. This is their case; they put things which they cannot do. We never put it. Can they tell me one single thing in our manifesto which we are not trying to achieve, Mr Speaker, Sir? We are trying to do every single thing that we had said.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all in the same boat. It is, therefore, essential that we all join hands together so as to enable us to master the rough waves and reach our destinations safely, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I would like to end by quoting Mr Barack Obama. He says –

“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we have been waiting for. We are the change that we seek”.

It is us today. We are going to bring change, and we are bringing changes, Mr Speaker, Sir. Thank you.

(5.35 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, l'exercice oral du ministre des finances sur le budget 2009 qui, cette fois-ci, est échelonné sur une période de six mois, traite principalement de la crise économique mondiale et sur les moyens de sortir de cette crise. Le ministre des finances nous propose un plan d'action sur une période de 18 mois, et comme il l'a dit dans son discours lui-même, M. le président, « *to ride out of the global economic crisis* ». Mon discours, ce soir, M. le président, sera accès à trois niveaux: le premier est la crise économique mondiale ; le second est la crise nationale, et le troisième, c'est l'incapacité de ce gouvernement d'implémenter sa vision.

Premièrement, en ce qui concerne la crise économique mondiale, M. le président, la grande question qu'il faut se poser c'est comment on en est arrivé là? Tout allait si bien! La croissance économique mondiale était la plus rapide dans l'histoire de l'humanité. Les experts prévoyaient que cette croissance allait se poursuivre pendant beaucoup d'années encore et ils s'étaient basés, naturellement, sur la progression démographique de la planète et aussi sur une épargne abondante. Il y a eu dans ce siècle ou quelques années de cela l'introduction de ce qu'on appelle, aujourd'hui, M. le président, le concept de développement durable par presque la totalité des pays de la planète. Dans tous les coins de la planète, dans des pays qu'on n'avait jamais pensé, en Chine, en Russie, on faisait les éloges du capitalisme, on construisait des *buildings*, comme on dit, et des *towers*, et voilà qu'en l'espace de quelques mois, voire, M. le président, quelques jours, on se retrouve face à une dépression planétaire. Qu'est-ce que ces experts économistes, financiers viennent nous raconter, M. le président? Que quelques familles américaines, qui n'ont pas pu rembourser un crédit sur leurs logements, sont la cause de ce bouleversement planétaire et qu'elles sont responsables de la première crise financière de la globalisation. On nous balance en pleine figure des termes comme *sub primes*, *hedge funds*, titrisation, *asset bad securities*, *colateralised debt obligations* pour nous embrouiller l'esprit, M. le président. Mais le vrai problème est que les salariés peinent depuis des années à avoir un salaire décent et faute de pouvoir, M. le président, avoir un salaire et des revenus décents, il y a une demande pour l'endettement; un endettement qui est naturellement gagé sur la valeur des biens qu'il a eu avec cette dette. Permettez-moi de vous faire un tableau. Quand je dis, le salariés peinent, M. le président - parce qu'on n'a pas les chiffres à Maurice - sur le plan mondial vous allez voir comment au fil des années le secteur financier a tout bouffé. Par exemple, alors qu'en 1960 les profits du secteur financier représentaient 14% des profits des entreprises

américaines, aujourd'hui ils représentent 39%. D'autres chiffres plus effarants, M. le président, 1% des personnes les plus riches de la population américaine cumulent à elles seules 16% du revenu national contre 7% en 1948. Voyez cette augmentation! 5% de cette population ont 38% de revenu et possèdent la moitié du patrimoine de ce pays qui a été créé entre 1990 à 2006. Naturellement, M. le président, cette infime partie des personnes qui sont riches influencent la politique et, à partir de là, les législations, qui sont votées, le sont en leur faveur. Ce n'est pas seulement aux États Unis. En France, M. le président, le pouvoir d'achat de l'indice boursier a progressé de 120% en 20 ans tandis que celui des salariés n'a augmenté que de 15%. La situation n'est guère différente à Maurice, M. le président. Il est temps que tous ceux qui ont gouverné ce pays ou ceux qui vont venir gouverner ce pays apprennent que cette situation n'a que trop duré, M. le président, et que des salaires décentes sont nécessaires afin de permettre à cette population de traverser cette crise dans le long terme. M. le président, il y en a marre des salaires de misère, de compensation dérisoire. Pendant ces quatre dernières années, l'actuel gouvernement a donné aux salariés des compensations de misère. Alors que certains dans ce pays touchent des millions de roupies, d'autres n'ont que des miettes. La perte du pouvoir d'achat, une des causes principales, découlait de cette crise économique et quand vous lisez le discours du budget de l'année dernière du ministre des finances, plusieurs paragraphes à la page 43 de ce discours sont consacrés à augmenter cette perte de pouvoir d'achat, M. le président. En réalité nous savons tous qu'aujourd'hui des milliers de ménagères peinent à arrondir leurs fins de mois. Plusieurs familles n'ont qu'un seul repas par jour et si nous ne faisons pas attention, on va se retrouver au début d'une crise sociale et éventuellement ceci débouchera sur une crise politique. Nous n'avons pas ce problème de *sub prime* mais nous avons le problème d'endettement et si on ne fait pas attention au problème d'endettement on ira vers un problème de surendettement. J'entrevois un approfondissement de la crise dans les mois à venir. Le ministre, lui-même, en a parlé. Il y a des secteurs qui sont vulnérables comme les secteurs manufacturiers, les secteurs du tourisme. La population va s'appauvrir et si elle s'appauvrit, elle ne pourra pas rembourser ses dettes. Ce sera à ce moment là un cycle infernal. On connaît la dette publique mais on ne connaît pas la dette privée. Sommes-nous à l'abri? Quelle est notre marge de manœuvre? Si vraiment nous bougeons sur cette situation de surendettement, est-ce que tout ne va pas s'écrouler, M. le président? J'ai parlé de la crise financière, de la responsabilité de ceux qui sont à la base de cette crise, c'est-à-dire, les banquiers, les

économistes, les financiers, mais très souvent vous allez voir, M. le président, qu'il y a d'autres personnes qui sont concernées - ceux qui doivent être des chiens de garde, par exemple, ceux qu'on appelle des notateurs dans le secteur financier. Je pense, M. le président, que là nous allons être choqués parce que ces notateurs sont ceux qui viennent donner des notes aux banques dans le monde, par exemple, Moody's & Fitch. Ils sont considérés comme des entités incorruptibles. Ils viennent visiter ces banques et, à partir de là, ils viennent dire aux épargnants et aux investisseurs si ces banques fonctionnent dans la totale transparence et ont une solidité financière sans faille. C'est là leur travail, M le président, et à partir de leurs observations ils vont décerner une note. Moody's vient de décerner une note à la Banque Commerciale de Maurice comme ils ont décerné une note à la Banque Lehman Brothers, M le président. Mais dans toute cette crise, M. le président, qu'avons-nous vu? Ces notateurs ont failli dans leur travail et savez vous pourquoi? C'est parce qu'ils sont des entreprises privées. Je vais partager avec vous des chiffres effarants, M le président. J'en ai parlé de Moody's, allons prendre Moody's, M. le président! Les profits de Moody's ont augmenté par quatre fois en cinq ans, M le président. Le revenu total de tous ces notateurs, il y en a trois dans le monde entier, ont doublé de 2002 à 2007. Leurs profits sont passés de 3 à 6 milliards de dollars en cinq ans, M le président. C'est une connivence générale à l'échelle mondiale entre ces banquiers à qui nous faisons confiance, ces notateurs qui sont des régulateurs dans le système et ces assureurs étaient tous dans le coup. C'est une conspiration planétaire. Maintenant, M. le président, venons en au plan local, c'est bon que nous soyons venus de l'avant avec le Additional Stimulus Package. Je suis pour parce que nous allons sauver des emplois mais la façon dont ce fond est géré me dérange. Avec la PNQ du *Leader* de l'opposition, il y a quelques jours de cela, le ministre des finances lui-même a concédé à un certain moment et je le cite: "*let me be very candid, I am not happy at all with what has happened*", et là on parle du cas de RS Denim. Déjà, M. le président, ceux, qui gèrent ce comité, ont failli dans leur tâche. Ils ont introduit dans l'esprit de notre population le doute et la méfiance. Or le maître mot de ce comité en ce qu'il s'agit du Stimulus Package aurait dû être transparence et responsabilité. Je n'ai qu'une demande, M. le président, et je vais la faire au nom de la transparence. En ce qu'il s'agit de l'*Additional Stimulus Package* des Etats Unis, il ont un *watchdog*, c'est-à-dire, le TARP Bill, une législation qui a été votée. Le *watchdog* a le droit et le devoir d'informer le parlement et la population des sommes déboursées à travers le *Stimulus Package*. Moi, je demanderai, M. le président, au gouvernement, de dissoudre ce Mechanism for

Transitional Support to Private Sector et, à partir de là, quand les membres auront démissionné, de nommer un comité parlementaire pour remplacer le MTSP qui se composera des honorables membres du gouvernement et de l'opposition, et pour épauler ce comité il y aurait des experts en la matière. A ce moment, le peuple aura la garantie que toutes les transactions vont se faire dans une transparence totale, et nous en aurons terminé, une fois pour toutes, avec ces soupçons de copinage et de passe-droits. L'autre aspect de cette crise, M. le président, c'est que nous avons l'impression que personne ne l'a vue venir. Je vous donne un exemple. A deux mois de cette crise, au sommet du G8 au Japon, les chefs d'Etat des pays formant partie du G8, au lieu de parler de l'éventuelle crise, parlent du réchauffement climatique. Le ministre des finances des Etats Unis, M. Paulson, ne voit rien venir lui aussi. Quant au ministre des finances mauricien, avant que l'on entre dans la crise, parle de *early harvest*, de *bumper crop*. Comment se fait-il, M. le président, que toutes ces personnes qui sont qualifiées, qui ont de l'expérience dans le domaine de la finance, ne voient pas une crise aussi énorme. Le vrai problème, je pense, se situe à d'autres niveaux, et c'est là, qu'il faut changer les choses, cette manière de venir dire que tout va bien, ce que j'appellerai moi en terme américain, *the positive attitude*. Aujourd'hui, on paye des gurus pour venir vous enseigner ce qu'est le *positive attitude*. M. le président, quand le cyclone bat son plein, c'est là qu'on vient vous dire qu'il y a péril en la demeure et, très souvent, c'est trop tard. C'est là où le ministre des Finances nous emmène dans des fonds abyssaux, dont on ne connaît même pas les profondeurs. C'est là où il vient nous dire qu'il n'y a pas de visibilité. Mais vous n'aurez pas de visibilité dans les fonds abyssaux, M. le président! Autre enseignement de cette crise - et je vais terminer là-dessus - elle nous démontre comment un petit groupe de personnes, sans produire de richesses - ces banques, ces assureurs - sans être contrôlées par personne, accaparent en toute légalité une part essentielle de la richesse de notre planète, et elles se font payer de formidables bonus, salaires et autres par les consommateurs et les épargnants, et, en retour, force l'Etat - ce que nous sommes en train de faire ici, l'Etat Mauricien - à trouver des sommes colossales en termes de milliards pour combler le vide qu'ils ont laissé dans leur caisse, M. le président. *We have to foot the Bill today* alors que ce même gouvernement - le gouvernement actuel - refuse, année après année, à payer une compensation décente aux travailleurs de ce pays et refuse d'allouer des sommes aux plus défavorisés de notre pays. Alors quel est ce système, M. le président, qui apporte tant aberrations? En regardant le *Appropriation Bill* qui est devant nous, ne sommes-nous pas en train de légaliser ce système? Ce

n'est peut-être pas pour toujours, mais au moins pendant dix-huit mois. Aujourd'hui même, je lisais une autre aberration dans un journal. Le secteur privé, pour qui nous sommes en train de légiférer afin de le sauver, vient nous dire qu'ils sont contre le fait qu'on légifère dans ce parlement le *corporate social responsibility*. C'est impensable, M. le président! 2% de leurs profits! Ils ne veulent plus partager cela aussi!

M. le président, l'actuel Premier ministre, au chapitre premier de son manifeste électoral avait ceci à dire: 'La démocratisation de l'économie n'est pas pour nous un slogan politique c'est la vision d'une île Maurice moderne.' Mais, le Premier ministre laisse cette crise l'éloigner de cette vision. Au contraire, il aurait dû profiter de cette crise et mettre en pratique cette démocratisation. Parlant d'argent et de l'argent de nos salariés, il y avait une question fort intéressante qu'un membre de l'opposition avait posée à l'honorable ministre des finances sur le *flexible line of credit* que le gouvernement propose de prendre auprès du Fonds Monétaire International M. le président. Je ne suis pas d'accord du tout avec la réponse du ministre, et je me réfère à une partie de sa réponse où il vient dire, et je cite –

"The view of the IMF and the international community is that if a country has good policies but it is hit by negative international shocks which it cannot influence, there is no need for it to change policies. Instead, it needs to be given the support to meet the external challenges'

A un autre moment, c'est le *Leader* de l'opposition qui vient lui poser une série de questions sur les conditions de ce *loan*.

Some days back, I was reading a very interesting book by Jeffrey Sachs, special advisor to the former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan. The book is entitled 'The End of Poverty'. Hence, it talks about economics and IMF. In a chapter called Clinical Economics, this is what he had to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the economists and the IMF –

"The rich world dominates the training of PhD economists - that is, like our Minister of Finance -. The students of rich world PhD programmes dominate the international institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, which have the lead in advising poor countries on how to break out of poverty. These economists are bright and motivated, but do the institutions where they work think correctly about the problems of the countries they operate?"

He says –

"The answer is no. Development economics need an overhaul in order to be much more like modern medicine."

Je suis très content que c'est un médecin aujourd'hui qui est à la place du ministre des finances, parce que ce que je vais dire lui fera beaucoup de plaisir.

"Development economics need an overhaul in order to be much more like modern medicine, a profession of rigour, insight and practicality. In some ways, today's development economics is like 18th century medicine, when doctors use leeches to drain blood from their patients, often killing them in the process. For the past 50 years, when poor countries have pleaded with the rich world for help, they have been sent to the world's money doctor, that is, the IMF. The main IMF prescription has been budgetary belt tightening for patients much too poor to own a belt. IMF led austerity has too often led to riots and, where IMF programmes have collapsed in the midst of social chaos and economic distress, the IMF has blamed the weakness of the Government of the day."

Que cela leur serve de leçon de l'autre côté de la Chambre, M. le président! Permettez-moi, maintenant, de venir sur d'autres volets de mon intervention, c'est-à-dire, l'aspect environnemental qui englobe aujourd'hui un nouveau concept, notamment le concept de Maurice Ile Durable. Mais, avant d'arriver sur ce concept, permettez-moi, encore une fois, M. le président, de partager certaines choses avec vous. La crise financière, malheureusement, n'est pas la seule crise qui nous affecte. Elle est d'une complexité, mais n'est pas aussi complexe que celle liée au changement climatique qui nous guette depuis quelque temps, crise dont l'enjeu, M. le président, je pense, est beaucoup plus grave que la crise financière. Qui provoque la crise financière actuellement? Une dépression! Et, liées à cette dépression ce sont des pertes d'emploi. Mais, M. le président, une éventuelle dégradation de la situation climatique mondiale peut anéantir l'humanité. Mesurons l'ampleur du problème. Je vais vous donner quelques chiffres, M. le président, qui vont vous choquer ou vous effrayer. Le coût de l'impact écologique des émissions de gaz à effet de serre, ce qu'on appelle les gaz toxiques, a été évalué actuellement à trois trillions de dollars, c'est à dire, le même montant des pertes actuelles liées à la crise financière. Un très récent rapport de la Commission Européenne nous informe que les sommes

dépensées par les pays du monde liés à la déforestation sont de l'ordre de cinq trillions de dollars. Imaginez si ce changement climatique s'accélère!

Je retourne sur cet aspect de Maurice Ile durable. Je constate, M. le président, que l'actuel gouvernement ne cerne vraiment pas ce concept. Je vais prendre à partir de la réponse que le vice Premier ministre a donnée ce matin lors de la PNQ. Si on analyse les chiffres qu'il a avancés concernant les demandes maximales de production d'électricité, nous arrivons à la conclusion que tout ce qui a été fait au cours de ces derniers mois dans le contexte de ce concept de 'Maurice Ile Durable', lié à l'énergie, n'a aucun sens. Quand je regarde aujourd'hui la demande maximale, c'est-à-dire, ce qu'on appelle le *peak demand* aux heures de pointe, il n'y a pas eu de baisse. Au contraire, il y a eu une augmentation de l'ordre de 13 MW. Nous avons demandé des chiffres dans cette Chambre que nous n'avons pas eus jusqu'à maintenant. Le gouvernement nous a emmerdés avec ce *summer time* - excusez le mot, M. le président - nous a ennuyés avec le *summer time*.

Dr. Kasenally: Mr Speaker, Sir, the word '*emmerder*' is unparliamentary.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has corrected himself.

Mr Lesjongard: Il nous a embêté, M. le président - je présente mes excuses à la Chambre. Le gouvernement nous a fatigués pendant des mois avec l'introduction du *summer time*, où nos enfants ont eu à se réveiller des fois à cinq heures du matin pour aller à l'école, pour économiser de l'énergie, pour baisser la demande aux heures de pointe. Malheureusement, tel n'est pas le cas, et nous l'avons fait savoir pendant les débats au gouvernement. Heureusement que c'est un projet pilote, et j'espère que le *summer time* est derrière nous et qu'on ne verra plus encore ce *summer time*, parce que cela ne sert à rien.

L'emphase est mise aujourd'hui par ce gouvernement sur les énergies renouvelables et, là aussi, ce matin, j'ai été étonné de voir que cette centrale qui est proposée dans l'actuel budget, c'est-à-dire, la centrale de 100 MW, is going to be an open technology ranging from coal again. Alors, M. le président, soit nous croyons dans la production de l'énergie renouvelable, soit nous avons la volonté de vraiment réduire la production de gaz à effet de serre sur l'île ou non! We cannot, at the same time, promote clean energy, promote renewable energy and looking for power plants that are going to be fuelled by coal. C'est aberrant! Other figures have been given to this House today morning, Mr Speaker, Sir. Des chiffres erronés, je dirais!

Mr Speaker: I am sorry, but the hon. Member cannot do that. He cannot say that the Minister has misled the House!

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Speaker, Sir, I withdraw the word. Je dirais plutôt des chiffres qui ne sont pas corrects, and I will prove that. In his reply today morning, the Deputy Prime Minister, with regard to forthcoming projects, stated that the only project that will be ready next year will be a 30 MW project, which is in the pipeline, and which will be carried out by the Central Electricity Board at Fort Victoria. Now, when he replies to his question....

Mr Speaker: May I just remind the hon. Member that he has got 45 minutes for his speech, and he started at 17.36!

Mr Lesjongard: You just ring the bell, and when it's time I'll stop.

Mr Speaker: No, I am just reminding the hon. Member!

Mr Lesjongard: What I want to prove, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that when he gave the figures this morning, he stated that the capacity needed to meet that demand in 2009-2010 is 30 MW, that is, just the capacity of the machine that we are going to install and that next year we are going to require a capacity of 110 MW. When we refer to the Budget, the title itself says 'Preparing for Recovery'. We are expecting recovery at the end of this year or next year. When we are going to recover from that crisis, are we going to require lesser energy? This is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the time where we are going to need the necessary power.

Like you say, I don't have much time, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will end up by saying that, dans le dernier discours du budget, le ministre des finances avait mis tellement d'emphase sur le pouvoir d'achat mais que constatons-nous? Le fossé entre les riches et les pauvres se creuse d'avantage. Nous avons une frange de notre population qui devient de plus en plus pauvre de par les mesures appliquées par le ministre des finances. Laissez-moi vous donner un exemple; le NRPT. Le NRPT a récolté R 119 millions! Only Rs18 m. come from the corporate sector, Rs101 m. come from the individuals of this country. Quelle est cette taxe? Cette taxe-là a été une taxe à être imposée sur les plus riches, et le corporate sector ne paye que R18 millions en comparaison avec les R101 millions. Que constatons-nous dans ces régions pauvres, M. le président? Les fléaux comme la drogue et la prostitution rongent ces régions. Le ministre des finances, lui-même, lors d'une émission radiophonique, avait fait part de la misère qui règne dans ces régions.

Le gouvernement est conscient de ce problème mais ne maîtrise pas la situation, parce qu'ils ont une approche clientéliste envers cette situation de pauvreté. Pourquoi je dis clientéliste? Depuis qu'ils sont au pouvoir l'argent octroyé à la population for the casting of slabs fait l'objet d'une publicité effrénée, c'est-à-dire, qu'il faut que cela soit donné à certaines personnes, il faut que la télévision soit là, il faut qu'on donne une grande publicité à cet argent. C'est pourquoi je dis que l'approche, M. le président, est clientéliste. Que constatons-nous ailleurs? Dans le secteur du logement, rien n'a été fait mis à part ces quelques maisons qui ont été construites à Bambous. Rien ailleurs - le ministre du logement me regarde - mais j'espère qu'il va le faire. Jusqu'à maintenant rien n'a été fait dans le secteur du logement.

Pour ce qui est du secteur de la pêche, c'est vrai qu'il y en a, mais ce n'est pas assez. Quand je constate - je vais terminer mon discours – que le parti travailliste a milité pour les travailleurs dans les années 1935-1940! Ce parti avait en son sein de grands tribuns comme Rozemont, Emmanuel Anquetil, Seeneevassen. Aujourd'hui la politique actuelle de ce gouvernement, à travers le ministre des finances, fait que les travailleurs de ce pays sont en train de tourner le dos à ce gouvernement. Vous avez encore quelque temps avant la fin de votre mandat. Vous avez encore le temps de faire de votre slogan 'Putting People First' une réalité et non pas une utopie. Vous ne pouvez pas vous cantonner dans un rôle de spectateur, M. le président. Aujourd'hui, c'est vrai que nous passons par une crise mondiale. A cause de cette crise, on est en train de prendre l'argent des plus pauvres de notre pays afin de le donner aux riches au nom de la préservation de l'emploi, l'argent de notre dur labeur. Vous êtes en train d'hypothéquer l'avenir de nos enfants, le bien qui nous est le plus cher. Nous n'avons pas de choix, nous n'avons jamais eu le choix, M. le président.

Like one of the previous orators on the other side of the House who quoted from Martin Luther King, let me also quote him from his famous speech "I have a dream". I quote –

“When the architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious, today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of colour are concerned. Instead of

honouring this obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, which has come back marked “insufficient funds”. But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So, we have come to cash this check - a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the poor of this country cannot and will not accept a bad check marked “insufficient funds”, especially when it is painfully clear that the funds are there. We should not wait for the rich to come to our rescue; we should make our stand in the face of official arrogance and neglect.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.20 p.m)

The Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations & Employment (Mr J. F. Chaumière):

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me at the very outset congratulate the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment, my colleague, Dr. hon. Rama Sithanen, for coming up with such a Budget at a time when Mauritius is caught in the midst of an economic storm which some people in this House seem to forget is not of our making.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the orator, who just preceded me, has made an analysis of the situation regarding the world economy, the international, financial and economic crisis, but on the local level, I fear that nothing has been proposed on how we should tackle this international, financial and economic crisis in order to be able to go through this worst economic downturn. Apart from the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it was said that we, parliamentarians, should replace the committee, which is responsible to implement the Additional Stimulus Package I think that this mechanism for transitional support must be run by people who are professionals. We, Members of Parliament, don't have the skills - perhaps certain skills, of course, but not this one - to oversee the implementation of such measures. Let me add Mr Speaker, Sir. The Additional Stimulus Package is not only to support the enterprises, the vulnerable sectors of our economy,

but it also deals with public infrastructure. For example, it deals with infrastructure in health, education, environment and sports.

Mr Speaker, Sir, despite the seriousness of the situation, the fact that the world is going through one of the worst economic downturns and, in spite of our own vulnerability as a small island economy depending highly on the vagaries of external markets, the hon. Minister of Finance has been able to reconcile the economic exigencies to our social objectives. People do not realise that, in spite of all these difficulties, Mauritius is still maintaining the Welfare State, Mr Speaker, Sir. In certain countries, for the time being, the Welfare State is something of the past. Here, in tiny Mauritius, we are able to maintain *l'Etat providence*, as promoted by the Father of the nation. The Welfare State has not only come up unscratched in this Budget, but has rather been further consolidated and strengthened. This is, indeed, a remarkable feat, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a real *tour de force* achieved by the Minister of Finance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have listened with much interest to the interventions of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and of other Members in the Opposition, and I can say that I am very much disappointed with their exposé. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was expecting, for example, the Leader of the Opposition, who has occupied in the past the position of Minister of Finance, to come up with, let's say, concrete proposals or serious alternative measures, or, at least, comprehensive and complementary suggestions, which he thinks would have helped the nation, the country to mitigate the adverse consequences of the global economic recession on our economy, and to help prepare Mauritius for a quick bounce back on the recovery of the world economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the main contentions - amongst a few others - of the hon. Leader of the Opposition was about the NPC - the National Pay Council. Some hon. Members have talked of the NPC, especially hon. Gunness. The hon. Minister of Environment and National Development Unit has talked about the fact that, even when the tripartite was still in force here, at times, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was then Minister of Finance, refused to chair it. The NPC, itself, is a tripartite forum, which is composed of Government, trade unions and the private sector. It is an independent body, Mr Speaker, Sir. If the trade unions have decided not to sit on the NPC and not to play the role, which is theirs that is their choice, but the NPC had to sit, the NPC had to come with a figure for compensation. Now, the Opposition is saying that

Government ought to have granted more than 5.1% compensation. Let us be serious! At a time when most countries, including countries like Singapore, USA, France and UK, just to name a few, are resorting to systematic pay cuts across the board, here, in Mauritius, as a caring and responsible Government, we have ensured the payment of salary compensation to the needy, to the most vulnerable persons in our society. The Leader of the Opposition says that 5.1% is not enough particularly with an inflation rate of 7%. Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been said here - and history will recall, as rightly pointed out by my colleague, the Minister of Finance, - that, in 1982, the hon. Member, then Minister of Finance, granted only 8% on an inflation rate which was 13.4%. To add insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir, prior to the general election in 1982, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who was then Minister of Finance - he was a trade union negotiator - promised not less than 13% compensation. So the question I am asking is: was 8% enough in 1982? Let us be serious, Mr Speaker, Sir. The situation today calls for serious actions and less rhetoric or, at least, constructive criticisms on the part of our colleagues from the Opposition, *mais surtout pas de la démagogie*.

It is a basic economic truth, Mr Speaker, Sir, a basic reality that needs and wants are unlimited but resources are not! Since we took office in 2005, we embarked on a series of reforms in nearly all sectors of the economy with a view to come up with a new economic model for our country and, above all, to address the serious and catastrophic economic situation we had inherited. Even before the world economies became aware of the gathering storms, we had taken a series of measures. Had we not taken these bold and enabling measures in time, the country would not have been resilient to the present crisis, and its negative impact would have been felt much earlier. We are better prepared, Mr Speaker, Sir, to weather these storms and this, under the sure leadership of our Prime Minister and the ability of the Minister of Finance. Needless to remind the House of those numerous countries that have gone almost bankrupt, one example, which is not far from us, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that of the Seychelles and of other countries where job losses are being registered by millions simply because measures were not taken on time. Don't forget, for example, that, in China, 26 million jobs have been lost and, in India, 10 million jobs. This Budget rightly provides for spending and investing in vital sectors that also symbolise our Welfare State, like I said, namely, education, health is still free in Mauritius, and social security.

Furthermore, this Budget provides for a massive investment in public infrastructure, without forgetting to give the necessary *encadrement* to sectors like fisheries, housing and construction. We should not forget, for example, Mr Speaker, Sir, that many questions have been asked on dwellings, for example, the NHDC flats, Camp Levieux, and elsewhere. We cannot forget, when these flats were constructed, the numerous problems arising from defects when they were built. We, as a responsible Government, have provided funds to rehabilitate these NHDC houses and, now, some people would come and say that this is a private sector geared budget! Perhaps those people have not been able to see those measures and the funding which has been provided for poverty alleviation, Mr Speaker, Sir. As a caring Government, in order to protect the population, even during these difficult times, this Budget also ensures that subsidies, with regard to such basic commodities like flour among others, are maintained. Mr Speaker, Sir, in spite of the difficulties, we have not asked people to eat *patate* and *manioc* like in 1982, for example.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the central objective of this Budget is the preservation of jobs and the protection of workers. How can we preserve jobs if we do not preserve enterprises? It is an agreed fact that the best way to protect our people is to provide them with jobs. Government is determined to create as many jobs as possible. Contrary to what is happening worldwide, be it in the USA, be it in Europe, in emerging economies like China and India, we, in Mauritius, are not only protecting jobs, but also creating new ones. For the year 2008 alone, we have been able to create some 19,400 jobs, Mr Speaker, Sir; much more than what the previous Government created during five years. We have done it in one year, Mr Speaker, Sir. The unemployment rate has continuously been going down since we assumed office. It has gone down from 9.1% in 2006 to 7.2% in 2008. In spite of the difficult economic situation, the unemployment rate has gone down by 1.3% in 2008 though there are many enterprises in difficulty. There are also many others, which are still faring well and have orders coming from abroad.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in his intervention on the Budget, hon. Bodha inferred that workers are being laid off, because we have adopted the two legislations. That is not true, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Leader of the Opposition too said so. That is not true at all. This is not the first time that we are witnessing job losses in this country. Let us have a look at the figures. In 2001, there were 8,788 job losses; in 2002, there were 7,957 job losses; in 2003, there were 14,663 job losses; in 2004: 16,100 and, in 2005, 10,085. Mr Speaker, Sir, this brings us a total of more than 57,500

workers who were laid off in the EPZ sector alone - my friend, hon. Soodhun, knows that very well - during the years from 2001-2005. The new labour laws came into effect on 02 February this year, and we are talking of more than 57,500 job losses in the EPZ sector alone at the time of the previous law; the Labour Act and the IRA. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell you something. We are talking about the law. Who is this investor, whose business is faring well, who has got orders, whose business is thriving, but still would want to lay off his workers? This is illogical to say so because our country is not immune. We should not forget that our traditional markets are out there abroad in places where they are also bearing the effect of a major crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially, regarding two sectors which are: one, the tourism sector and, second, the manufacturing sector, the EPZ. Of course, this has an impact on our economy as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, contrary to those years where no immediate protection was available for laid-off workers, today, workers under a similar situation are better protected under the new labour law, particularly the Employment Rights Act. We have, for example, the Workfare Programme, under the Employment Rights Act, which has the merit of ensuring a means of immediate subsistence, a maximum of Rs9,435 and a minimum of Rs3,000 for a maximum period of 12 months to all laid-off workers. Unlike the situation prevailing under the previous law, the Labour Act, where many workers did not receive any compensation on the closure of enterprises, the Workfare Programme guarantees a transition of employment benefits. This programme, in fact, maintains a contact between the laid-off worker and our Ministry until he is placed in a job or he is retrained, reskilled through the IVTB, or is assisted through the SEHDA to set up a small business of his own. The Workfare Programme also ensures payment of the laid-off worker's contribution to the NPF on his behalf for a maximum of 12 months. This is, indeed, Mr Speaker, Sir, a revolutionary scheme, which has also been highlighted by the ILO.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget also provides for a Work cum Training scheme to enable companies in manufacturing and tourism, facing a reduction in their turnover, to send their employees on training instead of laying them off. This scheme, which is also known as a Mix of Work and Training Scheme, was elaborated in the context of the implementation of measures contained in the Additional Stimulus Package which has, as one of its main objectives, employment protection. Rs300 m. have been provided with a view to save some 6,000 employees from retrenchment while, at the same time, upgrading their skills and maintaining their standard of living. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, these enterprises, which are concerned, will

have the possibility of providing, in lieu of work, one day or at most two days training to these workers, but the workers will continue to be paid their salary and other standing benefits by the employer for the full week. The employer will be refunded by the National Empowerment Foundation the equivalent of the basic salary paid to the workers for the days on which they went on training.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me remind the House that provisions exist under section 24(2) of the Employment Rights Act for an employer to seek approval of the Permanent Secretary of my Ministry to work temporarily for a shorter time than that specified in an agreement at a reduced remuneration. In fact, this provision existed also in the Labour Act, and this is meant to protect employment in a situation of crisis. This work and credit training measure will be available to any enterprise in difficulty, like I said, in the manufacturing sector, in the tourism sector, for a period of up to three months to help it maintain operations during the current economic crisis.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this measure is very positive for both workers and employers. Employers will have the possibility of retraining their skilled staff at all levels while significantly cutting their wage bill. Workers, who would otherwise have been made redundant during the crisis period, would have the possibility of benefiting from training without loss of pay and other benefits, and there will not be any disruption in their continuity of service.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the support being provided to the vulnerable sectors, particularly the sports oriented sectors, the domestic oriented industries and tourism enterprises have to enter into a social contract under which certain conditions will have to be complied with. These conditions relate, amongst others, to cut in operating costs; cut, for example, in the managing pay, in their benefits. They have to come with a commitment to preserve employment either within the firm or by redeployment, and they also have to agree that there will be no dividend payments until all preference shares held by Government are redeemed. As I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, employers have to enter into a social contract to ensure that employment protection should be given highest priority and the laying off of workers should be a decision of last resort. Mr Speaker, Sir, decent work, as defined and promoted by ILO, has all its relevance today and, more particularly, at this time of international crisis that the world is facing. As you are aware, the effects are being felt across, as I said, different sectors of the economy, namely the tourism and manufacturing sectors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the present financial crisis and the serious slowdown in the economic activities bring new challenges that we must fully take into consideration. We have to ensure that we develop policy responses to this global economic turmoil. It also means placing decent work at the centre of these policies. As a caring and responsible Government, this is, in fact, what we have been doing and will continue to do. This is exactly what this Budget intends to do by placing the vulnerable and the poor at the heart of development.

Like many other countries, Mauritius, too, has come up with a stimulus package, in order to mitigate the impact of this international economic crisis. This stimulus package, along with some of the measures provided in the new labour laws, in particular, the Workfare Programme, goes in the same direction as what has also been recommended by the ILO, in order to confront the crisis. In fact, the ILO has recommended to all its constituents a decent work approach to this crisis. Our Government, like the ILO, believes that the decent work agenda is an appropriate policy framework to confront the crisis as it is central to eradicating poverty, improving the lives of women and men, and thus enabling people to live in peace and dignity.

M. le président, je suis particulièrement touché par le fait que le ministre des finances a eu le souci de porter une attention spéciale aux '*ti-dimounes*', aux personnes les plus vulnérables de notre société. J'en veux pour preuve, M. le président, toutes ces mesures - mon ami, le ministre de l'agriculture a parlé - pour l'agro-industrie à l'intention des petits planteurs, des pêcheurs et des éleveurs de porcs.

M. le président, n'oublions pas que c'est ce gouvernement, lorsqu'il s'agit des éleveurs de porcs, qui a fait beaucoup plus que ne l'a fait l'ancien gouvernement. Je me rappelle, M. le président, toutes les pérégrinations, les difficultés que les éleveurs de porcs avaient rencontrées à partir de l'an 2000 ; ils étaient devenus comme des *nomads* - tantôt, on voulait les mettre dans le nord, tantôt dans le sud, tantôt dans l'est ou ailleurs. En fait, ils n'étaient nulle part. Si, aujourd'hui, M. le président, avec ce qui s'est passé pour la fièvre porcine, et ce qu'a fait ce gouvernement à partir d'octobre 2007, où on a dépensé R 280 millions pour restructurer ce secteur de l'économie, pour le remettre à flot et pour faire en sorte qu'il se professionnalise davantage, c'est parce que nous considérons que ce sont aussi des opérateurs économiques. Il en est de même pour les pêcheurs.

Aujourd'hui, M. le président, les gens ne sont pas dupes, et ils reconnaissent qui sont ceux qui sont de leur côté, ceux qui *pay lip service*, et qui sont ceux qui véritablement travaillent pour eux. C'est ce gouvernement-ci, avec l'honorable Dr. Ramgoolam comme Premier ministre et avec le ministre des finances, le Dr. Sithanen.

En ce qui concerne cette panoplie de mesures pour l'éradication de la pauvreté, on a parlé de Camp Lumière à Grand Baie. J'ai parlé de la réhabilitation des appartements de la NHDC. De l'autre côté, il n'y avait que du *lip service*. Ceux qui sont venus avec des questions auraient dû se les poser il y a quelques années de cela. Mais nous, nous sommes venus avec des solutions.

M. le président, quelque chose qui me tient aussi à cœur c'est lorsque ce gouvernement reconnaît, donne un statut à nos artistes, un statut qui s'accompagne de mesures financières. Cela n'a jamais été fait auparavant. C'est ce gouvernement qui l'a fait. M. le président, pendant la renaissance, à l'époque, par exemple, des Médicis, des gouvernements Florentins et des gouvernements pratiquant le Mécène, des gouvernements aidaient les artistes, et à ce moment-là les artistes pouvaient éclore. M. le président, aujourd'hui, notre gouvernement apporte un intérêt particulier au monde artistique. Aussi un jour, à l'île Maurice - parce que c'est un *business* aussi - on pourra parler de l'implantation du *show business*.

M. le président, dans un document du Concile du Vatican II dans 'Le Monde', je cite –

«Dans la vie économique-sociale, il faut honorer et promouvoir la dignité de la personne humaine, de vocation intégrale et le bien de toute la société. C'est l'homme, en effet, qui est l'auteur, le centre et le but de toute vie économique-sociale. »

Voilà pourquoi je félicite mon collègue, le ministre des finances, pour avoir mis l'homme au centre de son budget, M. le président.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should agree with the fact that, as a responsible and caring Government, we have been proactive to the effects of the global crisis. We have been at the forefront to take courageous and bold measures to contain the effects of the crisis. This Budget crowns our efforts and provides the framework and mechanism of implementation of the measures. We are confident that these measures will help our economy to bounce back.

It is only with this new mindset and new attitude that we can effectively deal in such a situation of crisis. We have always been able to overcome many challenges in the history of our country. There is no reason why we cannot. Yes, we can, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is not for nothing that Mauritius is quoted as a reference abroad for its achievements and capacity to navigate and to steer clear of trouble waters.

It is also not surprising at all why big investors like Tianli, amongst many others, are interested to invest in Mauritius. This shows the respect our small island enjoys among top foreign investors. It is due to the sound and effective economic and social policies of this Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, nobody knows when the effects of the economic and financial crisis will fade away. There is no script for that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in times of hardship, crisis and uncertainty which we are going through, we should put our differences behind us and bring our efforts together, pool our resources, rack our minds for solutions, put up a solid front and act as true patriots.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are determined to do our best to prop up the economy, to come to the help of jobseekers, heads of households, to the rank and file of our citizens who toil for our country. There cannot be security for some if there is no hope for many. We are all in this together.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.00 p.m.)

Mr Y. Varma (First Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is always an honour and privilege to intervene on such an important Bill, which is the Appropriation Bill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this practice has been going on since the reorganisation of the French finances, on the establishment of the French monarchy in 1850, and the practice has been going on in the British Parliament since the 1850s, after Gladstone.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is being presented at a time when the world is facing a serious economic turmoil and millions of people are losing their jobs. I believe that no one in this august Assembly lived the economic crisis of the 1930s, and posterity will assess how we

handled the situation at this critical juncture of the world history. Mr Speaker, Sir, posterity will be proud of us, proud of this Government. They will recall that there lived, at this point in time, courageous men, men of honour who acted responsibly and took the right decisions at the right time. The ethos of this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, is, firstly, to save jobs, to protect people and to prepare for recovery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we should congratulate the hon. Prime Minister, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having acted responsibly at this juncture. There should be, at this point in time, a paradigm shift in the mindset of the whole nation.

We should concentrate on the essentials. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget was presented about a week ago and, since then, I have had the opportunity to meet people in my Constituency and also outside my Constituency. Every nook and corner of the island is saying that this is a responsible Budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, we need to save jobs and, with the measures which are being taken in this Budget, we are precisely doing that. Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole debate about salary increase would be a futile one if jobs did not exist. By saving jobs, we are protecting people. People are being able to earn a living; they are being able to feed their families.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the history of this country is linked to the history of the Mauritius Labour Party. The Mauritius Labour Party established pension for the elderly. This very Labour Party gave free health care, free education and, now, this very Government has provided free transport for students and the elderly. Every village, every town has got, *inter alia*, a school, a dispensary, good roads, clean water supply, electricity, telephone, social centres and sports facilities. Now, with this Budget we are saving jobs. What more can a Government do? We don't have resources, Mr Speaker, Sir. The only resource that we have is the manpower. We have been able to establish all that. We have, over the years, consolidated the Welfare State. At such a juncture, the Opposition and the Trade Unions should have acted as patriots. They should have acted responsibly, but it is unfortunate that they have resorted to political demagoguery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have read many of the speeches made by hon. Members of this House and, yesterday, hon. Dulloo intervened. I would not be very long on what he said, but I need to set the records straight.

He said, I quote -

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we look at the inflation that was running and had to be controlled, then we should invite also my hon. friends to go and read the Budget Speech of 1982 of the Minister of Finance, hon. Paul Bérenger. The various measures that had to be taken to put discipline and order in this country were very painful.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the pains to go and read his intervention in 1983, when he was a backbencher of the Government. The present hon. Leader of the Opposition was the then Leader of the Opposition. The hon. Member had the following to say, in reply to hon. P. Bérenger, at that time –

“After all, Sir, this country must be administered, must be governed; it has to be governed within a development strategy, and we know it started in 1979.”

He continued –

“The same structural adjustment programme continued after 1979. He continued it last year”.

He was talking about the Leader of the Opposition, when the latter was Minister of Finance. He goes on to say -

“There was continuity in 1982, when he continued from what Sir Veerasamy Ringadoo started.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also took the pains to read the intervention of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He said that –

“The projects contained in the present Budget should be taken with a huge pinch of salt, *avec une énorme pincée de sel. Il y a unanimité, et tout le monde est d'accord qu'il y a eu une lenteur inacceptable.*”

This was also repeated by hon. Mrs Grenade when she spoke, and she said -

“Le budget est un non événement. Quant aux projets, on sait qu'un bon nombre demeura au stade de bonnes intentions, alors que d'autres sont quasiment irréalisables”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I took the pains to read the five Budgets presented by the MSM/MMM Government. There are a number of measures that were announced in these Budgets, which were not implemented. I cite a few of them. The Budget of 2001-2002 - the present Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance, and he said -

“As promised, in our electoral programme, we will enact a Fiscal Responsibility Bill.”

Five years of the MSM/MMM Government!

“Government is giving high priority to the identification of the most appropriate mode of public transport on the Curepipe-Port Louis corridor.”

Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the same Opposition has been criticising us for the past years about the National Pay Council that we have done away with tripartite meetings. Many Members on this side of the House have made reference to what happened in the factories when the SSU was called to get the workers out. They announced that monthly tripartite meetings will become a regular feature of the consultative process that the Government intends to put in place. Indeed, the same Government and the same Minister of Finance refused to chair the tripartite meetings! I have heard, my good friend, the hon. Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE speaking of the University of Technology at Côte d’Or, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the 2001-2002 Budget, they announced that Rs15 m. was voted for starting the construction of the University of Technology at Ebène on Illovo land.

Now they are making a lot of fuss about private television, reproaching Government, saying that the MBC has got a monopoly. What did they say, Mr Speaker, Sir, when they were in power?

"Government will honour its promise to liberalise TV broadcasting services. We will put an end to the monopoly of the MBC".

Five years of the MSM/MMM, nothing was done!

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the hon. Third Member for Montagne Blanche & GRSE was intervening, he spoke about Kewal Nagar, and that the hon. Prime Minister who was then Leader of the Opposition was invited for the opening of the Kewal Nagar. I think it was a recreational park.

In the 2001-2002 Budget, they mentioned "Our objective is to make Plaisance a world class airport". They did not even mention Sir Seewoosagur International Airport, Mr Speaker, Sir! Did they not know that the name of Plaisance Airport had been changed years back to Sir Seewoosagur International Airport? They even removed the name of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam International Airport at the entrance of the airport when they came to power. They even did that, Mr Speaker, Sir! They announced that they were going to transform the village of Grand' Baie into a resort of highest standard, construct new Police Head Quarters and construct a modern Police Training Centre at La Vigie. They were going to set up a modern complex to house the Supreme Court at the Cathedral Square at the cost of Rs450 m. What was done, Mr Speaker, Sir? Nothing! The construction of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, which is being done now by this Government, was announced year after year. Year after year, they announced the construction of Dr. Jeetoo Hospital, but nothing was done.

(Interruptions)

Don't blame Ashock Jugnauth now!

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Light Rail Transit system, again, was announced year in year out, Budget after Budget, but nothing was done. If I have to go on and on with the number of projects that they announced and did not honour, we can speak the whole of the night, but there are a few things that need to be mentioned. When hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Minister of Finance, he made mention in the 2004-2005 Budget of an Antidumping, Countervailing and Safeguard Measures Bill, and now this is being done by this Government.

As regards traffic congestion, they announced the construction of the Malinga-Crève Coeur road which, according to them, was due to start in April 2005. Again, the number of times they have reproached this Government, but nothing was done!

Mr Speaker, Sir, as shown, the Opposition is not credible; it is not an alternative Government; the Leader of the Opposition is not an alternative Prime Minister. They are dream merchants, they can sell dreams, but they cannot govern a country. The measures which have been announced in this Budget are worth mentioning.

The Government has taken the commitment to construct a new University Campus in Ebène at the cost of Rs600 m. This is a laudable initiative. The Government needs to be

congratulated for that, and it is unfortunate that none of the hon. Members, on the other side of the House, who intervened, congratulated the Government on that. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken a commitment that every eligible student should get a place in university to pursue further studies. As I mentioned earlier on, the history of the Labour Party is linked to empowerment, to education, to give maximum facilities to students to be able to pursue their studies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a number of infrastructural projects are being undertaken by this Government. They are the Terre Rouge-Verdun link road, the Phoenix-Beau Songes link road, the Trianon-Phoenix third lane, the Triolet bypass, the Goodlands bypass, the airport project, the Pamplemousses to Grand' Baie dual carriageway. These are projects that will help to tackle the problem of congestion, Mr Speaker, Sir. At this critical juncture, when we are preparing for recovery, we should have the necessary infrastructure so that, once the global crisis is over; we are ready to reap the fruits of the recovery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Environment, in his intervention, made mention of a number of initiatives that he has taken in his Ministry, and I would like to congratulate him for that. The issue of environment is something which is very dear to me. Mr Speaker, Sir, we have tackled the problem of illegal affixing of posters. Through necessary regulations, we have dealt with the problem of people smoking and drinking in public places.

What we need to tackle now is smoke emission from motor vehicles. Time and again, I have raised this matter in this august Assembly, and I am glad to learn that the hon. Minister has brought the necessary amendments to the regulations. The hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure is doing a wonderful job by realising all the infrastructural projects, but a little extra mile he has to travel as far as smoke detectors are concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir. He is well aware as I have spoken to him informally about that a number of times.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the entrance of Port Louis needs to be revamped. When we come to Port Louis, there are a number of derelict buildings. There should be some way in which Government can intervene so that these buildings are either restored or removed.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous Government took a commitment to relocate the inhabitants of Mare Chicose, and it is for us an honour and a privilege that we took the decision and found land to relocate these people. The landfill which exists in Mare Chicose does not fit in the concept of Maurice Ile Durable; it does not fit in the context of a modern country.

This morning, the hon. Leader of the Opposition put a question about the Gamma-Coventa Project and, I firmly believe, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this is the way forward. I cannot understand the fuss that is being made; there are institutions that are hearing the matter; there is a matter before the Tribunal, and we will allow the Tribunal to determine the appeal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, my good friends, hon. Boodhoo and hon. Guinness, raised the issue of private tuition. I entirely agree with them that this is a problem that should be tackled. Mr Speaker, Sir, is it possible that a class having 60 students be a private tuition class? What is the meaning of private tuition, Mr Speaker, Sir? Particular attention should be given to the students. Is there a need for students of Standard VI, for students of SC and HSC to take private tuition in all the subjects? I beg to differ, Mr Speaker, Sir. Private tuition has become a business. Private tuition is now a fashion. When a student joins Form IV or even, for that event, joins secondary school, the first priority for the parent is to find someone to give him private tuition. They would not assess whether the child is good at a subject or is weak at another. The straightforward solution is private tuition. Mr Speaker, Sir, how much time does a child spend on private tuition? Does that child get the opportunity to develop? A child, *en pleine croissance*, needs to have extracurricular activities, needs to play, read and do a couple of things. I believe there are some Members of this Assembly who have gone through the system. I have gone through the system, and I can say clearly that I have not really benefited from private tuition. It was a fashion; everyone was taking private tuition, and I also took private tuition. Mr Speaker, Sir, is there any control on the premises in which private tuition is given? Do we know in what conditions private tuition is being given? Should not the premises be a sort of licensed premises, with permits given by the Ministry of Education? I think this should be given top priority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all over the world, close circuit television is being installed. This has proved to be a proper method to combat crime or rather to bring down the crime rate. The Government took the commitment to install CCTV in Flic en Flac, Port-Louis and Grand' Baie. This is an opportunity that we get to congratulate the Government for the installation of CCTV in Flic en Flac, and the project is being extended to Grand' Baie and Port-Louis.

When the Labour Party was in office in 1995, we had the Mackay Report for reforms in the Judiciary. We have, over the years, implemented quite a number of measures in the Mackay report, but many of them still remain to be implemented. The measure announced in this Budget,

to give financial autonomy to the Director of Public Prosecutions, is commendable. It is in line with the Mackay Report. The Office of the DPP should be supported by highly qualified lawyers; they should be supported by a team that looks only after prosecution, without any other functions such as drafting of bills and to be the adviser of different Ministries. Therefore, this initiative, Mr Speaker, Sir, is really commendable. I will request the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to go the extra mile and set up the Court of Appeal and the École de la Magistrature as soon as possible.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this responsible Budget has made mention of 2% of profits of firms that should go for corporate social responsibility. I tend to agree with the hon. Second Member for Port-Louis North & Montagne Longue that there should be a legislation to enact that 2% contribution to corporate social responsibility. Otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, we know that, if it is only declaration d'*intention*, if it is only said on paper, many firms will not give 2% of their profits for corporate social responsibility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is doing a lot to save jobs. This economic crisis has been going on for a number of months. We have, until now, remained resilient. We have resisted the economic shock, Mr Speaker, Sir, and with the measures announced in this Budget on the Additional Stimulus Package, we are saving jobs. It is the duty of the firms, which are making profits, to give, at least, a percentage of their profits to the corporate social responsibility.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will briefly reply to a few criticisms, which have been made about the SC and HSC fees, and the tax on interests. The MSM Opposition as well as the MMM and, for that matter, the Leader of the Opposition, in his intervention, said –

“Nous défaireons some of the things which this Government has done, like taxer l'épargne.”

Many Members, like the hon. Second Member for Savanne and Black River, Mrs Hanoomanjee, also made mention of that. In fact, in 2004/05, they made mention of that in their Budget, and said –

“Targeting will also be extended to the subsidy on SC and HSC examination fees. Presently, all students benefit from a 50% grant in respect of examination fees, irrespective of the income level of their parents. These grants will,

henceforth, be limited to those family income not exceeding Rs30,000 per month.”

Therefore, targeting for SC and HSC fees was first mentioned by the MSM/MMM Government in 2005. They have, over the years, spoken about tax on interests. They, themselves, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2004, made mention of that in their Budget Speech.

"Under the Income Tax law, interest income above specified exemption ceiling is taxable. This provision has been very hard to enforce, because of the difficulty met by the Income Tax Department to obtain, on a standing basis, information from financial institutions. Those will be removed. All interest income above Rs100,000 ceiling will be taxable regardless of the maturity of the deposit."

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this is not political opportunism, what is it? Mr Speaker, Sir, I will conclude by making certain suggestions. Ministers formulate policies, and it is for the civil servants to implement them. Together with this responsible Budget, I will request the setting up of a Parliamentary Committee to oversee the implementation of projects, to make the Executive more accountable.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it will also be a good initiative if we set up a Committee of Promises, like it is done in the House of Commons, to oversee the commitments taken in Parliaments.

On a concluding note, I will seize the opportunity to thank and congratulate the Government for the number of projects, which have been undertaken by the NDU and all the Ministries like the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, in my Constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with the new airport project, the proposed IRS in Le Bouchon, the airport city, the Mahebourg waterfront, I believe that the whole face of the Constituency will change in the years to come.

I thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At 7.31p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.41 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair

The Minister of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs I. Seebun): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first of all, I wish to congratulate Dr. Rama Sithanen, the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, for the various measures taken in this Budget.

Across the world, countries are confronting challenges we never had to face before, of a failure in the global economic system on which we rely to fuel our economies. A failure that has, unfortunately, led to a fall in banking transactions and brought a cycle of low consumer demand and job losses. These unprecedented challenges since the depression of the 1930s demand new policies and new ways of thinking and planning.

We cannot stay put and wait for the crisis to engulf us or just hope that things “might get better”. Such a course of action would be an irresponsible one. This Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has beforehand taken a series of measures to face the crisis before it hits us. Our aim, today, is to respond to the challenges collectively for our future and replace uncertainty by clear action; insecurity with hope and fear with confidence.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the stakes are high. We must recognise all the new realities and we are not sheltered from the global economic crisis. As a first step, we must build on earlier achievements, sustain the economic reforms whilst we chart out a course of action that would restore the financial system, support economic activity and keep inflation at bay. Indeed, *l'Alliance Sociale* has got a strong team of doers to achieve this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today's financial crisis should not be to-morrow's human crisis. It is against this backdrop that the various measures stipulated in this Budget strike the right balance between maintaining economic and social stability. There is no doubt that the impact of the financial crisis is felt more on the most vulnerable and marginalised groups, which include mainly women and children. Historically, economic recessions have placed a disproportionate burden on women, as women are more likely to be in vulnerable jobs, to be underemployed or without a job. They have limited access to and control over economic and financial resources; there is a lack of social protection. My Ministry is particularly concerned with the alarming issue as our mandate is to cater for women, children and families.

The economic recession will put more pressure on the functions of my Ministry especially where women and children are concerned. With the closure of industries, especially

in the textile sector which comprises mostly women, massive job layoffs may be expected. Women run the risk of being hired last and dismissed first. As the gender pay gap will increase, so will women's financial dependency. Women often experience more the negative consequences of the economic crisis in different ways than men due to triple roles as "women, wives and mothers." It is expected that in order to "make ends meet", women will smooth their incomes through increased labour force participation, more commonly in the informal sector with no social security benefit and less effective safety nets. Female-based households are at a greater risk, with few, if any, saving to weather the crisis, and limited ownership of wealth and other assets, as compared to men.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I, therefore, welcome the measures spelt out within the Budget which will reduce the adverse impact of the crisis. I am here referring to the schemes under the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund and the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme which are indeed, praiseworthy, as these are safety nets to mitigate the effects resulting from loss of employment.

Likewise, the Additional Stimulus Package, created as far back as 2008, paves the way to mitigate the social and economic effects of global recession. Funds to the tune of Rs3.5 billion earmarked to support SMEs, in terms of modernisation of equipment, raising liquidity, encouraging leasing and lending by commercial banks are clear signals that this Government wants to convey to the population. The message is clear - Save Jobs.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the allocation of these resources will consolidate our actions in favour of women. My Ministry and the National Women Entrepreneur Council have, over the last few years, invested significantly in infrastructural support, capacity building programmes and provision of equipment aimed at promoting a woman entrepreneurship culture. These include, *inter alia*, the concept of incubators at Triolet Women Empowerment Centre and the National Women Development Centre at Phoenix, which provides women entrepreneurs with the conducive environment, coupled with technical counselling to produce and market their products, whilst enhancing avenues for growth of their enterprises. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to respond to an earlier comment made by hon. Mrs Jeewa-Daureeawoo pertaining to the absence of policies for sustaining small businesses. Unfortunately, she is not here, but I am sure that hon. Martin will convey the message. I seize this opportunity to invite her and other

hon. Members to visit our Empowerment Centres and assess the volume of incentives being provided to women entrepreneurs.

I am convinced that with the wide plethora of schemes and facilities being provided through this Budget, women owned enterprises can evolve from micro and small into medium and why not, into “corporate bodies”, as rightly spelt out at paragraph 63 of the Budget Speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the various mechanisms and facilities that will be set up forthwith, will, undoubtedly, enlarge our scope of operation. The National Women Entrepreneur Council remains a key partner in the endeavour of empowering women economically and we are also pleased to establish strategic partnership with the National Empowerment Foundation for the implementation of measures spelt out at paragraph 77 of the Budget Speech, namely, the Micro-Enterprise Financing scheme for women. In fact, my Ministry is fully supportive to the National Empowerment Foundation for the capacity building of female retrenched workers in our women centres.

These women, once trained, can be clustered into “*société*” and thereby, benefit from the loan scheme of Rs400,000 for the setting up of enterprises. This Government has come up with the most radical programme to support small and medium enterprises. SMEs can help to democratise the economy and we are encouraging women to develop and start SMEs as part of our empowerment programme.

The initiatives announced in this Budget are being criticised by the Opposition as being “*effets d’annonce*”, but let me inform the hon. Members that we mean business and to this effect, the Saving Jobs and Recovery Fund has already started its operations. A Project Monitoring Unit for the implementation of the various projects announced in this Budget has already been set up at the Prime Minister’s Office.

Women will be provided loan schemes. A comprehensive Action Plan for women entrepreneurs covering pertinent issues related to their economic empowerment will be formulated in collaboration with my Ministry, National Women Empowerment Council, National Empowerment Foundation and SEHDA. My Ministry is privileged to be chairing a subcommittee focussing on women entrepreneurship development within the SJR Fund. I have no doubt that our women entrepreneurs will emerge out more successfully and achieve their true potential.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am indeed pleased that adequate funds are being made available to existing and potential women entrepreneurs to sustain economic growth and development.

This Government has always placed women's empowerment high on its agenda and the package of incentives we are now providing will go beyond what has been provided for earlier on.

I wish to applaud the Minister of Finance who has been farsighted and sensible to introduce the Work cum Training scheme in the manufacturing and tourism sectors which are facing financial downturn and may envisage the lay off of their employees. Women's jobs predominate in these two sectors! The Work cum Training scheme is the right response to protect women's jobs, give fair treatment to those facing redundancy whilst, at the same time, provide support to the unemployed and create new opportunities for them. In the same vein, the *Espace des Métiers* offers bright prospects for the unemployed and the female retrenched workers.

The crisis has major implications for the country's economic and social resilience, particularly, given the vulnerabilities of women. As parents lose their jobs, families' ability to cater for the need of their children will be affected, and may result in pulling them out of school and sending them to work.

This Government will not let this happen! We do not want our children to grow up with the deep scars and stigma of poverty and trauma for having missed their childhood. The series of measures spelt out in paragraphs 184, 210 and 213 demonstrate the commitment of this Government not to compromise the future of our children in the course of grappling with the current economic threat and challenges.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the extension of the Integrated Social Development Project, more vulnerable families will be eased from precarious conditions to an enhanced standard of living with decent housing facilities, decent employment and access to the education of their children.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has always been proactive to respond to the needs of vulnerable children and has laid emphasis on the National Parental Empowerment Programme

to equip parents with appropriate and adequate parenting skills. Parents are urged to manage their roles and face the challenges in the face of a more and more competitive environment. Our focus has been on preventive measures, to provide coping skills to adults; and our Child Mentoring Scheme is a concrete example whereby children in distress will be provided with all the emotional reconstruction with the support of mentors.

In this august Assembly, I take great pride here in sharing with the hon. Members that, according to Save the Children International, Mauritius ranks first among all African countries as “the best place for mothers”. Mauritius secures mothers and credit goes to this Government and to men folk as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the socio-cultural scene of Mauritius is changing; the number of single women headed households is likely to increase. An increase in the social aid, that is, from Rs700 to Rs1,000 is another positive step.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget has, indeed, placed social cohesion high on its priorities. The massive allocations to assist Non Governmental Organisations, which are doing laudable work to support cancer and Alzheimer patients, HIV/AIDs victims and implement projects for distressed women and children, reflect the trust Government has in the capabilities of NGOs.

In the same vein, my Ministry is providing yearly grants to le Centre La Chrysalide which is doing well in the rehabilitation of women, victims of substance abuse, and we trust that such projects will flourish. However, the need for monitoring and transparency of operation should not be overlooked.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased that over and above the budgetary provisions, Rs120 m. have been made available to my Ministry for the next three years through the bilateral co-operations with the People’s Republic of China to assist women and children in distress. It is obvious that the Special Collaborative Programme for Support to Women and Children in Distress, with an envelope of Rs120 m. will, undoubtedly, increase our *marge de manoeuvre* significantly whereby more NGOs will benefit from projects to assist women and children in distress. My Ministry, through its multi-sectoral approach, will be able to address the issues of violence, marginalisation and exclusion of women and children, child battering, abandonment

and emotional problems in a more effective manner. The credit for this initiative goes to our Prime Minister to whom I am grateful and thankful.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government has ensured –

- (i) that all children, irrespective of their social background have access to free education, right from pre-primary to tertiary education;
- (ii) that the vulnerable are getting social aid;
- (iii) that, in spite of the financial constraints; as a caring Government, the free transport scheme for the students, the elderly and the disabled be maintained;
- (iv) that my Ministry, along with NEF, SEHDA and other institutions, ensure the empowerment of the disempowered so that they can be made to earn a living;
- (v) that, along with our Empowerment Programme, conducive environments prevail in households, and
- (vi) that, through our programmes, mutual respect amongst individuals and communities be advocated.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although certain mishaps are beyond our control, yet, this Government under the guidance of the Prime Minister is relentlessly working towards securing everyone, creating opportunities for each and every individual to flourish as per his or her potential so that no one is left out.

Investing in education should be seen as an intelligent and *avant-gardiste* investment, because education remains the prerequisite factor to development. This Government is following the path laid by the Father of the nation who believed that education is the basis for sustainable development and thereby introduced free education. This Government went further by providing free transport to all students to ease the burden of transport costs. An investment to the tune of Rs21 m. for training and placement of 2000 SC and HSC holders will go a long way in their career path. In this context, as an equitable measure, increasing the maximum income threshold for eligibility of scholarship to Rs10,000 deserves to be acclaimed.

By empowering our youth through education, we are providing them with opportunities and avenues in emerging sectors such as ICT and tourism. The construction of a new campus at the cost of Rs600 m. speaks for itself. The new campus will allow a greater number of students

to access quality education and eventually contribute to the national economic growth, with high dividends and returns.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, I would like, at this point of time, to comment on the massive investment plans enunciated in this Budget. Restoring global competitiveness requires modernising and restructuring infrastructure. This entails strategic planning for long-term development plans and economic prosperity. The Minister of Finance has been farsighted and has invested billions of rupees for roads, a modern airport and the expansion of the container terminal.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the central goals of economic policy remain accelerating growth and job creation, broadening economic participation and reducing poverty. Progress in these areas will be more difficult if we do not provide foreign investors with appropriate infrastructural base and support. We cannot wait for the economic downturn to subside and postpone infrastructural projects because, in doing so, we will stand to be losers. Moreover, maintaining a high standard of infrastructure is a key determinant for our tourism and other sectors as it also directly reflects a country's level of development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in aspiring for a "Maurice Ile Durable", it does not go unnoticed that the Minister of Finance has made budgetary provisions to address the food, energy, health, and law and order issues. For instance, the Food Security Fund will go a long way in the fight against poverty and food crisis. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a person of wisdom and clairvoyance has rightly said -

"If you want to fight poverty, if you want to combat food crisis, empower women."

How very true this is! The women of our country are fully equipped to take up the challenges as the strong pillars in the economic development of Mauritius and Rodrigues. The various measures contained within the Budget have indeed placed women and men at the centre of its actions. The call for building alliances through Corporate Social Responsibility is absolutely necessary to overcome the several challenges we are facing now. I wish to acknowledge that some firms have already responded positively to our call and my Ministry has been privileged to work with them on a capacity building project for women entrepreneurs, related to finance, marketing and networking. I am convinced that the CSR concept will be fruitful to many more

deserving and needy women. My appeal to the corporate sector is that they follow suit and help us in this endeavour.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, through this Budget, once again, this Government has reaffirmed its commitment to work for a gender inclusive society, an inclusive democracy and, in spite of the global economic crisis, it demonstrated how, through farsightedness, strategic planning and rethinking of its policies, a crisis can be turned into opportunities.

I believe that the best course of action, from now on, would be to carry out a post Budget National Awareness Campaign as early as July to sensitize the public at large on the wide spectrum of opportunities, facilities, schemes and resources that women and men can tap.

The National Women Entrepreneur Council will play its facilitating role and network with other stakeholders, particularly NEF so that women can maximize on each and every opportunity because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, women have the potential to increase growth and accelerate the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while we face the present socio-economic challenges, we should never forget that the philosophy of this Budget and the 18-month Action Plan is about people's livelihoods, it is about economic reality and steady resolve to succeed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will succeed, backed up by the strong political will and clear vision of our Prime Minister; a Prime Minister who symbolises national unity. Let us impose solidarity, justice and pledge to promote a culture of 'One Country – One Community' and let our younger generation evolve with this culture.

Thank you for your attention.

(9.03 p.m.)

Mr D. Rucktooa (Second Member for Grand' Baie and Poudre d'Or): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my congratulations to the Minister of Finance for presenting this Budget. At the very outset, let me state that Mauritius is mainly an export-driven economy. According to some predictions ...

(Interruptions)

No, he learned something new; he now can read the language of the faces.

(Interruptions)

I read only in Shakespeare that there is an art to find the mind's construction in the face. He seems to be able to read the body language also now.

According to some predictions, the volume of world trade is expected to decline. At this late hour, I'm not going to use too many figures like talking about world trade which goes down by 11% and so on; I am just sticking to the main points.

We cannot wait to see this crisis to take momentum. We will have to do something. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a harsh and unforgiving world. The hon. Prime Minister, very often, says nobody owes us anything. We will have to struggle in this world. We will have to sweat it out. We have come with a Budget to ride out the global crisis to save jobs, protect people and prepare for recovery. We have to play the stabilisation role. We have to help push enterprises forward. We have to boost up the economy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, comparing Mauritius to many other countries in the world, we have not yet reached that level where we are suffering that much. We are still resilient. What I mean to say is that over here the problem is still containable. We are able to face it. Look at our banking system. The banking system, in most other countries, has collapsed already, but in Mauritius, our banks are in pretty solid financial state. Look at the profits of the Mauritius Commercial Bank and the State Commercial Bank. It is just because our banks, through their analysis, did not invest that much in those foreign securities and so on which brought the collapse of the foreign banks in the US, England, France and many other countries.

The Central Bank also was playing its very important role to have a very good look at all the monetary policies that were taken by other commercial banks. I am not going to go into the details of what we have done and what they have done at this level, because I talked about it in the Stimulus Package about the decrease in the repo rate, whereby there was a decrease in the interest rate for loans, and when the interest rate went down people were able to take more loans and they have invested. I am not going to talk about the liquidity ratio of the commercial banks to the Central Bank. I talked about it in the stimulus package.

In Mauritius, our investment climate is good in general. We have provided fertile ground for investors and we did this through legislation. Even the foreign investors are protected. They can come to our country and invest. They are safe in this country, and we have to keep on showing this image of Mauritius. I listened to my good friend, hon. Dulloo, and in his speech there was nothing about the Budget. I understand why he just could not talk much on this Budget because when the Leader of the Opposition already announced about the prime ministership, he got the shock of his life. When you get a shock, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you really don't know what to talk about, you talk anything. What he needs now is a shock therapy. The question is: does shock therapy exist? Yes, it does exist, but I'm not going to give him the shock therapy; I am going to leave the shock for him and the therapy with me.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whether it is a tragic moment or a comic moment for him, I don't know what to say. He is going to decide because with all his experience in politics, I think he should already have realized that there was something which was unattainable and he cannot even dream of that. I just wonder how he went in that trap. It was just like putting the carrot in front of the donkey and the donkey always thinks that this carrot is attainable, so, he keeps on walking. I hope what I wanted to say is clear.

I think the word I will use is not unparliamentary. He is a stubborn-type politician. The word is not unparliamentary at all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, because by 'stubborn-type' I mean sometimes going with the waves, sometimes coming with the waves, sometimes he is washed ashore, sometimes he is pulled by the current. This is what I mean by 'stubborn-type'. He is still struggling. He is always running wild. I want to add something. Somebody just used the word 'nomad' and I think he is a nomad politician.

(Interruptions)

I do not say ‘mad’! I said nomad politician because nomads are at home nowhere. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir that is very interesting. What is a nomad? He keeps on going everywhere and everywhere he goes he says “home”. He is a nomad politician because he is at home everywhere.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, I think we can now come back to the Bill.

Mr Rucktooa: I am replying to him because he was giving names to my friend, the hon. Minister of Finance. Those who were in the House should know that he was calling him Ringo. He was missing his aim. He does not know in which direction he is going, and I know that whatever the hon. Minister of Finance is doing, he has an aim. We have the will, the ability and the capacity. He was talking nonsense on that side. The advice is very good. As a friend, I am giving him an advice. It is time for him to leave politics. What he has not done in 33 years, my friend, hon. Guttee and I have done it in 33 days.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he said that if this Government today is resilient, it is because of the past Government. This is where I get some trouble in understanding him, because he was with us. If he knew that the other Government was the reason why we are resilient now, so why did he not join us? He could have stayed on that side.

(Interruptions)

He is a nomad! It is time for him now to take a leave from politics and the day he is going to retire from politics, I will be the first one to go and congratulate him. I will ask him to take a rest and to let my friend, hon. Guttee and I continue with the work.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you cannot criticise a budget with 200 measures in this time of crisis. These 200 measures are to securitize the country in the midst of this crisis. Those who criticise this Budget, those who ignore the benefits to be derived, those who can’t acknowledge the relief to the population, let me be a bit poetic; this was used by Martin Luther King. We have talked about this great man. I heard his name from other orators too and I have to make a comparison. What I am telling is that this Budget has a lot of benefits. It is going to give relief to the population. Martin Luther King said:

“If you cannot notice the beauty of the rain falling, then how can you realise that the soil has been enriched and there is going to be growth?”

I don't know if that comparison has been well understood. We have this Budget which is going to benefit people. It will give relief to the population, to the country, to companies, to great companies. This Budget is there. Some people on that side cannot see this happening; it implies that the rain is falling. If they cannot see the beauty of the rain, how the hell will they see that the soil has been enriched?

This is a fantastic Budget! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will come for some time to my Constituency which has been represented by my hon. friend I just named. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the help of all Ministers concerned, the Minister of Environment and National Development Unit and the Minister of Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping, my friend, hon. Anil Bachoo, we have the project of the Goodlands ring road; we have the old windmill at Moulin à Vent, Petit Raffray which now is going to be a national heritage. We have the Poverty Alleviation Programme at Cité Lumière, Grand Baie. We have the uplifting and fencing work of the Petit Raffray football ground by the Minister of Sports, hon. Ritoo, which we are waiting. We have the Roche Terre Primary School where one more block will be added. We have the Moosun Primary School in Bois Rouge, Goodlands. Let me talk about this school, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This school was falling, the roof was cracking. When I was elected, I went to visit that school. I was surprised to see that this is the only school where there were 22 props. It is incredible. The life of those kids and teachers was in danger. He has been there for so many years, but he has never seen it! Today this school is closed and we are having a new one. We had the visit of the Minister of Education, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, and we have the Goodlands SSS which is now operational. Pavements are already done at Péreybère and the tuck shop from the Beach Authority is nearly completed. We thank the hon. Minister of Agro Industry for the fish culture in cages at Bassin Humbert at Poudre D'or.

It might be something not important but worthwhile mentioning. Between Poudre D'or and Goodlands, there is one cemetery which is the Belmont Cemetery existing for over a hundred years. It is incredible, never ever had there been a bus stop over there. If you come from Poudre or from Goodlands you cannot stop. Bus stops have now been placed.

(Interruptions)

I am just quoting this to show that he had done nothing for that Constituency for so many years. It's time for him to take a rest.

(Interruptions)

Prend retraite! I would like to thank hon. Xavier Duval too because he has helped to solve a lot of problems in Grand Gaube. In the papers, there were pictures showing a lot of water everywhere. He has taken money from the Tourism Fund to do some infrastructural work, for example, the dual carriage way from Pamplemousses to Grand'Baie and lighting in the Sir Gaëtan Stadium at Grand Gaube. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I quickly mentioned these points to tell you that I sincerely thank this Government and all the Ministers who have helped to do all these things in my Constituency. We really needed it and I hope we will have more than that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Mauritian nation is intelligent. They follow the news, they are aware of the challenges. We are honest with the nation and we have an 18-month Action Plan. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world may be facing the economic crisis, but we are not experiencing a crisis of confidence from the population. They always believe in us. They still believe in us. They will believe in us. Mauritians do not doubt about the ability of the hon. Prime Minister Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to end, as I said, we have the will, we have the capacity to succeed. The wish to succeed is so intense from Government that even failure and death are afraid to come near us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would just give advice to the Opposition, because they really want us to fail in our endeavours, and I'll tell them "please, there are some places when you passed by do not whistle."

Thank you very much, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Public Infrastructure, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Sir, I beg to move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mr Gokhool rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade (Dr. A. Boolell): Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 01 June 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. Bunwaree rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 9.26 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 01 June 2009 at 11.30 a.m.