

No. 34 of 2009



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FOURTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2009

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BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

MAURITIUS

Fourth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 34 of 2009

Sitting of Monday 30 November 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)

PAPERS LAID

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table -

A. Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment –

- (a) The Annual Digest of Statistics 2008.
- (b) The Loan Agreement between L'Agence Française de Développement et La République de Maurice for the Grand Baie, Phase 2, Sewerage Project (In original).
- (c) The Loan Agreement between L'Agence Française de Développement et La République de Maurice for the Terre Rouge Verdun Road Project (In original).

B. Minister of Industry, Science and Research –

The Mauritius Standards Bureau (National Management Systems Certification Scheme) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 145 of 2009).

C. Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources –

- (a) The Report of the Director of Audit on the Financial Statements of the Mauritius Examination Syndicate for Financial Year 2006/2007.
- (b) The National Heritage Fund (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 146 of 2009).

D. Ministry of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security –

The Fisheries and Marine Resources (Export of Fish and Fish Products) Regulations 2009 (Government Notice No. 147 of 2009).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

ADDITIONAL STIMULUS PACKAGE - BENEFICIARIES

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*By Private Notice*) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment whether, in regard to the Additional Stimulus Package, he will state –

- (a) the composition of the Mechanism for Transitional Support to the Private Sector Committee, since its creation;

- (b) the names of the firms whose requests have been rejected, indicating the reasons therefor;
- (c) if the beneficiaries have complied with all the conditions attached to the financial support;
- (d) where matters stand concerning RS Denim, in relation to its debts, and the sale of the enterprise, and
- (e) if infinity BPO Ltd, has benefited therefrom.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Empowerment (Dr. R. Sithanen): Mr Speaker, Sir, the G-20 has called for Timely, Targeted and Temporary Stimulus Packages to prop up ailing enterprises so as to save jobs and protect people. The recent IMF Article IV mission has noted that our Stimulus Package has these features. They have also recommended that we maintain the Stimulus Package with a contingency element and again noted that our approach builds in this element. At this juncture, the key element of contingency is the Mauritius Transitional Support to the Private Sector (MTSP) which is there to save jobs if it is needed and is demand driven but with Government only intervening on the basis of burden sharing between shareholders, management, banks and Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MTSP has saved jobs and protected workers by providing support to vulnerable businesses to continue operations. We have entered into a social contract with the private sector to ensure that employment protection is given the highest priority whenever firms restructure to meet the crisis.

The MTSP assists vulnerable sectors to face the challenges of the global recession based on burden sharing amongst shareholders, management, creditors and Government so as to provide additional financial support to firms hit by the crisis. These could be in terms of technical assistance and grants to SMEs and equity, liquidity, working capital and asset purchase, swap and lease back to companies. In fact it is these measures, together with policies implemented earlier, that have resulted in continued net job creation in Mauritius despite the crisis, in sharp contrast with job losses in most other countries.

The IMF has confirmed that the Stimulus Package, with the MTSP as a critical component to save jobs and maintain confidence, has unlocked approximately 2 percent growth in 2009.

Our interventions under the Mechanism for Transitional Support have already saved 3,734 jobs in 11 enterprises. And for every job we saved there are other indirect jobs that are also saved due to the multiplier effects. These indirect jobs saved have been estimated at around 1,500 to 2,000. In addition, we have also saved jobs due to the maintenance of confidence. Although no estimate exists for this third category, we should note the negative spiral that many countries have travelled as confidence was lost, leading to massive job losses. In fact, the delay in restoring confidence is behind continuing job losses in many economies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MTSP is being criticised by some as being too demanding in terms of the conditions to be satisfied and, as a result, turning down cases perceived to be deserving and by others for providing support to applicants too readily.

This reflects the dilemma any such programme faces and the risks we have had to balance in designing the MTSP.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the one hand, the MTSP cannot just be a giveaway programme where all firms that come are served regardless of their viability and willingness of shareholders and management to make an effort. On the other hand, the conditions cannot be so onerous that firms which can restructure are turned down.

The strength of the MTSP is that Government is only in a supporting role in deciding which firms obtain assistance. In fact, for a firm to receive support, its bankers and shareholders/managers must come up with a plan in which they finance at least half of the additional financing with Government covering up to half to protect jobs, although typically we have contributed 40 percent.

The eleven companies assisted to date have involved Rs384 m. out of which the MTSP has contributed Rs140 m. in the form of debentures through SIC at 5 percent interest. In addition we have provided guarantees for SMEs to the tune of Rs7.5 m. and purchase of assets to the tune of Rs70 m.

Taken collectively, the shareholders of assisted firms have come up with additional equity of about Rs70 m., the banks with fresh financing of Rs174 m. Thus, we are not only saving jobs but we are also safeguarding Government funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not possible to save all firms. The enterprises that have closed after failing to mobilise a package that could be supported by Government faced structural and not transitional problems related to the crisis. In the absence of a credible restructuring plan from shareholders, the creditors were unwilling to inject fresh capital and Government could not step in.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the MTSP Committee is made up of the Chairman of Enterprise Mauritius, the Chairman of SIC, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Industry, a representative of the Bank of Mauritius and the Director of the Joint Economic Council. The Committee is supported by staff from the Ministry of Finance and Enterprise Mauritius and a team of independent financial analysts.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it would not be appropriate to reveal the names of firms whose requests have been rejected as it may have a negative impact on their operations. In total 34 firms have applied to the MTSP. Of these, 11 have been approved and seven have been turned down, of which 3 are large and 4 are SMEs. These firms were turned down because they did not come up with a package that could be supported by their bankers. Of the remaining sixteen companies, four did not provide the information required to process their applications and the remaining 12 withdrew.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it may be useful to recall the process of application and decisions under the MTSP. First, the application must be made jointly by the lead banker and the company.

Applications are then subject to a High Level Evaluation by an independent financial analyst to verify the viability of the restructuring plan. The recommendations of the analyst are submitted to the MTSP Committee which ensures that the plan involves proper burden sharing by the bank, the shareholders, top management and Government. It must also ensure that the position of Government is protected through a credible restructuring plan or by attaching available assets.

Mr Speaker, Sir, beneficiaries under the MTSP also have to adhere to strict conditions until they have repaid the investment by Government. These include the following main elements -

- (i) dividends cannot be paid until Government has redeemed its investment;
- (ii) management may be subject to cuts in pay and benefits;
- (iii) in some cases, the main shareholder relinquishes decisions on financial matters.
- (iv) the firm has to hire at its cost an independent financial analyst to monitor the implementation of the restructuring plan.
- (v) the implementation of the restructuring plan is subject to monthly reporting by the company to the MTSP via the financial analyst.

The beneficiaries are all in compliance with the conditions that were agreed. In one case, the MTSP Committee had to intervene to ensure full compliance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the sale of RS Denim, there have been no responses to the offer for sale that was launched by the lead Banker in April 2009 with closing date June 2009. To address the debts of RS Denim, an independent financial adviser has been appointed to propose a financial re-engineering as part of the eventual sale of the company. The lead banker has proposed that it could consider converting much of its debt into equity as part of a sale. In the absence of a buyer, an independent manager has been hired and a stakeholder's committee comprising the Banks and MTSP has been set up to oversee the affairs of the company.

Since then the company has witnessed a positive evolution relative to the projections in the restructuring plan. Monthly sales have almost quadrupled from US\$250,000 in April 2009 to US\$950,000 currently. A decision will be taken in early 2010 by MTSP after consulting the lead banker on the best course of action following the recommendations of the independent financial analyst.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (e) of the question about Infinity, the package was led by Barclays Bank with its Headquarters in London directly overseeing the viability of the package. Implementing the package which was agreed this weekend, will save 650 jobs and keep the company as a viable going concern that can grow in line with the performance of the sector.

In line with established practice, it is the lead bank and the main shareholder who made the application. The final package enshrines the burden sharing principles of the MTSP and, in fact, goes further than normal in the proportion borne by the main shareholder. In this case, the total package is worth Rs135 m. with Government injecting one third - Rs45 m. in the form of debentures at 5 percent secured *pari passu* with the bankers on a building worth at completion at least Rs300 m. The main shareholder is contributing the second *tranches* of Rs45 m. as follows -

- (i) Rs12 m. fresh injection of his own funds;
- (ii) Rs33 m. in the form of intercompany receivables from related companies.

The remaining Rs45 m. is being provided by the banks in the form of additional facilities.

Some of the key conditions agreed with Infinity are as follows -

- (i) Rs1 m. per month cut in management costs including a 60 percent cut in the salary of the main shareholder who is also the CEO;
- (ii) two cars are being returned to the leasing companies;
- (iii) appointment of an independent financial manager to take care of all financial matters including validation of all expenses and joint signatory power with the CEO (who is the main shareholder);
- (iv) relinquishing power of the CEO to make sole decisions on financial matters, and
- (iv) appointment by MTSP of a project manager to ensure timely completion of the Infinity Tower.

Mr Speaker, Sir, last, but not least, the support to Infinity is being used as follows –

- (i) completion of the Infinity Tower;
- (ii) settlement of outstanding creditors including BPML, and
- (iii) working capital requirements.

Mr Bérenger: I can start with the first part of my question, Mr Speaker, Sir. Who takes the final decision at the level of the MTSP? Is it the MTSP Committee or is it the two co-chairmen?

Dr. Sithanen: I think it is the Committee, Mr Speaker, Sir. I can check, but I think it is the Committee after consulting the report of the independent Financial Analyst. As a matter of fact, I have learnt about the exact detail on Saturday night just like anybody because it was a difficult decision. In fact, I think, three times *les négociations n'ont pas abouti*.

(Interruptions)

We are talking about Infinity.

(Interruptions)

In general! I think the decision was made by the Committee.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know what is the role, being given that the Committee is co-chaired by the Chairperson of Enterprise Mauritius, of Enterprise Mauritius in the process of granting finance to those private service?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, a committee has been set up in order to make sure that we get all the information before a decision is made. That is why it is the lead banker and the company that make the application and then there is a committee that does a first evaluation. They need the support of Enterprise Mauritius especially if it is textiles and garment related and also the support of the Ministry of Finance. And once they think there is a case, then there is the appointment of the independent financial analyst. I am sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition would know that a document of 55 pages has been prepared by the independent financial analyst, as the case of Infinity.

First, a supporting role and then the decision to appoint an independent financial analyst who makes his report. Then the Committee meets, they start discussion with the shareholders, with the banker. In this particular case it was the banker which was Barclays that needed the support and the concurrence of Barclays London.

Mr Bérenger: If I can move on with the second part of my question, the hon. Minister of Finance has told us that it would not be proper, according to him, for us to have the names of the firms that have been turned down, but he gave us numbers. Can I ask him how many SMEs are amongst those that had been turned down and whether there is any BPO firm amongst them?

Dr. Sithanen: In fact, I gave the number, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure everybody will agree with me that it is not fair to give the names of companies that have been turned down

because this might have an impact on their credibility. But out of those who have received - let me give both – there are 11 who have received out of which there are five SMEs. I am assuming that we all agree with the definition of SME. One company has 35 employees, one has 38 employees, one has 17 employees and one has 45 employees. I understand from the same figures that there are three from SMEs that have been turned down.

To enlighten the House about how this has happened, there are seven which have applied, but they did not pursue when the MTSP started to engage them. Four applications were rejected as the companies have not been able to submit required information, documents despite reminders. It means that it is a very thorough process and six have not been approved for a variety of reasons. I don't find any BPO company in it, Mr Speaker, Sir. I have to check, but I can't see, at first sight, any BPO company that has been turned down by the MTSP.

Mr Bérenger: I have heard the hon. Minister of Finance saying that amongst those who have benefited from financial assistance under the Stimulus Package, there has been one case where the conditions have not been abided by. Can we know how the conditions were not abided by and what has been the end result?

Dr. Sithanen: There are a series of conditions that must be met. In that specific case, I think one of the conditions was not being met. The company was called and requested to abide by this condition and it is abiding by this condition now and the Committee is happy about this fulfillment of conditions.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move on to RS Denim and Infinity BPO. In the case of RS Denim, the hon. Minister reminded us that since April -and it was mentioned here when I put my PQ on the issue on 28 May 2009 - we have been on the lookout to find a purchaser. There have been international advertisements and so on since April 2009 and although the hon. Minister said on 28 May that the assets of the company are worth more than one billion of rupees, today, if I heard him correctly, he has said that there has been no response at all, that is, no buyer. No one has expressed any interest in taking over RS Denim. Can I ask the hon. Minister if that tallies with the fact that he came forward very optimistically saying that the assets are worth more than one billion rupees and that there was going to be international advertising to find a purchaser?

Dr. Sithanen: I am sure the hon. Leader of the Opposition will agree that there is a difference between the intrinsic worth of the assets and what would people believe would be the sustainability of its business model. This has happened, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we have been affected by the worse of recession, especially in textile and garments. It is not easy during this extremely daunting time to identify a company that will purchase this asset. I am sure all of us have read what has happened to Dubai, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, it reflects the very challenging and difficult conditions out there in the market and that's why the MTSP after discussing with the lead banker and the other players, because there is the Development Bank of South Africa which is a leading situation in the region and there are other banks that are involved in an attempt to rescue this company, they have given themselves until February 2010 to make a decision on what is the best course of action.

Mr Bérenger: Still on RS Denim, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 28 May 2009 when I put my PNQ, I alleged that there has been abnormal, unacceptable increase in the cost escalation of the project. There have also been assets stripping before the financial assistance granted. May I remind the hon. Minister of Finance that he said then he was not happy the way things had gone there. He added we have to investigate, but he said to let the Development Bank of South Africa which is a respectable institution carry out the investigation that it had announced then. Can I know from the hon. Minister of Finance what has been the result of the DBSA Investigation and whether, at the end of Government, there has been any investigation?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have not heard from the DBSA about the conclusions and the findings of the inquiry. Again, let me repeat to the House. Nobody is very happy when money is lent to a particular company and this company does not do well for a variety of reasons. Since there are Barclays International, State Bank International, DBSA involved, all these are reputable banks that have experience in lending and structuring business and they have deemed it after analysing all the facts and figures that it is best for the time being to continue to support RS Denim until 20 February 2010 when they will have to make a decision based on the progress made and whether they will be able to find a suitable purchaser of that company.

Mr Bérenger: Most probably there has been no purchaser at all because they have investigated into what has taken place before the financial assistance. Can I move on to Infinity BPO, Mr Speaker, Sir? I keep in mind, of course, that there are 650 jobs on the line. Of course, I

keep that in mind! But will the hon. Minister agree with me that, in fact, Infinity BPO does not clarify as per the criteria which the hon. Minister, himself, has described at length here, that is, financial assistance is being granted to firms that are viable, but that are in temporary difficulties due to the international financial and economic crisis. Will the hon. Minister agree that under those criteria Infinity BPO does not qualify? It has not been their problems, from what I understand, it has nothing to do with the international financial and economic crisis and will he, at the same time, confirm that this is why this is the first BPO firm to be assisted?

Dr. Sithanen: No, Mr Speaker, Sir. I cannot agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition for the simple reason that I have read the report from the independent financial analyst very early this morning. It is a thick document and I have read also the notes of meeting of the various committees held at the level of the MTSP. Infinity is a viable company, it is a solvent company, but it has a problem of liquidity and this is exactly what we stated in this House. That if you have a viable plan, if you are solvent, but you are illiquid for some reason, you can get support. Let me remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that Infinity started with 40 employees in 2004, and it has grown. Today, I think, it employs 550 people. There is also burden sharing. Don't expect Barclays international in London that has been monitoring all the discussions, the negotiations with respect to this particular case just to give money if it is not happy that the business model of Infinity is a sustainable one. As I mentioned, they do have a problem of liquidity in the short term, but Barclays and the Committee have reached the conclusion just like the independent financial analyst that the model is sustainable in the long term.

Mr Bérenger: Different firms have different liquidity problems for different reasons. Would the hon. Minister agree with me that, in this case, there have been extravagant expenses wages, bonuses, cars and so on that have led the firm in that trouble. Does he really think that it is the role of Government to come in with public finance in a case like that?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, we have taken all the precautions. Like they say in French: *personne n'est au-dessus de la loi*. But people also should not have lower rights just because they are A,B,C. What we have done, Mr Speaker, Sir in this particular case - not me - the MTSP and the independent financial analyst have analysed the business model and they have taken all the precautions. It is costing about Rs135 m. I have explained very clearly to the House: one-third is coming from the shareholder, part from his pocket and part from, what they call,

intercompany creditors, and they have put the dates when this money has to be injected. Second, one-third is coming from Barclays and one-third from the MTSP through the SIC. It will be a debenture at 5% interest and the debenture will be injected with respect to the building being constructed. And concerning the building, the experts have ascertained that they require approximately Rs45 m. to complete the building and then the building will be worth Rs300 m. once it is completed. They have done two things. First, they have appointed a project manager to ensure the timely completion of the building so as to make sure that the building is worth Rs300m. when completed. It is there that the MTSP has invested. Second, the MTSP Committee has appointed a financial manager to oversee the affairs of Infinity and, as I stated in my reply, the CEO is not in a position now to make financial decision on his own. All the cheques will be co-signed by this financial manager. As I indicated, Mr Speaker, Sir, at the beginning of my reply, the choice, very often, in life is between bad and worse. There were 550 people that could have lost their job. On the other hand, we have not been reckless with the use of public fund. We have ensured that they put some money and that Barclays also put some money. And we have a series of conditions. As I said, one of these conditions is that we have collateralised the building.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few more questions on Infinity. The hon. Minister has repeated what he said earlier that there is a Project Manager appointed and that there is an interim Finance Manager appointed. Can I ask the hon. Minister why, at least, have we not done what was done in the case of RS Demin where an interim General Manager was appointed? Why this *deux poidis deux mesures*? Why, in this case, has not an interim General Manager, especially after the mess that existed there in terms of extravagant expenditure, been appointed?

Dr. Sithanen: But there is co-management, Mr Speaker, Sir and this is the decision reached by the three parties. As I said, there are the shareholders, the management, the bank and an interim Manager. This is a specific line of business. We need to use the competence of people who are there, but MTSP has done its best in order to protect public funds.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister must be aware that Infinity BPO has received millions and millions through the Empowerment Programme. Can he give us a figure of how much has gone to Infinity BPO through different schemes set up, retraining and so on, has gone from the Empowerment Programme to Infinity BPO?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, but let me inform the House that the BPO, ICT, IT enabled services and call centres are the sectors that have grown most over the last five years. The growth has been about 40%. We have one major problem, we don't have enough people who are trained to join that particular sector. And there is no way that we can do it alone. That is why the National Empowerment Foundation is partnering with firms to train people and once these people are trained they are getting jobs. This is basically what the National Empowerment Foundation is doing in many sectors, *dans l'ameublement* and also in other sectors.

Mr Bérenger: May I ask a last question on Infinity for my part for the time being? In fact, BPML, that is, a Government owned entity has been paying for water and electricity so that the firm could carry on functioning. There have been allegations - I said allegations - that Infinity BPO together with another firm has been guilty of illegal routing of international calls. We have been putting public money into Infinity BPO. I hope that this was thoroughly investigated into. Can I know whether this has been the case and what has been the result of any inquiry into alleged illegal routing of international calls?

Dr. Sithanen: I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir. This Monday morning - it is not easy to get all the information - I have been reading the 50 pages of the document from the independent financial analyst. I have not seen the allegation of the hon. Leader of Opposition there. I have also read all the documents that have been submitted to me by the MTSP and I have not seen any such allegations. I will find out and I will inform the House accordingly.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, in view of the fact that the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance himself said in the Budget that the ICT/BPO sector is expanding by 16.2% this year, how can he explain that a company like Infinity should be in that position when we have a rate of expansion of 16.2%? Second, how can he explain the fact that the company is injecting Rs12m. in fresh money whereas it has not been able to pay the rent to BPML over the last years?

Dr. Sithanen: I think this is a very fair question. Mr Speaker, Sir, even in a rising tide not every *pirogue* gets lifted. It is true that the BPO/ICT sector is doing very well and, in fact, the company is doing well. That is, why all three parties have agreed to support it. It is doing well. However, it has short term liquidity problems and this answers probably to some extent the question that was asked by the hon. Leader of the Opposition: why have other companies in that

particular sector not asked for it? The same thing for textile. I know some textile companies that are doing well even though the international climate is not good. In all sectors - even in tourism, there are some companies that do very well; there are others that are not doing very well. This is life. The fact that one sector is prospering does not mean that each and every enterprise that operates in that particular sector has necessarily to do well.

Mr Bhagwan: Can I know from the hon. Minister, concerning the senior partner of the Infinity BPO, whether he is the same gentleman who is the senior adviser of the Prime Minister's Office and as such he has benefited from duty-free facilities for the purchase of high range car? Can this information be checked and whether the House can be made informed of how these facilities have been given?

Dr. Sithanen: I don't know about these facilities. Let me make it very clear to this House, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are all politicians and I know this was a sensitive issue, but I also can't play politics Mr Speaker, Sir. I did not intervene. I read about the communiqué on Saturday afternoon and, in fact they continue negotiations with Barclays until late. He does not have more rights, but he also does not have fewer rights than others. They have analysed the file, Mr Speaker, Sir. An independent financial analyst has submitted a very thick report and they have taken all the precautions. One in terms of burden sharing and second in terms of imposing many conditions, Mr Speaker, Sir, from the appointment of a Project Manager to see the timely completion of the building, to a Finance Manager to make sure about the use of money. MTSP has taken measures to protect Government money. If we have not made this decision 650 people, would have been *sur le pavé* and we would have been criticised.

Mr Berenger: I have two last questions. One, being given that the hon. Minister is insisting that no one is above the law - we all agree - can I remind him on 09 December 2008, he informed the House that it had been recently brought to his attention that the gentleman concerned, the Chief Executive Officer of Infinity BPO, has two previous convictions in France, and he added: "I propose to look into the legal implications of the judgement of the tribunal and take appropriate action accordingly. " Before we grant financial assistance to the same gentleman, can I ask the hon. Minister what were the results of his investigation?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, again, this was not discussed both in the report submitted by the independent financial analyst and also in the deliberations of the MTST deliberations. But

again, Mr Speaker Sir, let me re-emphasise, that all necessary precautions have been taken to protect the use of public fund, and, at the same time, as I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, some people are criticising us because we are not giving money easily while others are criticising us because they think that we are parting with money too fast.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Minister will make a difference between firms that are being assisted generally and those two firms RS Denim and Infinity BPO Ltd which have had up their head and, still have on their head, political figures. In one case a Member of Parliament, in the other case, a special adviser and I won't go into his other activities. Therefore, will he agree with me that we are perfectly entitled to pay special attention to those two cases and that it will be his duty to see to it that there is no further foul play in those two cases?

Dr. Sithanen: Mr Speaker, Sir, we do realise it is a very sensitive point. That is why in the case of RS Denim, the person that the hon. Member is mentioning is no more managing RS Denim. RS Denim is being managed today by a committee of stakeholders, those who have put the money. In the second one, we have just mentioned, two managers have been appointed. One, a property manager to make sure that the building is completed in time. I forget to inform the House that the expert believes that the value of the property once completed is in excess of the collateral that exists on the property.

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S. O. 10(2)

The Ag. 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.

Mr X. L Duval rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

(12.10 p.m.)

PUBLIC BILL

THE APPROPRIATION (2010) BILL

(No. XXI of 2009)

Second Reading

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Appropriation (2010) Bill (No. XXI of 2009).

The Minister of Youth and Sports (Mr S. Ritoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is with a great sense of satisfaction that I take the floor today to express my deep appreciation of the measures enunciated by the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment in the context of the Budget 2010.

The vice-Prime Minister, as a good doctor, has been right in his diagnosis and the cure he applied to our economy has proved efficient. Could someone have ever imagined that a small and vulnerable country like Mauritius could sail unscratched through the uncertain economic tide which turned many giant titanic-like countries topsy-turvy?

Mr Speaker, Sir, when you have three doctors at the helm of our affairs, supported by a professional Accountant, we are bound to be in safe hands and be able to fend for ourselves. Let me therefore congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance who so admirably braced the challenge to reconcile the expectations of the population with sound and prudent economic management. In fact, he steered the ship amidst a turmoil sea in the right direction which he so aptly shaped over the last four years. In short, the Minister of Finance through the innumerable measures announced, has restored the feel good factor among the population.

The consolidation of social progress, the sustenance of Green Mauritius, the maintenance of the Additional Stimulus Package, the improvement of the country's infrastructure, investment in roads, housing, water, the port, the airport, the vulnerable, the elderly and without forgetting the youth and sports are but a few examples of the sectors which have obtained special attention and massive financing in the forthcoming Budget.

During my maiden speech as a Minister of Youth and Sports, I took a tryst with destiny to change the course of life of the population by capitalising on its youth and by making sports a part of their daily life. When I see the increasing interest shown by our young people in the

affairs of the country and in sports activities, I can confidently say that I am in the right direction. To add to that, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has been attentive to our proposals and he has announced a number of measures and projects which, when implemented, *va révolutionner le domaine de la jeunesse et des sports dans notre pays et surtout donner la confiance à nos jeunes et nos sportifs*. Indeed, it is for the first time in its 40 years of existence that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has obtained *une grosse part du gâteau*. I have made a rough calculation and the figure is not far from half a billion of rupees of investment in Youth and Sports. So, let the figure speak for itself.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now mention a few measures announced in the Budget Speech.

- the setting up of an '*Institut National des Sports*' around the premises of Anjalay Stadium which will be further supplemented by an International cricket stadium;
- the construction of a Football cum Sports Complex in the South of Mauritius which is still devoid of such infrastructure;
- the provision of basic sports amenities and equipment in all Youth Centres to promote *sports de masse*;
- the provision of lighting and upgrading of all stadia that will be used as training and competition grounds in our quest to revive our local football;
- the provision of training equipment to at least 300 promising athletes to facilitate their integration among the elite;
- *la réinsertion* of our high level sportsmen and sportswomen to compensate them for having been the pride of the nation and to enable them lead a stable life after their sports career, and
- the implementation of the *Programme d'Accompagnement et de Réinsertion Sociale des Jeunes* as a contribution of the Ministry of Youth and Sports towards vulnerable young Mauritians who are exposed to social ills.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during my intervention on the last Budget, I announced the tasks and responsibilities that I had conferred upon myself and I am glad to say that I attended to each of them with the support of my immediate collaborators and despite all odds that tread our path. The list is long, but let me highlight a few of them -

- the FIFA Grassroots Project for children aged 10 and 11 years was organised with the collaboration of FIFA and MFA to detect potential in football;
- the *Jeux de L'Avenir* was successfully organised and attracted some 20,000 children in the preliminary phase and out of them, 1,200 reached finals in the age group of 12 and 13 years;
- the *Jeux de L'Espoir* was held on 25 and 26 November and saw the participation of athletes and teams from Réunion island, Seychelles and Rodrigues, thus giving it a *cachet régional*. This game which is open to our youth of 14 and 15 years will be a stepping stone for our emerging athletes to gather experience and momentum to prepare themselves for international competitions. A *Volet Jeunesse* was also added to the Games.
- *Les Jeux Inter Collèges* which caters for our youth of 16 and 17 years was re-established with the participation of 116 colleges and will now be an annual feature;
- the Inter University Games was launched successfully and will surely attract larger participation as from next year among our tertiary students who are over 18 years;
- *le Centre National de Formation de Football de Réduit est maintenant opérationnel. Ce Centre d'Excellence qui a fait ses preuves dans un passé récent* was closed in 2004 by certain irresponsible and unprofessional sports leaders and politicians. Fortunately we have rectified this gross mistake;
- a new DTN for football is now in place. *Il aura la responsabilité de toutes les structures de formation des jeunes footballeurs.*
- the National Youth Policy for years 2010 to 2014 was launched in August this year by the hon. Prime Minister, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam who stated -
 “The National Youth Policy is an important frame work for tapping the energy and the creative drive of the youth for the development of our country. It endeavours to ensure that all young men and women are given opportunities to reach their full potential both as individuals and active participants in society”.
- The Youth Excellence Award Scheme which rewards young people in different fields of intervention was held in November ;

- a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between my Ministry and the IVTB to encourage a culture of entrepreneurship among the youth and help them develop a small enterprise as an economic activity;
- the Gold Award and Red Badge were presented to our young awardees who have excelled in adventures and expeditions in October at the State House;
- in the wake of the unfortunate calamity which occurred at Mon Gout, the Youth Section of my Ministry under the stewardship of the GIPM and the National Coast Guard organised a training in climate change and disaster response to equip our young people to face calamities and natural disaster;
- social Youth Integration Programmes were set up to alleviate poverty among the young people;
- more massive participation of women in sports has been recorded with the assistance *de la Commission Nationale du Sport Féminin* ;
- We are not only consolidating our *acquis*, but also expanding our range of sports disciplines because we want the youth of our country to unfold their talents and to expose them to new sporting fields. Thus, disciplines like Beach Soccer and Cricket will soon be added in the Sports Act so that they are duly recognised and promoted, and
- local Firms *à travers la Fédération Mauricienne des Sports Corporatifs* are also being given all assistance to promote sports. In short, we do not want to leave anybody behind, but instead inculcate the sports culture in one and all.

That is not all, Mr Speaker Sir, let me highlight the progress achieved with regard to our infrastructure -

- the Sir Robin Ghurburrin Stadium in Triolet which was in a deplorable state for years has been relevelled and lighting facilities are being provided. The stands will also be upgraded. Thus for the first time the inhabitants of Triolet will have a football playground *digne de ce nom* ;

- the lighting of New George V Stadium has been completed and drainage work is ongoing;
- lighting facilities are being provided at Arsenal football pitch and a cloakroom and public toilet will also be constructed;
- Morcellement St. André football ground will also be fenced, lighted and upgraded;
- the St François Xavier Stadium, which contains the only synthetic football playground of Mauritius, will be provided with stands and cloakroom, the project value of which is Rs77 m.;
- the structure of the Mauritius Secondary School Sports Association, which no longer fits new challenges, will be revisited and conferred with new responsibilities;
- the use of sports infrastructure in schools will be strengthened and sports *animateurs* will be posted over there on a regular basis to provide coaching to users;
- our Youth Centres will be equipped with sporting facilities to encourage *le Sport de Masse*;
- Triolet village will soon be provided with a modern and state-of-the-art Multi Sports Complex which it long deserved and which will be a one stop shop for sport lovers. Two acres of State land near the Triolet market has already been allocated to this project and additional land in the vicinity will also be acquired for the project.

My Ministry will also strengthen its collaboration with the Commission of Youth and Sports in Rodrigues and assist them, as far as possible, by extending technical assistance and other facilities, because many of our high level athletes originate from Rodrigues.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the first time in the history of Mauritian sports, as many as four international competitions have been organised on our grounds in a single year. That also at a time when funds were scarce at our end and other countries which had pledged to organise the games on the soil, backed out for economic reasons at the last hour.

I seize this opportunity to thank the Government for having allowed my Ministry to use available funds towards this purpose and thus give the right signal to the countries in the region that Mauritius is the big brother despite its small size.

Thus, Mr Speaker, Sir, this year, the following international competitions were organised here –

- 1) the Senior African Boxing Championship in which we won 7 medals;
- 2) the Junior African Athletics Championship in which we bagged 15 medals;
- 3) the Junior African Swimming Championship in which we won 11 medals, and
- 4) the Senior African Judo Championship in which we got 3 medals.

Besides, we also participated in nine major competitions at continental and international levels from which we brought 22 medals home.

The highlight on the International front, Mr Speaker, Sir, has been our recent participation in the *Jeux de la Francophonie* in Lebanon, and I must say that our athletes made us proud of being a Mauritian. In fact, Mauritius ranked 6th out of 42 participating countries and we came back with 3 Gold, 3 Silver and 2 Bronze medals. This Game also gave us the opportunity to gage the potential of some of our athletes who hold the promise to do it big in forthcoming international games.

Thus, with the support and *encadrement* of Club Maurice Committee, we are already preparing our athletes who will participate in the Commonwealth Youth Games to be held in India next year, the *CJSOI* Games in Reunion in 2010, the Indian Ocean Island Games in Seychelles in 2011, the All Africa Games and the Olympic Games in 2012.

The preparation of our athletes for such big games is a herculean task. It requires a lot of perseverance and sacrifice on the part of the athletes and their parents, the coaches and Federation. The responsibility on my Ministry and the Club Maurice is heavy because we have to ensure that the proper *encadrement*, motivation, infrastructural and training facilities and financial support are at all times available and that appropriate training camps are organised, locally and abroad, both for the psychological and physical preparation of the athletes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I know, I can rely on the support of one and all to prepare our athletes for these international competitions. A lot of resources and financial investment go into these competitions and in the athletes *pour hisser encore plus haut le quadricolore Mauricien*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I briefly outlined, a moment ago, the tasks that we set to ourselves during this current Budget and the various games in which Mauritius will be called upon to participate during the course of the coming years.

Let me now dwell on the work that lies ahead of us for the forthcoming financial year, both in the youth and sports sector. Besides the ongoing projects, many new and challenging ones are awaiting implementation.

Just to name some of them –

- (i) We are reviewing the criteria for the payment of allowances to High Level Athletes. Based on certain conditions to be satisfied and depending on categories in which they are, athletes are presently given a monthly allowance ranging from Rs2,000 to Rs20,000. In view of certain representations received, and to ensure that no athlete is unduly penalised, the High Level Sports Unit is revising the criteria.
- (ii) The Cash Prize Scheme which was reviewed recently has become the craze of the moment, because it bears testimony to the fruit and reward of the extensive training, sweat and pain that accompany success and victory in any competition. It is also the recognition by the State of the culmination of the efforts put in by *our athlètes de haut niveau*. As the name implies, the Cash Prize is the financial reward given by Government to Athletes who give outstanding performances in regional, continental performances in regional, continental, intercontinental and world competitions. The prize may vary from Rs7,000 for a regional game up to Rs1 m. for an Olympic Gold Medal.

While I am on this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to the Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who spared some of his precious time to personally handover cash prizes to athletes who performed honorably in recent games.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Cash Prizes always motivate our athletes enormously. That is why I personally ensured that a Cash Prize of Rs10,000 be allocated, for the first time, to two athletes who participated at the Paralympics Games held in Beijing, China, last year and irrespective of

their performance. Through this action, Mr Speaker, Sir, I want to give the signal that I wish to *ratisse large*, and take on board all sport lovers, despite their age and disabilities.

In fact, the hon. Prime Minister handed over Rs1.8 m. and trophies to some 82 athletes and coaches at a ceremony organised three weeks ago at Domaines Les Pailles.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FIFA World Cup Finals is fast approaching and a fever of excitement is now invading football fans. On our side, we are preparing ourselves and readying our infrastructure to welcome one or two foreign teams qualified for the World Cup to train in Mauritius.

The upgrading of Anjalay Stadium and New George V Stadium are ongoing and we have also earmarked one or two other stadia with good training grounds for the purpose. The drawing of lots for the World Cup is scheduled on 04 December and a delegation from Mauritius along with the Agent of the Mauritius Football Association will be present in Cape Town to finalise discussions with teams that are willing to train on our grounds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, while I am on football, I wish to thank hon. Members for their comments with regard to the Youth and Sports Sector and football in particular. I also thank hon. Rajesh Bhagwan for his suggestions. He also mentioned the incident which happened in Egypt with our national team. I agree that this is unacceptable and I have told the MFA *ses quatre verités*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to his remarks on poor performance in football, I have, on several occasions, openly expressed my mind on the issue and I reiterate that our football is sick. But, I have full hope that all the measures being set in place will bring elixir for our football to retrieve its Number One position among all sports disciplines.

Moreover, as I always say, the Federations should assume their responsibility; they should put sports before all ego.

Mr Speaker Sir, let me thank the Vice-Prime Minister and Ministry of Finance for his brilliant idea to remove or reduce custom duty on big screen TVs so as to give the Mauritian population a unique opportunity to relax and enjoy *la saveur d'une Coupe du Monde de Football* because, at that moment, Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole World will stop to 'eat and drink' but football.

Let me also announce that the Steering Committee set up to revisit and '*redresse nou football*' has completed its assignment. The main recommendations of the Committee, which will be implemented during the forthcoming financial year, are as follows -

- (a) Each First and Second Division Football Team (*i.e* 24 in all) will be allocated a fixed training ground. These grounds belong either to my Ministry, the Local Authorities or the private sector, and a sum of Rs12 m. will be spent in year 2010 to provide them with basic lighting facilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I seize this opportunity to convey my deep appreciation to our friends of the private sector who are giving us a helping hand *pour redonner la gloire d'antan à notre football* and for having pledged to use CSR Funding towards football and promotion of other sports.

- (b) New George V, Anjalay, Germain Commarmond, Auguste Voltaire, St. Francois Xavier, Guy Rozemont and Rose Hill stadia will henceforth be known as Competition Grounds and will be used for First and Second Division matches only.
- (c) Each 1st and 2nd Division football team will compulsorily have a junior team which will play *en lever de rideau*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an undeniable fact that 80% of our population is not active in sports and thus fall prey to all sorts of diseases. Keeping this in mind, my Ministry, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health, Local Government, Women's Rights and the Mauritius Sports Council has, already introduced the Keep Fit Project. Moreover, my Ministry will work with Local Authorities and NGOs to devise a strategic plan for the promotion of sports at grass roots and household levels and for the proper use of sports infrastructural facilities that will be put at their disposal in our Youth Centres.

Our aim, Mr Speaker Sir, is to reduce the percentage of non-sport active population to 30% in the coming years. Mr Speaker Sir, the major objective of my Ministry is to cater for the welfare of our population through youth and sports activities. We, therefore, cannot remain insensitive towards those young children in the 12 to 15 years of age bracket, who are school

failures or *'des laissés pour compte'*, and who might fall prey to social evils and become harmful citizens.

Thus, my Ministry will, through the *"Projet d'Accompagnement Pour La Réinsertion Sociale,"* take under its custody 550 such children every year in Mauritius and Rodrigues, over a period of three years, and provide them with all facilities and coaching to become good and responsible citizens. They will be constantly followed by *animateurs*, who will have the responsibility to detect inborn qualities in them, be it sports or other skills, and channel them accordingly to an honest means of livelihood.

I again thank the vice-Prime Minister and Ministry of Finance, for putting Rs30 m. at the disposal of my Ministry over three years to implement this particular project. Mr Speaker Sir, as the House will see for itself, the number of projects I have mentioned, coupled with those enunciated in the Budget Speech requires serious planning, adequate manpower and a will to execute. In short, as Jawaharlal Nehru put it, "I have miles to go before I sleep", but I will say "I have miles to go before I realise my dream". But, the path I have to tread is full of hope and opportunities, because I have the support of all the stakeholders and we have the total commitment of Government.

While speaking of stakeholders, I am happy to note that most of the sports federations *'ont joué le jeu'*, because they understand that the unhealthy financial situation of the recent months gone by did not allow us to do all that we wanted to. However, we had the total collaboration of the different federations to hold the international competitions on our soil, as I said earlier. But, Mr Speaker Sir, I should however, admit, and say it openly, that I am still perturbed by certain organisations in the sports sector, which are putting other interests before sports. Some federations are, unfortunately, still not functioning as expected, thus to the detriment of the sports discipline they are expected to promote. May I again remind them that all support from my Ministry, including financial, will continue to be linked with performance, good governance and visible promotion of the discipline under their responsibility. One should understand that my Ministry is more of a facilitator than fund-provider, and that federation and other sports associations should also contribute.

Mr Speaker Sir, the objective and target of my Ministry and that of the sports federation are the same. Our mission is to provide all basic requirements to promising athletes, and convert

them into high level athletes. To be able to do so, we will have to put aside petty quarrels and personality clash that often occur within federations and other sports organisations. We will have to strive to become result oriented.

The day we realise this, we will surely beat the present record of 100 medals in three years at continental, intercontinental and world levels. So, let us all look in one direction and work as a team for the betterment of sports, because sports know neither religious nor cultural barriers. I still remember the words of the hon. Prime Minister who, during the Cash Prize Ceremony, rightly said -

“Athletes are the *véritable rassembleur*’ of this nation and they have the capacity of bringing people of different social backgrounds together”

I, therefore, rely on all our sports organisations, be it, the Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, the Mauritius Sports Council, the *Comité National Olympique Mauricien* or the National Youth Council to work towards that role of *rassembleur*, because the future of our athletes and our youth lies in their hands. *M. le président, j’aimerais ici, saluer l’excellent travail effectué depuis trois ans, par les responsables du Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports, dans le domaine du Sport-Etudes. Cette structure est l’une des plus importantes de mon ministère.*

Ce concept, qui concilie sports et études, demeure un maillon très important, afin que le sport mauricien puisse atteindre d’autres sommets dans les années à venir. D’ailleurs, les résultats enregistrés par les athlètes du *Trust Fund* lors des championnats d’Afrique junior de natation et d’athlétisme, sont des preuves que nous allons dans la bonne direction.

Mr Speaker Sir, it is unfortunate that the Sports Act, which was initially scheduled to be amended this year, did not go through due to the heavy workload of this august Assembly. But I want to assure all stakeholders that the amendments are ready, and they will be brought before the National Assembly at the first opportunity. Mr Speaker Sir, sports remain a dynamic sector, where changes occur constantly and more rapidly than in any other sector. In this context, it is important to evaluate continuously our previous actions and plan for the future. My Ministry’s policy regarding sports infrastructure, high level sports, sports for all, training and youth development will have to be continuously reviewed to meet the expectations of all our sportsmen and sportswomen and the population at large. I will invite all stakeholders in the sports sector to make an evaluation of their actions and policy, to come up with concrete proposals for the

benefit of one and all, to enable my Ministry to prepare a strategic plan, especially for the sports sector.

Mr Speaker Sir, the message I want to pass in my concluding remarks is twofold. First, I ask all our promising and high level athletes to accomplish the hope that sports lovers and all Mauritians have pinned on them, that is, to hold the country in high esteem and to fly our flag even above the mast, so that we feel proud of our rainbow nation.

Next, I request all household families and our youth who have shown little interest in sports so far to turn a new leaf. I request them to “*Start Sports, Stay in Sports and Succeed in Sports*”, because sports is the life line to a long and healthy life, and the future of the nation lies in the pulse of our youth.

Finally, Mr Speaker Sir, all actions initiated by this Government, since July 2005, are proving to be outstanding, and we will continue on that path. I can assure this House that my dedication and commitment to the cause of sports in general and that of athletes will not move “*d’un iota*”, and my Ministry will continuously assess its actions and will bring new ideas and dynamism to boost the sector.

Mr Speaker Sir, I hope that our hon. Prime Minister’s wish will be realised one day, that is, to see our national football team participating in a final phase of the World Cup.

So, let us all work for it.

Thank you Mr Speaker Sir.

(12:37 p.m)

Mr M. Dulloo (First Member for Grand’ Baie & Poudre d’Or): Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the last Budget of an outgoing Government. *C’est, donc, un budget bilan et un budget de manifeste électoral. Cela doit être ainsi ; c’est inévitable, et c’est normal.* It is part of the game. We know that this Assembly, Mr Speaker, Sir, unless sooner dissolved, would stand dissolved on 12 July next year, that is, in just over seven months. General election should necessarily be held next year, as per the Constitution and the Representation of the People Act. *N’en déplaise au Premier ministre!* Because notwithstanding this fact, it seems the hon. Prime Minister is still dreaming. Mr Speaker, Sir, you were here on 21 November, before this very Assembly, when

the hon. Prime Minister insisted that there were eight months more to go before dissolution, and that he could fix the general election in 2011.

Cela démontre M. le président, une méconnaissance totale de notre constitution et de nos lois électorales. De même sur la question des recommandations de l'Electoral Boundaries Commission, the question is whether there is need to amend the Constitution or not. Peu importe ! Les faits demeurent que c'est le dernier budget de ce gouvernement, qui se prépare à affronter les élections générales.

At paragraph 3 of the Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance stated –

“It is our fifth budget in four and a half years (...)”

He could have stated and other Ministers did state that it is their fifth and last Budget. In fact, more than half of the Budget Speech is devoted to the *bilan* of the Government's mandate. For almost one and a half hours, the Minister of Finance talked about the legacy of 2005, the performance of his Government, that is, his own performance from 2005 to this date. Then, in the rest of the speech...

(Interruptions)

Yes, I did contribute a lot. I don't like to boast of what I have done. I look for what we do now and for the future. And we are talking for this purpose, the now and the future.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Rucktooa said how much has not been done in our constituency the other day and I joined him. Then, in the rest of his Budget Speech, the hon. Minister of Finance announced and repeated a series of measures, schemes and projects that are intended to be started next year, but whose implementation or completion would be spread over a few years. Apart from certain fiscal measures and provisions in the Estimates for the next calendar year, most of those schemes and projects could properly find their place in an electoral manifesto. To pretend otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, would smack of bad faith.

And I'll come first to the *bilan* of the Government. Of course, he referred to quite a few good things that were done in 2005, 2006 and 2007. I won't go over these good measures that were taken, but then after 2007, things started going haywire. The Government lost track or started derailing altogether though I should say that there were some measures in 2006/2007 that

were not to my own personal liking, especially some measures introduced by the hon. Minister of Finance. And this is the plea that has been going on for the past two years or so. Some very important support was removed from some economic operators at the beginning of this Government's mandate. I have especially in mind, the small planting community, the small operators and especially the middle-income group, how they were very seriously hit by some of the measures at the beginning of this Government's mandate. This is why the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that now is payback time, now you have to restore these various support and assistance that some of our people were benefiting in the past. But the harm has already been done, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll refer to that when we'll come to certain measures that are being put in place for the next five years or the next decade, but which would not be enough to re-instil the confidence that the people need in order to work, invest and make the efforts necessary to push this country forward.

As regards the *bilan*, this has been spelt out at pages 10 and 11 of the Budget Speech. What we see globally looks very gloomy and very negative. In the *bilan*, in part of his speech, the hon. Minister of Finance referred to the question of debt, food security fund, pig sector, the Marine and Agricultural Resource Support Programme for the Pro-poor, etc. and then the main sectors of the economy, what he would term as the traditional and emerging sectors. We see, for example, in the textile and clothing sector, the output is shrinking by 4%. Regarding tourism, for quite some time, we have had -7.6% growth; in the financial industry some 6% compared to very favourable situations in the past; in the ICT BPO which is supposed to be an emerging sector and which was set up by previous Governments, there has been some expansion. It was about 16.2%; it has grown to about 40.8%. This is good, but, unfortunately, this morning, we have seen the calamity that has struck a BPO and we see how the Stimulus Package is being used. I won't go on that again, but we have seen it. The people outside are very annoyed when they hear what has happened to RS Denim, what has happened to this BPO Ltd. I think the people are rightfully asking questions. There should be more transparency. That was the purpose of the PNQ this morning by the Leader of the Opposition. I hope Government can reassure the public that the public fund is being well used. Let us grant this to save jobs, but, at the same time, we should not be taken for a ride by some people who have come just for a hit and run, just to grab, then go away and just leave an empty shell for Government to take care of those workers. This is very bad.

Concerning the construction industry, there is only 2.5% positive growth. This is why Government is compelled to intervene and inject a lot of money in the construction industry. This is a sort of very primary, simple economy that we are doing. The only possibility now for Government to give the impression of dynamism in the economy and in the country, is to start up as many infrastructural projects as possible in order to try to improve growth and create jobs.

Concerning the real estate sector, there is about 6% expansion. The seafood industry also is now starting doing well, but we know that there are also lots of dangers and we know how fragile this industry is.

Concerning the Health Centre of Excellence, there have been, of course, Apollo and quite a few projects that have come up. But, of course, there is a lot to be done, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have talked a lot about this new technology, health tourism and all that. People have believed in us, investors have come, we have given a lot of facilities, a lot of concessions and incentives, but we do hope that we have been able to accompany those new enterprises. Of course, because it has just been done, it looks positive. But we wish them well and we hope they'll succeed.

But the problem is that when we come to the knowledge centre of excellence, the hon. Minister of Finance has, of course, made a lot of display about the Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence, the Afrita and all that, but there again, there is not much that has been done. A lot could have been done. I remember well how we were motivating people in this sector and how we have engaged with the World Bank and a lot of countries. We wanted to be a regional hub of excellence for training, education and especially a knowledge hub with this Regional Multidisciplinary Centre of Excellence is concerned. It is not this Government that talked about it for the first time.

It was already mooted by the previous Government. It was at the famous conference, the SIDS Conference, and it was there on the table: a regional centre of education. But we have talked a lot about this. Other countries in the region, South Africa, Mozambique and others have borrowed from our idea. They have been able to have an edge on us in a sense. This is why, therefore, this Government, in its last days, and the future Government, will have to pay a lot of attention to this particular sector. And then, there is also the bright idea of the Institute of Languages. But, there also, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing much has been done. We have lobbied and canvassed a lot - and the Institute of Confucius that was my doing. I went to China. There are

lots of things, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I raised including the Confucius Centre. Fortunately, the University of Mauritius was very forward. There was a person at the Head, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Mauritius, who was very forward and he immediately grabbed the project of the Confucius Institute at my behest. There was also this idea of the Institute of Foreign Affairs. Again, all this got blocked and, fortunately, the University of Mauritius came in and with the cooperation of Government or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, we started this at the level of the University. But we needed more support. We needed more encouragement, more funds, more resources and this was ready in the first 100 days, but unfortunately, the support...

(Interruptions)

Oh, yes, it was fully ready, just right, Mr Speaker, Sir, you know full well, even the setting up of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs was something that was almost ready in the first 100 days. But then, the other thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, was the Stimulus Package. A lot can be said about this. So, as far as the *bilan* is concerned, we see that globally it is negative and, luckily for the Government, there was this world crisis and it is so easy to put everything on the back of the world economic crisis. True it is that some sectors, like the textile and the tourism, were affected. But fortunately, Mauritius has not integrated itself to such an extent as Singapore, as maybe Ireland, maybe as Dubai now in the world global economy. We were a bit isolated and we were resilient. I have been saying this all along since the world economic and financial crisis. I have been saying that the resilience is not the doing of this Government - though I was part of it in 2006 and 2007 - as the hon. Minister of Finance would like us to believe; it was the economic resilience that has been built up over the years by successive Governments, by previous Governments in our banking institutions, traditional banking institution, our financial institution and the traditional sectors.

The way that we have been battling around in spite of trade liberalisation, we have been able to make our voice heard, especially within the caucus of the small island States economy in order to preserve on the world stage what we call the special differential treatment, a period of transition and, at the same time, we have been able even to improve our market access in the recent Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) negotiation. We have been able to improve our access for certain products, more particularly our textiles. Now, the rules of origin have been softened in a sense to make it possible for us to produce from third country fabrics to export on

the European Market within the EPA. But, of course, with liberalisation, we have now to face the fierce competition of other exporters on the European Market who are now having easier access.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having referred to the various areas where there are difficulties, - according to the Minister of Finance, himself - unfortunately, the Minister of Finance has not been able to come up with a well-defined sustainable development strategy that would, in the long run, guarantee rising levels of development, of income and, especially of employment; because he is saying that his three main objectives being shaping recovery to accelerate job creation. Shaping recovery, to recover from what?

Not to recover from the world crisis, the world economic crisis or whatever, because we have not been seriously affected. Shaping recovery to recover from his own management of the Mauritian economy, to recover from what has been done wrong, and I am going to show this in a moment. His second objective is consolidating social progress. Fair enough! The purpose of each Budget is to consolidate social progress. But then he continues: “to embed inclusive growth” Why? - because his Budgets have had the effect of excluding a lot of people from development, from growth, not only excluding, but pauperising certain cross sections of the population. This is very eloquent when you look at the various measures that have been put into place in order to support the poor, the vulnerable. The Minister of Finance is boasting, he is saying that he has done that much.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Member. Let's stop for lunch now.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.09 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr Dullo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I started my speech well this morning when I said ‘last Budget of an outgoing Government’. When we came in, there was no Government just now. No Ministers present. A Minister is coming in now. Let us say it is a *signe de temps, M. le président*.

(Interruptions)

The outgoing Government - everywhere, there is crisis. We know what is happening right now within Government, what consultation is going on and what decision is taken. I will come to that later on.

Before the break, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was referring to the *bilan* made by the hon. Minister of Finance himself, how bad a picture that was put before us, using his own statistics and his own figures. Therefore, there is no need for me to interpret those figures or to say what information or statistics we have. But then, how to shape up recovery? The very first sentence of the hon. Minister of Finance is very eloquent. I read paragraph 82 under heading 'Shaping the Recovery'. Recover from what? I have talked about this before. I quote –

“But going forward requires (...)”

Listen well! This is not the Opposition saying.

“But going forward requires a different management of the economy.”

A different management of the economy from what we have had for the past four to five years. Why? Because, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budgets of the Minister of Finance lack a well-defined sustainable development strategy that would, in the long run, guarantee adequate growth and rising levels of income and employment. His Budgets, unfortunately, have been devoid of any kind of development philosophy. It seems that the chief concerns of the Minister of Finance throughout have been how to directly and indirectly collect more and more revenue for spending. But, most of the time, for spending unproductively! We have seen that most of the productive sectors are in difficulties. In fact, there has been a substantial transfer of wealth from the low and middle-income group to the wealthy people of our society. And this we can see through the pervasiveness of dissatisfaction with the budgetary performance of this Government and the miseries of our people throughout the country.

One by one, all his Budget Speeches have been neither original nor good and what were good were not original. Events after the financial crisis and the ensuing economic recession have carried home a strong message to all of us that the globalised world is systematically vulnerable. As I have said earlier on, we were sufficiently sheltered from the recent crisis thanks to what successive Governments have done in order to build up the necessary resilience in our economy. But, we could still be most affected should we face another serious downturn, because of our

small economy, vulnerable economy and also our lacking in natural resources as well as the distance of our main markets.

But, the last two years should have been the time for deep reflections on a development strategy aimed at making Mauritius more resilient and less vulnerable to clearly emerging economic problems. Mauritius, therefore, will be facing tough and trying years. So a development strategy to steer the Mauritian Economy out of the current morass is indispensable. Unfortunately, this Budget is devoid of a decisive development strategy. What we have, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a collection of incoherent *ad hoc* projects picked up on the way in what constitutes this Government's strategy. Gone are the days when the Mauritian economy could rely on a collection of infrastructural projects for generating income and employment. We are no longer in the seventies or the eighties when on the eve of the election, you can just put up a few infrastructural projects and give the impression that everything is going on well. We are in a new millennium with the architecture of our external environment evolving rapidly and requiring more adaptive changes at home. What the country badly needs is not only a development strategy, but also credible and transparent policy actions towards implementing this strategy such that business confidence in the economy is strengthened. But, this Budget is a far cry from this philosophy and why? May be we can find, diagnose a few reasons for that. One of the main reasons is the centralisation of certain departments of Government, the centralisation of the Ministry of Finance, itself whereas a lot of decision-making process which belongs formally to different Ministries had been hijacked by the Ministry of Finance. Formerly, we had a Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and it was good to try to put it together with the Ministry of Finance, but this Ministry has disappeared completely. The independence, the liberty and freedom of Ministries to conceive and come up with projects submitted to the Ministry of Economic Planning, that would do the necessary works and then go to the Ministry of Finance for funding. But, now it is all centralised in the hands of one Minister and a few civil servants and to the frustration and detriment, of other Ministries. But, unfortunately, now with the centralisation of power in the hands of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, all the other Ministers have had just to tow the line and they are not able to think, to take initiatives and to submit to Government. This centralisation process is very bad indeed. Then, secondly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I had the opportunity of stating this to the House on many occasions - it is about trust and confidence in our institutions. Unfortunately, these days, our institutions are

under serious attack, especially the credibility, the confidence and trust our people must have in them. What is happening today itself. It is the Central Bank, the Bank of Mauritius. We have seen all the sagas involving the State Trading Corporation, Air Mauritius and other institutions. The hedging that was done, whose decision was that? Of one man! At the end of the day, the political appointees would pay *le pot cassé*, so they are the one responsible because they had special connections with Ministers or the Prime Minister. Not only the State Trading Corporation. We have seen it in Air Mauritius, in the Port, the Port Authorities, Cargo Handling Corporation, in the Municipalities, in the District Councils right now. Corruption is the order of the day. Each time, of course, in order to show that Government means business, we are cleaning the Augean stables, so we take the political appointee to task. He is the one to blame. Who is to be blamed in the first place? It is not the advisors, the political appointees; it is the one who appoints the advisor, the one who appoints those political nominees. So, he is the one who has made the wrong choice. He is the one who is responsible for the undermining and the ills of our institutions. Every citizen of this country should have a sense of belonging to any institution. Once Nelson Mandela said - "when the man in the street is passing by the office of an institution, he should say: yes, this is my institution. I belong to this institution". Now, how many people, now, can identify themselves with the Central Bank of Mauritius. What is happening there? History is repeating itself. This is what happened in 1991/1995, when the political appointee, then Governor of the Central Bank, had to be checked out. We know what happened to Mr Dan Maraye. Why? Now, at the beginning of this Government's mandate, we know what happened. There was a tug of war between Government and the Central Bank. And in what circumstances, the then Governor of the Bank, at the beginning of this Government's mandate, had to walk proudly and dignifiedly out of this Central Bank and now again, we have a political appointee at the Central Bank and we have the same problem. I was reading the statement from the Governor in the annual report of the Bank of Mauritius of 30 June 2009. We know what pressure we had to put for this report to come out, though belatedly. The very first sentence of the statement from the Governor –

“What a period of exceptional turbulence it has been ...”

Of course, he was talking for the Finance and Banking Sector and for globalised economies like that of Mauritius. “What a period of exceptional turbulence.” Now we can borrow from this sentence and say what a period of exceptional turbulence it has been and it is

still for the Bank of Mauritius! A turmoil now! The Bank of Mauritius has been doing a good job. It managed the world economic crisis. The Bank of Mauritius has got its own contribution. Some people were complaining that they cannot intervene or interfere because the Bank of Mauritius Act of 2004 has given too much independence to the Bank of Mauritius. Thanks to the Banking Act of 2004 that the Bank of Mauritius has obtained that much independence. It is through this independence that the Bank of Mauritius managed. There are also our traditional institutions including our banking institutions that were resilient enough. Because our banks had no exposure to toxic assets, although there have been attempts to undermine some of our banks. Then in the report the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius went on to say what has happened and how Mauritius managed during this difficult time. But, now what is happening? The Board of Directors is now going to the streets '*sur les trottoirs, faire le trottoir ou battre le trottoir.*' I do not know what is happening to our institutions. So, how can people have trust and confidence? Who is responsible? Who has appointed the Governors and the two Deputy Governors under the Banking Act? So, when we are challenging, are we not challenging the President and the Prime Minister? This is not the first time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. In the beginning of the Government's mandate there was turmoil at the bank. It all started with a parliamentary question raised by hon. Deerpalsing. She will be addressing the House immediately after me. She has just come in. It started then. Now, at the end of this Government's mandate the turmoil has been started by a PQ from hon. Dayal. So, who appoints the Board of Directors? Who appoints the Governor and the Deputy Governors?

What is the relationship? And, we have asked PQs, PNQs by the Leader of the Opposition, about the Ministry of Finance dealings with the Central Bank. So, this is very symptomatic of the present situation in the country; the lack of credibility and trust. The people cannot have the trust required in our institutions. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir Government at the eve of the election, of course, had to make provision for wage compensation because the workers constitute a very large constituency. To win or lose general election depends on whether the workers are with you or not. Fair enough, they welcome the compensation that has been given, but is it adequate in the present situation? Is it adequate when figures that have been worked out indicate that in actual practice there has been an erosion of purchasing power. Right from the beginning of this Government mandate some people have been saying to be very careful, look at the purchasing power of the people. Protect the purchasing power. This is what will enable

Mauritius to flourish. Unfortunately, according to calculations that have been made by some experts, the inflation rate, the loss has been 42.9%. But the actual average wage compensation has been 17.7%. So, to what an extent the people have been impoverished? And then, something that we cannot understand. The Minister of Finance comes to us and boasting that this is a caring Government! See to what extent they are taking care of the people! At page 36 of the Budget Speech, we are given a whole list, a whole gamut, according to the Minister of Finance, of the support being given. In paragraph 264, in the previous paragraphs also and in the subsequent paragraphs, but especially in paragraph 264, it is stated that Government is doubling the income support for about 100,000 beneficiaries. 100,000 beneficiaries require income support in this country! This was not the situation when this Government took over. So, how many people are in dire need? And we can go on, we can read the whole list. There are about 13 or 15 supports. To what extent have people become poorer? And within that list you know who are included? Who are those people that need special support in order to survive? Fishermen, 4,400 fishers! Support to the small planters and pig breeders! All those people are listed out, those who require urgent need for support in order to survive, in order to be able to eke out a living not to develop, not to extend, not to grow.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is very clear right from the outset that this Government is out of touch with the realities of this country. Let me take the very opening paragraph, the preamble of the Minister in the Budget Speech and then his conclusion to indicate to what extent he is not aware of what are the real aspirations and needs of the people. At paragraph 4 he says –

“Like the previous budgets it has been prepared to reflect the high ideals of this Government and to meet the aspirations of our people’

Yes, I agree, this Government had high ideals to change the life of the people, Putting People First in order to ensure democratisation of the economy. We don’t quarrel that these are high ideals. I campaigned for that. We all wanted to realise these ideals. The people agreed. They accepted these high ideals. To show that Government means business, the Leader of the Social Alliance said: “if I don’t succeed in translating these ideals into realities, we are going to change our name. Some people even said, yes, if you change that name, give me that name please. But what has happened? The situation has deteriorated terribly especially over the past

two, three years. But, what are the aspirations of the people? It seems that Government is talking of the same old Labour Party. We thought that we were dealing with the new Labour Party with new ideals, with no longer communal division. But, now what we have seen during the past few months: extremists, fundamentalists, religious fanatics have been thriving in this country with the blessing and support of Government. Is this the new Labour Party? This is why it is a Freudian slip of the tongue when the hon. Prime Minister, the other day stood up and said: it is the same Labour Party that did this. Yes, it is the same old Labour Party which is at the head of this Government, at the head of the country and which is causing havoc to the people, to the youth of this country. This Government, therefore, cannot understand the aspirations of the people. After the enticing promises, after the high ideals that have been used to canvass people, right from the beginning of this mandate, it was clear that the aims and objectives are different. Some have said putting their pocket first or pick pocket of the people first. Whatever it is, I won't engage in such debates. The aspiration of the people Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is simple, to feel happy and secure, in their land, in their house, in their country, economically and socially, including physical security. The question of law and order! What are we witnessing these days? A deterioration of moral values. Law and order is no longer existent. People now have to take up as protest the case of victims in a very sad conditions. People do not feel secure to go in the streets at night in certain places. So much so, we have to introduce a sort of Police state. CCTV cameras and Big Brother are watching at every nook and corner of the country wherever you are going.

About economic and social security, what is happening Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I've talked about impoverishment. People are indebted. The country is getting indebted. The national assets are going. But the individual assets of the citizens also are going. Seizure, sale by levy of furniture, of property and fixtures. This is the order of the day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The selling of national assets started back in 1995. The selling of the assets of Air Mauritius, Mauritius Telecom, State Bank and so on. But the proceeds are being used in order to balance the Budget. This is where the policy of Government has gone wrong. I have stated just now about wage compensation. What Government should have done in order to boost the purchasing power. We know about the balance of payments also. The Mauritian economy is far from being fundamentally strong. For an economy like ours, that is overwhelmingly dependant on foreign trade, a current account deficit of the order of Rs25 billion is clearly unsustainable. With the

current account deficit, we will be needing about Rs2 billion per month to cope. This Budget unfortunately does not address this deficit problem.

With regard to foreign reserves of the Bank of Mauritius, I've just said the Bank of Mauritius has so far managed well. But, Government is borrowing massively from abroad. This is what has happened over the past few years. This is what has happened recently; and Government is still borrowing. We are living on borrowed moneys. It seems to us that this is the style of the Minister of Finance, hon. Rama Sithanen. In his first tenure of office - we remember well - between 1991 and 1995, what did he do at the end of the mandate? He contracted a FRN loan of \$150 m., and I think it was the Government of 2001 that repaid that loan. Now, in his second tenure of office, he has in all contracted US\$650 billion debt. I think this is the largest debt ever contracted by any Government. And this will have to be paid in foreign currencies. This will have to be paid by the future Government again. *Après moi le déluge!* But if you look at our economic future through this Budget, there is no room for hope. Therefore, this is the tragedy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

In 1982, the country was in a mess. A new Government came in. The present Leader of the Opposition, then Minister of Finance, put the country back on the rail, and started doing the work. Then, again, difficulties in 1991, the MMM came, the Leader of the Opposition came with ideas. This is important. You must have a person in Government that can rally the consensus, the support, the confidence and trust of the people. Each time the country was going down and was in a mess, Mr Paul Bérenger came in and saved the country.

(Interruptions)

Each time! Go back to our recent history and you will see that! In 1982, in 1991, in 1995, in 2000 and, now again! With the legacy that we are getting from this Government, it needs a person that can build confidence and trust, that the man in the street, that the workers, that the small SMEs, the small businessmen, the top businessmen and the world outside can trust as being somebody responsible, somebody who would tell the truth, who would not bluff the people, who would not say things that are not and describe a bleak picture into a rosy one. This is why you should tell the truth to the people, so that they would be ready to come, do the effort and sacrifice. But don't bluff with the people; don't tell them that everything is rosy, that you are dishing out so many funds, and all that. As to the handling and the management of those

funds, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they are again controlled by just one Minister and a few civil servants. We all know what was happening on the food production front in Mauritius after the disincentives, after removing all those supports to the small planters, whether the small stock breeders, the small fishermen, the small planting community within the sugar cane industry, vegetable growers and fruit growers. After removing all those incentives, it was clear that this sector was going to collapse. Instead, the hon. Minister of Finance put a Food Security Fund of Rs1 billion. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam once said this –

“If you want the small planter to plant and grow, to feed their plantation, you must feed them first”.

Give them enough to feed themselves, so that they can feed their plants, so that plantations could grow and flourish in this country. Fortunately, this philosophy has been followed by successive Governments up to this one, when it dealt the death blow. And they say that they should follow in their father’s footsteps!

This is why, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we have been saying that Government should immediately abolish the NRPT; that Government will have to abolish tax on interests on savings. See what has happened to savings, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Savings have been reduced dramatically. At the same time, people have been exporting their money. Money has left Mauritius, as a result of the new policy of this Government concerning savings.

With regard to housing, again, promises about so many houses that would be built. What about the middle income group people? If they had been taking loans, they knew fully well - there was the incentive – that they could deduct their interests on housing loans. That was a big incentive. They could also deduct their insurance premiums. So, this would go together; life insurance and housing loans. But this special incentive has been abolished by this Government. Not only this! It is the middle class, the middle income group that, sometimes, cannot afford paying for higher education. It is good to give support to the lower income groups also, so that they have access to university education. Now that Government is making a U-turn, in order to adopt the proper policy and as far as education is concerned, it is good to support, to enable people to have access to university education. Expand further university education is good; international campuses being opened in Mauritius. It goes in the proper direction. But, of course, some people would need to have the means also to send their children abroad. Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir, the majority of us here, professionals in this House, have been able to study, to become professionals, thanks to the sacrifice of our parents to send us abroad to study. One big incentive was that we could deduct from the taxes. This is an incentive! When you are taking a tax measure in order to remove so many people from the bracket of taxation, just give that incentive. They are going to work for it and ensure that they send their children for further education, because they know that they will be able to deduct all this from their tax. This is our plea. But, unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are preaching on deaf ears, and we would not see anything till the next election. It is for the future Government that would come to implement this measure.

I will say a few words now, on the various measures, on all those new schemes that would be set up. I would invite my colleagues, hon. Members of the House, to go and read the Budget of 1995 of the same Minister of Finance, hon. Rama Sithanen. I have a copy of the 1995 Budget here. The same scenario coming up as in June 1995, with a series of measures to be implemented before the general elections. After the MCCB had crashed, when he was Minister of Finance. we can see the mess in which the DBM is right now. He started it, putting the DBM in the mess that it is now. In 1995, when he opened up the DBM and the MCCB, these were banks for the small men, for the middle income groups, for the SMEs, when he opened these banks for big business people, that was the undoing of the Development Bank of Mauritius and the MCCB. Now, the Development Bank of Mauritius is in big trouble. At the same time, he is going to use this Development Bank again, in order to assist large enterprises that are in difficulties. Be very careful! This is why I have asked my colleagues of this House to go and read the Budget Speech of 1995/1996. That was the swan song of the then 1995 Government. The hon. Prime Minister then did not realise to what slaughter house the hon. Minister Rama Sithanen was being taken then and again I would ask the hon. Members to read the speech of the then Leader of the Opposition, no other person than Dr. Navin Ramgoolam himself and what he said about the then Minister of Finance and what would happen to the then Government. And, if the hon Prime Minister would go and read his own speech in answer to the Budget of 1995 presented then by the same hon. Minister of Finance, he would know what would happen to him in the next election. Historical irony!

(Interruptions)

My speech? Beautiful! So I would commend the hon Minister of Finance to read my speech on his Budget presentation of 1995. I addressed the Prime Minister then and I warned him what would happen to him. I told him that – see what I said – I won't go into details about the calendar year budget, the budget that was presented in July. It was well timed. You know, elections are in 2010. Prepare a budget in December for the calendar year, put in a lot of very high sounding measures to impress the people and then we go to elections. It gives us the funds that we can spend around as the elections would be approaching. Fair enough! They can use their power this way.

But then I was saying: why the Budget was presented in July 1995, if not political strategy. They leave the option open to go to elections with or without a budget next year. So, I warned them in 1995 that they would be heading for disaster. Let me quote...

(Interruptions)

Listen well! 'Sir Anerood Jugnauth is not Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. He will not wait till his back is to the wall to go to elections. He will not wait for Parliament to be dissolved on its own in order to go for the elections. So, maybe there is a possibility of his coming with elections after this Budget. This is clear. He is waiting.

(Interruptions)

Yes, this is what he did! He dissolved Parliament after the 1995 Budget. What happened to him? 60/0, he was kicked out. But, again, I am standing here and I know. I have been in this Parliament for almost 34 years and I know. The historical irony of this! When the then Minister of Finance, hon. Rama Sithanen presented the Budget in July 1995, who was the Minister of Tourism? Hon Xavier Duval was Minister of Tourism. What the then hon Leader of the Opposition said? "You have taken the PMSD. The PMSD is a one man show. The PMSD is the *cing sous* that you needed. They are not even worth that *cing sous*!" And this is all there in the Hansard. That was the speech of hon Dr Navin Ramgoolam regarding the then Minister of Finance, hon. Rama Sithanen, the then Minister of Tourism, hon. Xavier Luc Duval. Again, I would ask Members to read my speech. The various warnings that I gave to Government then! Unfortunately, it all turned out to be true. Again, what this sane Minister of Finance is doing to this Prime Minister. It is beautifully done! He did it with Sir Anerood Jugnauth! And, of course, when Sir Anerood Jugnauth lost, he left him for a better climate. He constantly has been

saying: “This is my budget. I have been working for over a month with the Prime Minister day in, day out. Night and day I have been working with the Prime Minister.” And the other day, when certain questions were asked, he said “it is not me, somebody else.” meaning the Prime Minister. It is like a Berlin wall that has been set up around the Prime Minister’s office. Apart from the Minister of Finance and a few of the inner circle, nobody could have access to the Prime Minister to open his eyes. No, because I am afraid for my country. I am suffering because of my country. I am not jealous of your prerogatives and your powers and the grip that you have on the Prime Minister. You can take hold on him and lead him to disaster, and lead him to defeat. That’s good. I like it this way. We, on the Opposition, we enjoy. We want it to be that way. Ok, take him. Get control of him. Set up the Berlin wall around him. Do not allow any other Ministers to have access to him so that everything should be under your control, everything should be your doing. But when it goes wrong it is the Prime Minister’s doing. Then, after defeat you will walk out on him!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition referred to Maurice, île Durable. We were for it. We agreed that we should give support. It was a good concept, but then in its implementation, the Leader of the Opposition pointed this out well, that the contrary was being done.

Now with the climate change and renewable energy, ICT and all that, we missed a lot of opportunities, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is good, we support. The Prime Minister, if at the CHOGM, at the Commonwealth Summit, is pushing certain ideas, but certain ideas on behalf of whom? The Small Island Developing States that met here before 2005 in order to organize themselves to face up to the climate change challenge. It was a struggle to put this agenda back on Government’s priorities. Ultimately, it is good now that Government again is assuming this leadership for the Small Island Developing States. But we have lost a lot of time regarding climate change and renewable energy.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is good for the sake of this House to remind, especially my new colleagues, new Members that have joined during this mandate, the question of alternative sources of energy, ethanol production, setting up ethanol corporation, the motion to ensure that small planters obtain 100% their money for molasses, 100% for bagasse, that was the Opposition of 1976 to 1982. That was the MMM that was pushing the agenda in those days, in the 70s and

early 80s, for renewable energy. We were saying the value that bagasse and molasses would obtain, and, subsequently sugar will become the by-product. Other Ministers have come from the ranks of MMM, we have been together pushing this agenda: Swaley Kasenally, Ramduth Jadoo, Kailash Ruhee, Jugdish Goburdhun and all that. The Bagasse Energy Development Programme was set up in 1990/91 by the MSM/MMM Government to have four units of production in the four corners of Mauritius in order to produce renewable energy from bagasse. We have had the first Global Environment Facility disbursement and hon R. Sithanen was Minister of Finance then and together we went to the World Bank. We got the first GEF to be disbursed in order to support our bagasse energy and environment protection project. But then what has happened in the meantime? Now we should have taken an integrated approach. During the debate, I hope that the Minister for Renewable Energy or the Prime Minister will come and tell us more about this, but the Minister of Environment has not said much, the Minister of Industry has not said much, the other Ministers have not said much, about the integrated approach as far as energy development is concerned for Mauritius. And this integrated approach should have been in the programme of Maurice, Ile Durable. But we have had wrong reflex concerning certain projects vis-à-vis the sugar industry and in the support that we are getting. We managed to mobilise international support, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - You know this well, you were a Minister - support from Denmark, we had a Danish Week and Denmark came and this was one of the priorities in December 2005. We have got most of the European Union countries, Germany especially, France and England to support us in our venture.

This was presented in 1989 before the European Parliament and Mauritius became known for this bagasse energy development programme. But now what have we seen? The saga with Gamma Covanta, the saga with CT Power. With all this, we don't know where we stand now. What has the hon. Minister of Finance advocated? I think it is at page 17 of the Budget Speech. Now he is going to make provision for two power plants for Fort Victoria and another one in order to use renewable energy for 100 MW and what not. We were already talking of people coming from India, from China, even from the United States to support us for a fully integrated renewable energy programme. The hon. Minister of Finance went to India and the people from Vestas in India came and presided the roadshow – it was Mr Bakshi, I think. Concerning As far as Suzlon project, wind energy, what has happened, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? In those days, our High Commissioner in India, Mrs Dwarka, was so good as to organise a meeting with the people

of Vestas, with the people of the National Institute of Technology of India in order to set up an integrated programme, a hybrid renewable energy programme for the sugar industry. Apart from bagasse, you can complement it with wind energy, with solar energy for continuous supply to the national grid. I am very happy, Omnicane is going now on its own on that. This should have been well supported by Government. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a lot of things that we can say in order to indicate how Government is going for the wrong target. Never mind! *C'est un plaisir* to see Government acting in such a way and heading for disaster. In the Opposition, we are happy about this. But let me conclude on a note by saying that this Government does not know the aspiration of the people. This Government does not know the character of the people. This Government does not know the character of Mauritius, what Mauritius stands for. Mauritius is not a mere pleasure just to be enjoyed and to be discarded. Mauritius is not an *île aux plaisirs*, with all sorts of connotations – I leave it to their imagination. Mauritius is a culture, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mauritius is nature. Mauritius is a land of culture. Mauritius is a land of mother nature personified. Mauritius is a land of culture and religion, a land for cultural dialogue and blending, a land for religious harmonisation and synthesis. It is here that all the great religions will discover each other, will understand each other and can live together. Mauritius is not just a land of pleasure seeker. We are not pleasure seekers. Our tourists should not be mere pleasure seekers. The Mauritian is not a pleasure seeker. The Mauritian is a universal man. *Maurice, c'est une terre de dialogue entre l'humanité, M. le président.* Mauritius should be projected as a land of discovery and a land of recovery to use the word of the Minister of Finance, for other people to come and recover themselves, reconcile with nature, reconcile with culture, reconcile with religion. Mauritius is a paradise, not just a pleasure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mauritius has been branded as paradise in its widest sense in the past. Mauritius is still and should remain 'The Paradise'. Maybe with this Government, paradise is lost; our people are going through hell right now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. But all is not lost. Paradise is not lost. Paradise can be regained. And we pledge this to the nation. We, on this side of the House, pledge that Mauritius will be known as "Paradise". The Paradise that it has been. And that paradise will be regained by the people on this side of the House when we come to Government.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(2.55 p.m.)

Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by congratulating the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the Budget he read in this House a couple of weeks. Let me also congratulate the hon. Prime Minister who has ensured that this would be a *budget responsable*, as he had already announced, prior to the presentation of the Budget. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the previous orator has been talking a lot about his own speeches and I cannot resist taking up his own speech in 2006, after the first Budget of this Government, and listen to what he said, and I would like to return the same words that he used about a previous orator. He said -

« Malheureusement, M. le président, l'honorable membre qui m'a précédé, l'honorable Jayen Cuttaree, nous a infligé un discours incohérent et confus. On a l'impression qu'il est complètement désorienté et mal à l'aise dans la place qu'il occupe. Je crois qu'il se trompe de place. Il se croyait de ce côté-ci, il se croyait de ce côté-là. Il s'est trompé de place. C'est pourquoi il quitte sa place pour essayer de chercher ailleurs. »

How appropriate for the previous orator, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last week's event which sent a new wave of tremor across the global financial world shows that indeed, the Prime Minister has chosen the path of cautious optimism. Everybody has been talking about the *reprise - lente, molle, timide*, but only a few days ago, the menace of a Dubai default has reanimated the jitters of markets suffering from a continuing financial fragility.

Of course, when Dubai seeks a standstill of payment for six months, we are not exactly in the same scenario as a Russian or Argentinan defaults. But still as the 'Financial Times' commented: "Growth may be returning and green shoots breaking through, but this week has confirmed that the world is not yet in the clear."

So, here we are, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is why I say that the Prime Minister was wise to steer on the side of caution and not as the previous orator said and other orators from the side of the House have said: payback time and all that. We are still in the midst of very fragile global financial situation and tremors can come and go and we have to steer with caution.

This also shows, in my opinion, that we have to take the whole idea of IRS and property development as a pillar of growth with a healthy pinch of salt. Dubai shows that when growth is built on artificial, irrationally exuberant real estate development, this growth is extremely vulnerable.

In the wake of the Dubai scare, analysts across the world are saying that the sheer size and exuberance of its property boom was always unsustainable. This should resonate loudly here in the minds of those who think that IRS and property development is a sustainable pillar of development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am just going to go through the structure of my intervention. I am going just to speak on three things that the hon. Members on the other side have mentioned and then I am going to look into things that we have achieved in terms of what we said we were going to do and why we engage ourselves in politics and I would talk about a few of the concerns that I have and then I will conclude.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning some of the comments that were made on the other side of the House, I note that hon. Bodha, in his speech, acknowledged that we, on this side of the House, have lofty ideals, fantastic ideas. I will come back to the rest of what he said later, but I also note that the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Bérenger, spoke of an onion-like budget, which as he peels, it makes him cry. We understand why.

On the ICT industry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you were the Minister responsible, hon. Bérenger has talked about the ICT industry and has tried to appropriate the emergence of the ICT industry to the previous regime.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is as ridiculous as when we had the debate on the Equal Opportunities Act. I remember I was here, they were not there on the debate as the MMM Opposition had walked out. When hon. Bérenger had spoken, he had said *sans gêne que nous avons ouvert la voie* avec le Sexual Discrimination Bill. He said that and yet in the same House to a woman Member of Parliament, he said '*alle rode ène mari*'. This is the difference between the lack of convictions between what you say you do and what you do.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who created a full-fledged Ministry for IT? It was the Labour Government. You know that very well. Who signed the agreement with the Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh regarding the construction of the cybercity and when was it signed? It was signed by the Government of Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam before the previous Government came into power. These are facts. They may want to believe their own propaganda, but these are verifiable facts. The agreement to create the cybercity was signed by Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam and it was the Labour Government that gave *l'essor pour l'émergence de cette industrie*. These are facts, but the only difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that the Labour Party then wanted to put it in Riche Terre. It is only the difference in the place where it was going to be and actually it was wiser to put it there because with Ebène what we have done is we have taken the most fertile land in the country and we have put a jungle of concrete there whereas it would have been better to put the cybercity in Riche Terre. That's the difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, but the Government led by Dr. the hon. Navin Ramgoolam was at the start of creation of the ICT industry and that is a verifiable fact.

Regarding Ebène, just as an *aparté*, if you look at what has happened there, with the lack of urban planning, the lack of green spaces, the lack of parking and in our constituency we know this, people come and say to us, they work there, they live there and they say this is a disaster because it has been so poorly planned. Anyway that was an *aparté*.

Regarding the CSO figures that the hon. Leader of the Opposition quoted on the ICT industry, I am sure the hon. Members on this side of the House have already rebutted these figures, but when you look at the figures actually and the hon. Minister of Finance has just given me a piece of paper. In fact, the ICT/BPO sector consists of two main segments, one is telecommunications catering for the domestic market and the other is the IT/BPO sector which focus on the export of global services, we know that very well. The figures that the hon. Leader of the Opposition quoted from the CSO, were wrong because he was looking at the global figure and not at the figure of ICT. That was on the ICT industry and the wrong arguments that were put forward.

The second thing that I picked and that I think deserves to be replied ...

The Deputy Speaker: When the hon. Member says the 'global', she means the 'combined'.

Ms Deerpalsing: Yes, exactly. Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you would know much better than I.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the second thing that I think deserves reply on what hon. Bérenger has said again. He talked about the universality of pension benefits and I think it is time to put that argument to the test of scrutiny of evidence.

When we talk about basic universal pensions, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we often refer only to the BRP (Basic Retirement Pension), but in fact Basic Universal Pensions are made up of the BRP for 70% of beneficiaries and 30% of beneficiaries who receive several other benefits such as Basic Invalid's Pension, Basic Widows Pension, Orphans Pension and so on.

Over the next 40 years, the number of BRP beneficiaries will increase at an average annual rate of 2.5% whereas the number of beneficiaries for all other benefits will increase by about 0.3% annually. Taken together, the overall annual increase in the beneficiaries will be around 2% annually.

At present, the expenditure on all basic universal benefits represent about 3.2% of GDP. So it means that if our real GDP growth rate is 2% annually, that is, 2% over and above the rate of inflation and if we limit the increases in basic pension to the rate of inflation, our expenditure on all basic pensions over the years will remain at the same level as it is today, i.e. 3.2% of GDP. In this scenario, expenditure on all basic pensions over the years will remain as sustainable as they are today. Since our GDP growth rate has been more than 2%, even during this year of economic crisis, it will be possible to grant annual increases on basic pensions exceeding the inflation rate without increasing expenditure beyond the present ratio of 3.2% of GDP.

So this means that the sustainability of our BRP or the universal pensions depends crucially on the rate of annual increase, that is granted to compensate for inflation.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition made reference to a World Bank report when he said the BRP was unsustainable. In fact, the report that he made reference to was the 2001 World Bank Report and they had said that the system would be unsustainable on the basis of very generous annual increases that were granted prior to that report in 1996 and also in 2005. I think that the increase that was granted was 15.5%. We have to be very clear about what we are talking about and not take reports and then make general conclusions. In any case, evidence is there now to prove that the targeting of pensions which the previous regime introduced did not result in any savings. Therefore, the argument of making the BRP more sustainable was itself a

big joke, not to mention the outrageous administrative failure that led the then Prime Minister to come and apologise to the beneficiaries for the hassles imposed upon them.

And for those who are still seduced by the very reasonable and convincing arguments that people earning Rs50,000, Rs100,000, Rs200,000 should not receive pensions, let me remind the House of hon. Bappoo's answer to a PQ put by hon. Dowarkasing on 15 July 2006, who wanted to know how many individuals' pension were disallowed between January and July 2005. Do you know what the answer was, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? How many individuals' pension were disallowed between January and July 2005 as a result of the targeting exercise? 664 people. Maybe that was for half a year and maybe some people had not been caught in the system.

Maybe, the real figure is some 2,000, 3,000, 4,000 people, which would include, as the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, the President, the Prime Minister, himself or whoever. Is it worth the candle? Do you subject 130,000 people to that kind of atrocious administrative hassle to get 3,000, 4000 people? It does not make sense! We all agree that people who earn more than Rs100,000 should not get pension. We agree with that! But, what do you do in the implementation? The implementation of it is so catastrophic. You have to remember what the scale of income is in Mauritius. We have a very lopsided scale of income, where about 80% households – not individuals - in this country earn less than Rs20,000 a month. This is the problem; this is the contextual problem! Intellectually, on paper, the argument holds. But, when you look at the context of this country, you are going to subject 130,000 people to get 3,000, 4000 people off the rack. This is what hon. Bérenger said in his speech!

M. le président, je pense que ce que la population doit retenir du discours de l'opposition au sujet de la pension universelle, c'est qu'il n'a pas renoncé à cette folie du ciblage de la pension. Il a dit, dans discours, qu'il faut stopper ce non-sens de pension universelle. *He said it right here. He said that we must stop that nonsense of universality of pension. I listened to him, and I noted that.* Il est, donc, en train de dire, M. le président – et c'est important que la population note cela – que si jamais, par je ne sais quelle malchance pour la population, il revenait au pouvoir, il allait, encore une fois, harceler nos pensionnaires, comme il l'a fait lorsqu'il était Premier ministre et, ce, malgré le fait – comme je l'ai prouvé avec chiffres à l'appui – que *the sustainability* de notre système de pension universelle n'est nullement menacé,

tant qu'on gère bien l'économie et les augmentations annuelles. Ce que ce gouvernement a fait, avec beaucoup de succès.

Just to end on this subject of pension universality, I heard hon. Barbier repeat something about those who are *anti-ciblage* being racist. I think that's regrettable. I would advise the hon. Member – he is not here – to carefully consider the merits and the evidence of the subject before eagerly jumping onto the bandwagon of those who have absolutely no long term vision, as far as holding the nation together is concerned. He should know that Père Philippe Fanchette, Sylvio Michel, Dev Virahsawmy, and even hon. Xavier Duval have publicly expressed that they were against the *ciblage*. Maybe, they too were racists in hon. Barbier's mind. I don't know! Or, maybe, these people have a little bit more common sense and a bit more contextual local knowledge than technocrats hailing from the World Bank.

While I am on this notion of racism, let me, on an *aparté* - as the Members on the other side of the House have mentioned this - make an appeal to some hon. Members on the other side of the House, who, year in and year out, make speeches which give the impression that this Government is against the Creole community. This is simply not true. Yes, there are renegades in our society who are still full of prejudice vis-à-vis the Creole community! In my own family, unfortunately, there are renegades like that. There are people – we have to say it – in this society who are still full of prejudice against the Creole community. But, this does not mean that you can generalise. In fact, we have to be careful not to succumb to the temptations of a cynicism that masquerades for realism. Social narratives, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are very important in the lives of people and in the way they confidently face their future. But, if you constantly drum into people's head that they are excluded, that they can't trust institutions, that they are forever outside the margins, despite colossal efforts made to include everyone, how are you really helping these very people whom you pretend to defend? Are you providing them with the courage to face any possible societal discrimination or are you pushing them into a hole? Repeating, repeating and repeating 'you have no chance, you have no chance, you have no chance' has an effect on people. We should stop this kind of discourse. I am not saying we should wash over discrimination and prejudice, but there is a fine line between voicing out injustices and pushing people more and more into a hole. I think we have to be very alive to our responsibility on that issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Let me now turn on the third issue on which I would like to comment, and this was raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition and by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. It concerns the Cane Democratisation Fund. On this subject, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Bérenger and also hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee argued that we should have put the 35% stake that the Prime Minister has agreed with the MSPA in the SIT, instead of creating the new Cane Democratisation Fund. Hon. Bérenger has even argued that it was *mesquinerie* and all that. I will address these criticisms.

First, about the SIT, true it is that it was a good idea to open up shareholdings of the sugar industry to the small planters. But, though the intention was good, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everyone knows, every single small planter to whom you talk today knows that what actually happened, unfortunately, was that the small planters ended up investing in loss making enterprises. The 20% stake was in the milling companies only. And what did the sugar industry do? They separated the milling and the growing. At the end of the day, the small planters had 20% in loss making. The Labour Party was right in saying that it was '*vieux feraille*'. They were right in saying that! The facts are there! The evidence is there for anyone to verify! Anybody, with even Form III level of accounting, can check the books, the annual reports, and see that the SIT has only become profitable when it started to invest in real estate and in the IPPs. The way it is structured, the participation of the shares is not direct. It's indirect; it's diluted, and then the benefits and dividends are broken up with the stakes of the SIT in landholdings, in water park, and in what not. Small planters don't want their money to be in water park; small planters don't want their money to be in real estate. They want their money to be in the cane activities, and this is what the Cane Democratisation Fund will be, and this is why it is different from the arguments that the other side of House was putting forward.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is very revealing and very interesting also, when the hon. Leader of the Opposition said that he did not go along with the Labour Party. He said 'we were ganging up with the Labour Party, but we did not agree because it was too fanatical'. This was about the Labour Party saying it was wrong that the small planters were investing in loss making enterprises. So, it's very revealing of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. When somebody sees that the small planters are getting injustice, as a result of subsidising loss making activities in the sugar industry, the hon. Leader of the Opposition calls us fanatical! He said that was fanatical! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that's very revealing of his mindset; very interesting. Of course, this is also what he said about the democratisation of the economy. When *l'Alliance*

sociale was campaigning on the democratisation of the economy, hon. Bérenger used the same word! 'Fanatic', 'fanatical'! But, that's very revealing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, when you are standing up against injustice meted out to the small planters, you are fanatical in the eyes of hon. Paul Raymond Bérenger.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this Cane Democratisation Fund, the shares will be there and it will not lose focus as in the SIT. As I said, investing in the real estate, Water Park and so on, because the Cane Democratisation Fund will invest only in cane-related activities and the shares will be direct in the value-chain, which is, refinery, distillery, etc. instead of being indirect as is the case of the SIT. Another thing that is very important, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to note and this replies to what I think hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee was putting forward, is the values of the shares that the small planters will buy in the Cane Democratisation Fund. It is very important to note that according to the Agreement that the Prime Minister had with the MSPA in December 2007, this is black on white - it was agreed that - 35 percent stake - the shares will be at the value of pre-MAAS, i.e. pre-reform. What does that mean, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It means that whatever value these shares would have gotten between then, pre-MAAS and now will accrue to the small planters, because they will pay a lower price for those shares than they are actually worth now. I think paragraph 66 of the Budget mentions that the sugar industry has known a growth expansion of 22 percent, more than 18 percent just in 2009. The accrual of value, *la valeur ajoutée que ces actions auront eue depuis la réforme sucrière irait aux petits planteurs directement. C'est cela que le Premier ministre a agréé car c'est dans l'accord que le Premier ministre a signé avec les sucriers. Donc, il faut aussi prendre cela en considération quand on est en train de dire quel est le prix que les petits planteurs vont payer et quelle est l'aide que le gouvernement va donner aux petits planteurs pour acquérir ces actions. Comme je l'ai dit tout à l'heure, le Cane Democratisation Fund, les actions que les petits planteurs vont acquérir dans le Cane Democratisation Fund seront dans des activités profitables. C'est cela toute la différence du Cane Democratisation Fund versus le SIT. Dans celui-là les planteurs auront des actions dans des activités très profitables, comparées au SIT où les planteurs étaient en train de subsidiser des loss-making activities.*

But I have to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as far as hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee was concerned - I don't know whether the hon. Minister of the Agro Industry is here - she also mentioned the problems that small planters are having on derocking and the regroupment

projects. Here, I have to say that I fully agree with her. In fact, there are major problems in the regroupment and in the derocking projects because there are many small planters who come to see me and my good friend, hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen. There are small planters right now who are so disgruntled at the prospect of losing their second, third and even fourth harvest due to the incompetency of the Sugar Authority and other institutions which are under the Irrigation Authority. My good friend, hon. Hawoldar, also has planters who came to see him and they said the same story. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think there is an urgent need and I would appeal to the hon. Minister of Agro Industry to have a complete audit and review of these projects so that particular attention is paid to these projects.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would just like to say a couple of words about the democratisation of the economy in general, because some Members of the House - I don't remember who it was - have said 'oh, well, when hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen took the floor, had the opportunity to make his *bilan*, but he did not do so.' But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is where I think that people are mistaken. The democratisation of the economy is not the responsibility of hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen and myself.

The Commission for the Economic Democratisation has been set up under the aegis of the Prime Minister's Office as a consultative body. Every single person present here campaigned on the democratisation of the economy. Every single Minister sitting in Cabinet campaigned on the democratisation of the economy. It is the responsibility of each and every one and each and every Minister in the Cabinet of this Government to push for the democratisation of the economy. This is what this Government has done. I am just going to outline briefly what this Government has done to facilitate and push forward the democratisation of the economy.

- First, the boost to the SMEs through the Business Facilitation Act.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, many people do not realise that when we are talking today. I think that hon. Minister Jeetah said it the last time, that between 2000 and 2005, we had 428 SMEs registrations. Since this Government took power and with the boost of the Business Facilitation Act, we have had 11,000 SMEs registrations. Of course, not everybody will be successful. But, it shows you the boost. In every 10 SMEs there is only a small proportion which succeeds, but you have to start with the large base. If you start with 428 and you start with 11,000, there is a big difference between how many will be successful on 428 and how many will be successful on

11,000. This is basic statistics. You cannot start with 428 registrations and you expect to have the same number that will be successful as for 11,000 registered under this Government.

- Special schemes for the SMEs sector (I know they shout a lot, but compared to the previous regime, what this Government has done for the SMEs sector is unparalleled and unrivalled.)
- Competition Commission.

The law is now into effect. The Competition Commission is another great piece of legislation which opens up the economy. Let us remind this House what kind of competition law the previous Prime Minister brought to this House. We all know how a huge section was removed at the last minute and whose lobby it was and why that section was removed. Whilst in this Competition Commission the section that had been removed by hon. Bérenger then, is in there and it opens up the economy.

- Equal Opportunities Act.

This is another testament to how serious this Government is to open up *les chances à tous les Mauriciens*. *D'ailleurs le Manifeste sur lequel on avait fait campagne était « Une île Maurice pour tous ».* *Toutes ces politiques gouvernementales que j'ai énoncées vont directement dans cette direction.*

- Truth and Justice Commission.
- Help to the Pig Breeders.
- Help to the Fishermen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I heard hon. Dulloo just now speaking about fishermen. Under whose Government did the fishers get shares on the Fishermen Investment Trust? It is this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! There can be a lot of talk, but action is where it happens and it happens under this Government.

- CHA housing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to say a big thanks to the Attorney General, hon. Rama Valayden, and this Government.

The Attorney General has found a solution with the rest of the team to the legal maze - it was a complicated legal problem - to make sure to find a solution so that the people of the CHA houses could become owners of their houses.

(Interruptions)

It does not matter! It is where the will is. Whereas the previous regime did not do that because the problem was too complicated, and the legal problem was not solved. So it was put aside. I will come back to that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

As far as the sugar reform is concerned, I think, we are very proud here on this side of the House about the democratisation that has happened thanks to the hon. Prime Minister. The hon. Prime Minister insisted with the people in the sugar industry that they should give 2000 *arpents* of land, 35% stay in the whole value chain of profitable activities. A special look to the *métayers*, a review of their IPPs! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, who would have ever ever thought that there could be an independent review of the IPPs other than under a Government headed by hon. Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam! Would it have happened under hon. Bérenger as Prime Minister? Never, ever, ever! *Jamais de la vie, la revue des IPPs n'aurait eu lieu sous un gouvernement autre que le gouvernement dirigé par l'honorable Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Jamais il n'y aurait eu cette revue des IPPs!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we tend to forget what has been achieved. We forget from what base all this has been achieved. It is all relative. From what base was all this achieved? Let us look at the context! And here I do not hesitate to say what was envisaged in MAAS, in the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy. What was envisaged? Which by the way was a copycat version of what was left by the previous Government and we know who the gentleman at the Sugar Authority was and thanks goodness he is no longer there. But what was envisaged? What was written there? Six new power plants: five new power plants of 42 MW and 1 new power plant of 35 MW, without which, both in the Landell Mills report and in the Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy, the sugar sector said they would not be able to survive, usual cry wolf stories. They would not be able to survive, to build a new refinery and sell refined sugar on the world market. But what has happened, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Thanks goodness for the hon. Prime Minister, there have not been six new power plants and they are surviving just fine. Not only they are surviving, they are expanding by 22% and 18% this year. *C'est un miracle, M. le président.*

There was a report saying that they would not survive without six new power plants. That they would not be able to have enough power for the refineries, that they would not be able to sell refined sugar *dans le marché mondial. Ils n'auraient pas survécu mais c'est un miracle. Aujourd'hui, sans ces six power plants, le sucre raffiné est en train d'être produit. Le sucre raffiné est en train d'être livré dans les marchés mondiaux. Le sucre raffiné, avec le premium que cela donne, aujourd'hui le secteur sucre est en expansion par 22% et 18%. Donc, c'est un testament, M. le président, que le Premier ministre a pu trouver droit dans ce dossier de réformes sucrières.*

I have to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I say it with a lot of pride and respect for the convictions of the hon. Prime Minister because if that had gone ahead, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it would have been game over for democratisation. It would have been game over because more than the whole of energy production would have gone to the economically more powerful. The hon. Prime Minister saw through this. So, I have to say that the hon. Prime Minister took the *dossier* in hand and saw that if this had gone forward, it would have been game over for democratisation. *Chapeau au Premier ministre pour avoir pris ce dossier en main et avoir assuré* forcefully that everybody should be on board and that there cannot be a certain policy *qui nous aurait attaché la main* forever. There would have been no coming back, no need for any politicians in this country anymore, if that had gone forward, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That's why for myself I have to say personally if that had gone forward, I would have never ever had the courage to come back to the electorate.

So, I think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here, I have to pay a tremendous homage to the hon. Prime Minister, who forcefully demonstrated that his convictions were not for sale to the highest bidder. I simply cannot find words for what he has single-handedly achieved. History will note that he never flinched or wavered from his convictions even when people were saying that he should capitulate for the sake of the EU funds. *Sur ce dossier de la démocratisation, j'espère qu'on ne va pas entendre les mêmes disques rayés de raciste, de ceci, de cela. Laissez-moi rappeler aux honorables membres du MMM surtout de l'autre côté de la chambre, que le manifeste électoral du MMM de 1976, parlait de 14 familles et de nationalisation. Donc, la question que je me demande est: est-ce que le MMM de 1976 était raciste ou bien est-ce que le MMM de 2009 s'est rangé aux côtés de ces 14 familles. C'est soit l'un, soit l'autre!* It is one or the other, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, either there has been *coustique* or there has not been

coustique. And they were racists in 1976. So, I hope never again the people from the MMM side of the House will dare to come up with such kinds of ridiculous and nonsensical arguments.

I just heard Dawood Rawat. I will like to comment on that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is the big thing that they put forward. Dawood Rawat and BAI! But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I prepared that, as far as I know, BAI and Dawood Rawat do not sit on shareholders' funds evaluated at a staggering Rs24 billion. Go and see page A92 of the Landell Mills Report! Page A92 du Landell Mills Report *démontre que dans l'industrie sucrière, le Shareholders Fund est évalué en 2004 à R 24 milliards avec des milliers d'arpents de ownership de terrain. Je ne crois pas que M. Dawood Rawat a R 24 milliards de terrain. Je ne crois pas que M. Dawood Rawat ou la BAI s'assied sur 30,000, 40,000 ou 50,000 arpents de terrain.* We are not talking about the same thing. So, I think we have to stop this kind of nonsense comparison. This is totally nonsensical and it shows how poor and how intellectually bankrupt they are in terms of coming up with these kinds of arguments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just to finish on this note, pour démontrer – et là je reviens sur ce que l'honorable Bodha avait dit - l'architecture mentale et institutionnelle qui était en train de se développer sous l'honorable Paul Raymond Bérenger, cette architecture qui était en train de prendre racine où les plus économiquement powerful n'avaient même pas à demander rendez-vous, ils avaient ce qu'ils demandaient. C'est cela l'architecture qui était en train de prendre racine avant 2005. Donc, il faut comparer où on était et où ce pays se dirigeait avec Paul Raymond Bérenger comme Premier ministre. Où se dirigeait ce pays? C'est cela l'architecture mentale et institutionnelle qui se développait. Je vais prendre un seul exemple. Je vais revenir à ce que j'ai dit tout à l'heure sur l'Attorney General qui a trouvé une solution pour les gens de la CHA.

C'était un problème énorme. *It was a tough nut to crack.* Mais, l'honorable Attorney-Général, l'honorable Xavier Duval et d'autres personnes du Gouvernement se sont acharnés à trouver une solution à ce problème légal, que je ne comprends pas bien sûr. Mais quelle est la différence, M. le président? La différence est que dans le *Illovo deal*, quand le State Law Office a dit qu'il y avait un problème, qu'est-ce que le Premier Ministre d'alors avait fait ? Il est allé en dehors de la State Law Office. Il est allé vers un juge retraité pour aller trouver la solution. Pour le *Illovo deal*, il a pu trouver la solution. C'était super ! Mais pour les 20,000 familles de la

CHA, le problème légal était trop dur à craquer pour l'ancien gouvernement. Pour Paul Raymond Bérenger, il n'y avait pas de solution à ce problème légal de la CHA. C'était trop dur. Mais pour pouvoir sauter la barrière et aller trouver un ancien juge, retraité pour venir contredire la State Law Office, ça il y avait la solution ! C'est cela la différence, M. le président. C'est cela la différence où le pays se dirigeait et où ce gouvernement est venu. C'es vrai le premier ministre l'avait dit pendant la campagne électorale. Je me souviens et cela m'avait marqué. Il avait dit que c'était les élections de la dernière chance et c'est vrai, M. le président. C'était les élections de la dernière chance sinon les 20,000 familles de la CHA n'auraient jamais trouvé une solution. Merci à l'Attorney-Général, merci à Xavier Duval et merci à Navin Ramgoolam. Il faut le dire parce que, M. le président, les faits sont les faits et la politique basée sur les convictions reste un engagement politique noble comparé à la politique basée sur des *coustiques*, comme ils les font sur l'autre côté de la Chambre.

M. le président, je ne vais pas être encore trop longue, mais je vais juste parler sur les politiques gouvernementales and the policy measures in this Budget which touch directly the lives of our constituents and I will take concrete examples from my own Constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we come to this House, we are engaged into politics and sometimes I have to tell you, I ask myself what I am doing here. Why am I in politics because sometimes, really, you are discouraged because you feel people are coming to you asking, as we know, my two colleagues here know, people come to all of us and now the season for end-of- year party is starting, people come and tell – sponsor *pour telle fête*, sponsor *pour telle fête!* I tell them to go and see my two colleagues. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to see what we come to politics for. We come to politics – and I told some of my mandants the other day. I don't do politics in order to sponsor *manger-boire*. I don't do politics in order to sponsor this, that and the other. I come to politics in order to try and come and make a difference, to realise and I am very proud, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and my two colleagues, hon. Duval and hon. Sithanen, know some of these measures that have been taken in the Budget touch directly the lives of some of our Constituents and I am going to mention two people. I am not going to mention their real name, but I am going to mention them by fictitious name.

First one, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a couple of weeks ago, I went to a person's place, let's name him Ben. He called me to his place and I go to everywhere that people call me in my Constituency. I go to their place, I sit down and have a cup of coffee, I talk to them and I listen

to what their problems are. There was somebody who called me and insisted that I come to his place and I went there and he said to me – I didn't call you here to ask you for anything. I call you here to thank you. I was really shocked because usually you get a lot of problems. Somebody called me and said- I want to thank you and I want to thank hon. Duval, I want to thank hon. Sithanen, I want to thank le premier ministre, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Why. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? He was there with his family and his son. His name is Ben and he had tears in his eyes and I was really touched by that. He said: “ *look at my son, mo ti ène militant pendant trente ans, mais zamais pas fine gagne ène lueur l'espoir.*” It's true, I am not inventing ! Today, with le Premier ministre, Navin Ramgoolam, mon fils a pu rentrer dans la seconde chance programme et il est sorti premier dans sa classe. M. le président, les larmes dans les yeux dans cet homme ...

(Interruptions)

Je sais que cela fait mal. La vérité fait mal au MMM...

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: C'est pas grave, M. le président, les larmes dans les yeux de cet homme, de ce père de famille, m'a vraiment touché parce qu'il était tellement fier de son fils qui est sorti premier dans le programme de seconde chance et il m'a dit : « allez, s'il vous plaît, je ne peux pas parler au Premier ministre, dites au Premier ministre et à vos collègues que je les remercie de tout mon cœur pour l'avenir de mon fils qui est maintenant assuré. » C'est vrai, je le dis du fond de mon cœur.

Le deuxième exemple, M. le président. Il y a une personne dans ma circonscription qui s'appelle Asha Zéphir. C'est un mariage mixte et ils sont vraiment pauvres. La dame a une fille qui est handicapée, qui ne peut pas rentrer dans le bus pour aller à l'école, pour aller faire ses études. Son mari touche R 13,000 par mois, mais, il a sa femme, ses deux enfants et sa belle-mère sous sa charge. Le coût de taxi pour que cette fille de Forme I aille à l'école est de R200 *for one way only*. Ils m'ont donné les résultats de cette fille et ils sont vraiment impressionnants. Cela fait R 400 par jour pour aller à l'école pour vingt jours de classe et par mois cela fait R 8,000. R 8000 à trouver pour que cette fille, qui a un énorme potentiel, puisse aller à l'école parce qu'elle ne peut pas entrer dans le bus. Mais avec ce gouvernement, avec le CSR, on est en train de trouver une solution. Je l'ai aidé personnellement pour qu'elle puisse faire le troisième

terme. J'ai payé tous les frais de taxis pour cette fille pour le troisième trimestre, entretemps qu'on trouve une solution avec le CSR. C'est une famille mauricienne qui a tous les droits, M. le président et c'est une famille mixte. Qui allez trouver pour eux ? Voice of Hindu ou la Voix Créole. ? Non, ils ne sont ni dans l'un ni dans l'autre. Alors, il faut bien que le gouvernement puisse se mettre debout pour les gens qui peuvent avoir le potentiel. C'est ce que le gouvernement est en train de faire, que chacun puisse avoir l'opportunité de s'épanouir dans son potentiel. Je ne vais pas être trop longue, M le président, je voulais juste mentionner quelques éléments de satisfaction personnelle que moi-même j'ai eu en étant membre de cette Chambre et avoir l'occasion de poser certaines questions. J'ai été vraiment bien contente d'entendre le vice premier ministre et ministre de tourisme, l'honorable Duval qui a dit dans son discours que dorénavant les hôtels vont devoir avoir un certain index environnemental. Je suis contente parce que je ne sais pas s'il se souvient mais, je ne vais pas prendre le crédit, j'avais posé une question dans cette Chambre *about whether hotels would come up with the carbon label. I also, have to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that I am also very grateful to hon. Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance because when I asked the question on whether the Government would legislate for CSR in 2007, I remember I asked a PQ No. B/584 on 05 June 2007 and the hon. Minister of Finance at that time was not too sure whether that was a right approach, but I am very grateful that it has made its way through policy.*

I am also very proud of having asked questions about the prices of molasses that small planters get and to which hon. Boolell started a whole inquiry and today small planters are getting much, much more than they were receiving before for the price of molasses.

About my own constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am very happy that through questions I have put in this Parliament, there was Ebène Bridge that has been built and there has been the enlargement Avenue Tulipes, as hon. Dr. Sithanen is saying. We have talked about that in Parliament and I am very, very grateful to hon. Bachoo and hon. Bundhoo for their collaboration.

I just have three to four minutes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to share a few concerns. One of them – I will go very quickly on that – is about my constituency again and I would appeal here to my two colleagues. It is about the building that is being built on Sodnac Park. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance for putting in his Budget that we are

constructing *eco-villages*. It is a very good idea and that's what we have to do. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in our own constituency, in Quatre Bornes, I would appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to look at what is happening at Sodnac Park. It is not normal, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that such a small, only remaining green space in Sodnac, is being *envahi par du béton à la hauteur de R 14 millions*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know the hon. Minister of Finance has always said - and he is totally right in saying it - that people who have should pay taxes. But as far as savings rate is concerned, we do have a problem. I would just humbly suggest to the hon. Minister of Finance that, yes, let us tax all the people who have a lot of savings in the bank. But would it not be possible to have a special scheme just for people who are saving for their children's education or for people who are saving for their first home? What I would propose is possibly - it has to be thought about, but, I am just thinking - a scheme with a deferred taxation where people could put up to a threshold, not any amount, but a threshold of money, a certain amount of money X, every year, in a savings account on which tax would be deferred and then when the person takes out that savings after 10, 15 or 20 years, if the use of that fund in that savings account is being used for the education of children or for a first home, then that would be exempt of taxes, but for any other use, then it would be normal to have taxes. Because we do have problem with savings rate in this country. We encourage savings for the long-term, because, of course, I know there is a balance to be had between consumption and savings in terms of growth rate. We have to look at the long-term as well, consumption will fuel, the growth rate in the short and medium terms, but we will have to rely on savings and savings for education, savings for a home is always good savings, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, I would appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance to think about that for the next time.

(Interruptions)

Of course, it will be the next time. I say next time, because, of course, it is going to be the same Government, with the same Prime Minister who is going to be here. So, we think that this can be taken on board.

Just to finish, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to talk about governance at the Bank of Mauritius. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the hon. Minister of Finance has said, no one is above the law. No one is above the law and if the Governor - I am very glad that there is a Fact

Finding Committee – has done anything that is wrong, so he should be called to account. I think hon. Dulloo just talked about a Parliamentary Question that I had put on the last day of last session about the Directors of the Bank of Mauritius. I regret having withdrawn that question. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the spectacle, *le cirque qu'on nous a réservé, un des Deputy Governor-General avec M. Li Wan Po, avec le reste, le cirque de cette conférence de presse dans la rue ! C'est indigne, Mr Président, indigne de notre pays, indigne d'eux-mêmes ! La question que j'allais demander dans ce PQ que j'avais withdrawn, c'est, effectivement, la personne qui a fait cette conférence de presse, M. Li Wan Po, ne devrait même pas être dans le Monetary Policy Committee ! D'après mon opinion, il y a un gros conflit d'intérêts. Or, tout le monde sait dans ce pays que M. Li Wan Po est un des plus grands importateurs de goods dans ce pays. Quel sens que cela fait que M. Li Wan Po soit dans le Monetary Policy Committee et qui va avoir tous les renseignements, comment les taux d'intérêts vont évoluer over the years !* It is nonsense and he should not have gone on the street and held that press conference. He should have been the last person to talk about Fact Finding Committee, he should have been the last person to talk about governance because, he, himself, in my mind, has a major conflict of interests in sitting in that Monetary Policy Committee. He should not even be on the Board of the Bank of Mauritius as far as I am concerned. So, it is shameful for all these Directors who stood on that street the other day, shameful for the country, shame on them to have held a press conference on the streets. It was vulgar and uncalled for. So, I really condemn that cheapness of these Directors of the Bank of Mauritius. In fact, if there is to be a cleaning up there, I think all of them should be given the boot, all of them, without exception.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said, we come to politics with the hope of making a difference. We recognise that there are threats of dysfunction when people come to see us for other reasons and this is why I say that I can only wish that, as Mahatma Gandhi has said: “that we should be the change that we want to see in the world”.

You need convictions in the philosophy and principles.

You need a party that stands for these ideals. You need a leader who embodies the unrelenting and unbuyable convictions. And there is not even one little iota of doubt. *Il n'y a pas un petit bout de doute, M. le président, que le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam* is imbued with the sense of purpose, a sense of responsibility towards the future generation of

this country. He stands unrivalled in his sense of statesmanship, steering the nation forward towards modernity and shaping an inclusive Mauritius as a true, and the one and only ‘*rassembleur*’ we have in the political arena today.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I can only end here by wishing this Government – as I said earlier on – I took two concrete examples in my constituency –many, many more, thousands more replications of these two examples, where two people – I have taken only two people, not to take the time of the House. But the decisions that have been taken by this Government have had a direct bearing. *Cela a eu une incidence concrète dans leur vie, M. le président, et je ne peux que souhaiter que ce gouvernement puisse amener ce type de changement dans des milliers de familles mauriciennes. Je sais que même après les élections, avec le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam comme Premier ministre, nous allons le faire et nous allons continuer dans cette direction, d’apporter un changement soutenable, tangible, positif dans la vie des mauriciens.*

Merci, M. le président.

(4.00 p.m.)

Mr J. Spéville (Second Member for Rodrigues): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, while listening to Mrs Deerpalsing, I appreciate her vivacity and determination, but some of her words make me, not sad, but tickle. But, I am not here to answer to her criticisms.

From the outset, I would say I am pleased that we are celebrating the “*festival Kréol.*” That is my conviction. I am pleased that this week will be a week we *kréol* to celebrate and as hon. Duval rightly said “*célébrez la kréolité*”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before commenting on the Budget 2010 of hon. Dr. Sithanen, let me, first of all, pay a vibrant tribute to Marie-Ange Milazar who had been savagely assassinated, I will say crucified, on 06 November. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the case of Miss Marie-Ange Milazar should interplead everyone of us in this House and every citizen of Mauritius. Can we understand how a mother of seven children terminates her life in a manhole? I am saying that because, for me, it is so sad that Mauritius should wake up. We should wake up because, in this House, I have spelt out the cases of high level athletes with humility and it is with the same humility that I am making the case of Marie-Ange Milazar. She was from my Constituency and she came here as a young girl with the hope of - as every Mauritian - having a better life. I am in

regular contact with her parents in Rodrigues who are very good and friendly people, but *l'exode des Rodriguais vers Maurice* is getting worse and that is the other side of the medal. That is the tip of the iceberg, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Criminality in Mauritius should interplead everyone of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the CSO Report of 2007, Digest of crime, Justice and Security shows that the imprisonment rate per 100,000 inhabitants of Mauritius is 179. Mauritius is well behind Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and Mozambique with South Africa in the lead.

Another shocking figure of this report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that from 2004 to 2007, the offences vary from 249,310 in 2004 to 229,000 in 2007. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for me these figures are shocking, and as I have said before, they should interplead everyone of us in this House.

When the athlete, Eric Milazar won the gold medal, he is the pride of Mauritius, when Daniel Milazar, known as Snyder, *fait vibrer la foule au Caudan Waterfront*, he is the role model of the youngsters of Mauritius. But when this lady is assassinated, *c'est un silence total, voire complice, M. le président*. I would pay tribute to the NGOs, under the *Collective Citoyen*, for their brilliant initiative. I hope that their resolutions voted on Friday last *ne tombent pas dans l'oreille des sourds, M. le président*. *Il faudra vraiment trouver un engagement national pour prendre en main les rejetés de la société et, en l'occurrence, les sex workers et les street children*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in response to the Budget of hon. Dr. Sithanen, the hon. Leader of the Opposition stated that the hon. Minister has mentioned Rodrigues five times. In fact, he mentioned it six times. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since 2006, the hon. Minister had not visited Rodrigues for Budget consultations. There had been various interpretations of that. Some people said that he needs to be there to see the reality. But during his recent visit, I was expecting him to have, as the tourists said: *visiter Rodrigues c'est un coup de coeur*. I leave that to the hon. Minister to express his feelings and observations for the island.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking about the Food Security Fund, the hon. Minister mentioned and I quote –

“The Food Security Fund is also financing the purchase of fibre glass boats for off lagoon fishers. (...) and purchase of boats for off lagoon fishing in Mauritius and in Rodrigues.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in presentation of the mid-Budget of July-December 2009, the same mention was made at page 16 regarding saving job, protecting people and preparing for recovery –

“Twelfth, the Fishermen Investment Trust will now finance activities which were previously too ambitious for artisanal fishermen.”

And he continues –

“(...) for use around 20 fish aggregating devices outside the lagoon in Mauritius and 10 in Rodrigues.”

Here, it is in the Food Security Fund whereas in July-December 2009 Budget, it was in the Fishermen Investment Trust. I just want the hon. Minister to clarify whether it is the same project or is it a new one other than the one mentioned in the Fishermen Investment Trust.

My second point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerns the Marine and Agricultural Resource Support (MARS) Programme. At the Consultative Meeting of 05 July, the then Minister of Agro Industry and Fisheries, hon. Dr. Boolell had said the following in his address. I quote –

“(...) IFAD is to reduce poverty and provide appropriate support for enhancing the productive potential of the poor so that they can help themselves to overcome poverty.”

In fact, this project which was made of a combination of loans and grants was estimated at Rs545 m.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are now in November 2009. Rs545 m. have been earmarked under IFAD for the poor of Rodrigues and Mauritius. I am asking myself whether or why this money has not been used. I am sure if poverty in Rodrigues has really been tackled professionally, it should have been far behind us now.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my third point concerns tourism. In fact, two major decisions had been taken regarding tourism in Rodrigues. First, the changing of the name of the airport to Sir Gaëtan Duval which was supposed to be the branding name; coupled with that, we were supposed to have an extension of the Plaine Corail Airport. Over the last three Budgets, I have not heard a word on this and in this Budget also, no mention has been made. I feel that this is something of the past.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another thing that has just been implemented, is the reduction of the air ticket to ensure greater travelling tourists from Mauritius to Rodrigues. In fact, this proposal was not in the Budget July 2009-December 2009, but it has been strongly canvassed by the *Association des Touristes Organisés*, and you know what has been the ups and downs of the discussion until decision has been agreed, so that, as from 01 August this year people travelling from Mauritius staying in hotels, *gîtes*, *pensions de famille* have a reduced ticket. But what is happening, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The problem is that they have tried to solve the problem, and that has created another one on the other side. I explain myself. People from Rodrigues coming here, for whatever reason, be it for treatment, for their business, to visit friends and families feel that they are treated as a second class *citoyen* in Mauritius. How can you accept to travel by the same plane ATR 72 and pay Rs8,200, when somebody from Mauritius going to Rodrigues pays Rs4,500? Even though they say that this has helped to boost tourism by 25%, I am still making the case that we should consider the reduction of the ticket across the board for every citizen of Mauritius, whether for tourism, whether a traveller or whether somebody coming to Mauritius for treatment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, still on tourism, the hon. Minister is pledging to invest Rs10.6 billion in a new passenger terminal in Mauritius, Rs2 billion in a new runway, Rs900 m. for a new taxiway. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the cost of a new runway for Rodrigues is only Rs1.2 billion. I am sorry to say that we will wait a long time again to see our Boeing 747. Hon. Xavier Duval always says that we should have a Boeing 747, a bigger carrier for Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, recently, many flights of the ATR 72 from Mauritius to Rodrigues and vice versa have been cancelled, due to bad weather or dire state condition. Do you know why? The ILS (Instrument Landing System) was not functioning at Plaisance Airport, and they needed to send the ATR 72 to Reunion Island, instead of going back to Rodrigues.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in 2009, in Rodrigues, we are still getting the plane landing in Rodrigues controlled by the Precision Approach Path Indicator (PAPI) lamps on the airfield, and the problem is that the pilot needs to see the lamps before starting to descend, whereas with the ILS it is 100% safer, even in bad weather they can go to Rodrigues. I put the question: what will happen if the same bad weather condition is prevailing in Reunion Island, and the ILS is not working in Mauritius? What are the options? It is Rodrigues, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the other point I want to raise is that the Government is investing massively in *Maurice Ile Durable*; clean Mauritius. Actually, out of 25,000 applicants from Mauritius, from my information, only 2,000 are from Rodrigues. Do you know how many have been able to get one of these solar heaters? Not more than 400. The thing is that, in Rodrigues, all these people who buy this solar heater, need to have an electric pump plus a water tank which costs them an additional sum of Rs17,000 up to Rs20,000. That means that, first, they have to bear an additional cost and, second, the application coming from Rodrigues to DBM in Mauritius goes in the pile of applications and is not treated separately. At the end of the day, they get lost in the pile of applications, and that's why I am making the case that the 2,000 applicants for Rodrigues be taken in separate lots, and that those who fit the criteria be given a chance to get their solar heaters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rodrigues can be really an eco-friendly island as regards renewable energy. Recently, Government has installed, with the CEB, three wind turbines. But if we are really going for Green Mauritius, for the *Maurice Île Durable*, all these conferences on climate change, big money spending on consultancy, Rodrigues is really a case study. Rodrigues is really the place where all this money could be well invested.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to conclude, I will say that - the Budget allocated to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has not mentioned that - in this 2010 Budget, the Minister of Finance did not even mention what has been earmarked for Rodrigues as capital, operating expenses and investment on financial, which is amounting to Rs1.635 billion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the items in the Regional Assembly Budget has been amply canvassed, discussed and voted in the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. I will spare the time of the House to comment lengthily on that, because I know that what has already been agreed will be

the figure allocated. But, as I said before, we have lost an utmost chance of making tourism industry the industry to boost Rodrigues. It is not the reduction of the price of tickets alone that will help Rodrigues to get out of the messy situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will end by taking the words of one of my idols, namely Martin Luther King. He had a dream, and that dream was for his country: America. Mine is for the Republic of Mauritius. I dream of a Mauritius, safer, *solidaire*, where every Mauritian has a home, a piece of bread, whether he is in Mauritius, he is Rodrigues, in Agalega or he comes from Chagos.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

At 4.22p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.59 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs F. Jeewa-Daureeawoo (Third Member for Stanley and Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, it is always an honour and a privilege to take part on the ongoing budgetary debate.

In his Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance made a detailed analysis of the economic situation prevailing in Mauritius at a macroeconomic level. All the figures quoted by him are figures related to the national economy. But the harsh reality – and I pause here to say that I do not want and I do not intend making a negative criticism, but to express a genuine concern - is that the rich is getting richer and the poor is getting poorer as has been rightly said by hon. Bodha and other Members of the House who intervened before me.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if the economic improvement is equated to the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer then no responsible politician can say that he has succeeded in his mission. There is one common denominator in all debates on the budgetary exercise in this august Assembly: the purchasing power of the majority of Mauritian household. One can tell me: ‘Madam, why are you complaining, there has been an increase in salary.’ True it is that the Minister of Finance has recommended an increase in the take home pay packet of every Mauritian household, but the question to be asked, Mr Speaker, Sir: is the increase in salary sufficient to those at the bottom of the ladder? No. The harsh reality is that for many families, even with an increase in wages, their purchasing power has eroded. Erosion in the purchasing

power of Mauritian families is of great concern to all of us because when the wealth of the nation does not trickle down in an adequate manner to the *ti-dimounes*, the social result is catastrophic.

One does not have to be an expert in social anthropology to note that indeed there is a degradation of social behavioural norms and mores. We are living it every day: violence, petty crimes, serious crimes, physical assault, burglary, robbery, drug trafficking, larceny, murder and recently violence against those who represent law and order. Violence against those who represent law and order is very serious because it is a real sign of the degradation of a society. I am here referring to the latest attack on ACP Ramasawmy *agressé au cutter* by an alleged ex-detainee. I will come to that at a later stage.

As has been rightly pointed out by hon. Pravind Jugnauth, there is a social unrest. It is a pity that the Budget is a list of unconnected 'does' and 'do not', rather than expressing a vision based on a holistic way of our future. With this introduction, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now elaborate on some of my points and views.

I will highlight some statistics figures concerning the pattern of offences in Mauritius. I will refer myself to the CSO, Statistics on Crime, Justice and Security circulated in this august Assembly. I do not know if you have had time to go through it, but it is a very interesting report prepared, Mr Speaker, Sir, by the assistance of Professor Christopher Lewis, World Bank Expert on Crime, Justice and Security Statistics together with the contribution of the Mauritius Police Force, the Judiciary Department, Mauritius Prisons Services and the Probation and After Care Services. What is interesting to note, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that this report highlights the socio-economic situation in which crimes occur. Statistics show that 45.1% of people of both sex and 55.3% female feel more insecure in public at night; 45.8% of people have been attacked on the road side while walking. This report also underlines that elderly people, aged 60 years and above, are those who feel the most unsafe in Mauritius. Females feel less safe than males both during the day and night in various places in Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can we achieve productivity and economic progress when people of this country, especially a high percentage of women feel insecure? Unfortunately time is of essence, so I will not have sufficient time to dwell on all the offences listed. Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to outline some of the figures quoted in the CSO Report of 17 August 2009 too.

Assault and related offences increased in 2007 to 13,768 and in 2008 it passed to 14,307. Juvenile delinquency rate has increased from 2.2% to 4.7% per 1,000 juvenile. In 2008, the rate passed to 5.3%. It is a quite an alarming rate, Mr Speaker, Sir. Larceny with aggravating circumstances has increased from 136 to 181. I am not saying that Government is to be blamed for that increase; no one is to be blamed. I am sure that no Prime Minister will want the deterioration of law and order. But, what is important, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we have to face the facts. What is required is a review of the whole system as no piecemeal solution will be efficient. We have to go through a whole process of change if we really want to live in a safe social environment, because all the figures mean a degradation of the behavioural norms of different sections of the community and, unless something is done, there will be further degradation impacting directly on the quality of life of the Mauritian people. I dare not say that over and above the risk to our citizens, such degradation will surely have a negative impact on the tourism sector.

Let me now say a few words on juvenile delinquency. Crimes committed by children seem to be on the rise. We find that more and more young people are involved in petty offences to serious crimes. Some of the crimes committed by those youngsters shock the nation. We are still under the shock of the plight of the two recent hideous crimes. You will agree with me when I say that a child is not born an offender. There are circumstances in his life which brought him to become an offender. So, an in-depth study to the root of the problem is essential. What happens when a youngster commits an offence? He is sent directly to the Youth Centre or the Correctional Youth Centre where he is taken care of by the Prison guards. Now, the question to be asked is: does the Prison officer have the proper training to deal with the youth juvenile, taking into consideration that the youth will find himself with other youth juveniles who have committed more serious offences? For young offenders it is essential that they be dealt with by psychologists, sociologists and other social workers. It appears that it is high time for action and delinquents must benefit from their stay in those centres. We must be able to give them proper education. Tailoring and woodwork trainings are not sufficient in our modern world, Mr Speaker, Sir. They should be given the opportunity to get IT training, music and cultural activities and sports should be encouraged. Provision should be made in our Budget to ensure that they have means to practise those activities. Further, permanent dialogues between the young detainees, the officers and psychologists working with them should be of paramount

importance. Any success in the young detainee during his stay in those centres would mean not only a better future for the young, but his success would result in a decrease in the number of detainees in our prison. Treatment and better rehabilitation programme should start at those centres. We also need proper structures and well trained professionals.

Another issue of concern which may have a dangerous bearing on our society in the near future is the increased number of persons admitted to jail for non payment of fine. We note that there is an increase of 30% in the number of fine defaulters, i.e., those who have been imprisoned for non payment of fine. According to the CSO Report that I have just mentioned - in August 2009 - in 2007, 972 persons were fined defaulters and in 2008 the number increased to 1,267. What is worst, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that in 2008, 90% of prisoners admitted to jail for non payment of fine was because they had no means to pay the fine of Rs200 to Rs10,000 inflicted upon them. This is very serious; the root of the problem should be tackled. Here, I pause to congratulate the hon. Attorney General who has brought amendment to the Courts (Civil Procedure) Act whereby civil debtors are no longer sent to prison; otherwise the situation in prison would have been worst.

According to the report that I mentioned earlier, may I draw the attention of the Assembly that in 2007, out of 2,600 prisoners admitted, 427 had no previous conviction at all, i.e. they were serving a sentence of imprisonment for the first time in their life.

In 2008, the number increased to 573. This surge in the increase of prisoners is not at all a good indication of the social state of health of our society. From an international point of view, Mauritius is worst in the rate of imprisonment when compared to countries like Kenya, Madagascar and Tanzania. For example, we have in Mauritius, 166 prisoners out of a population of every 100,000 population, whereas in Madagascar, a neighbouring country, they only have 81 prisoners out of the same number of 100,000 population. So, despite the increasing trend in the number of persons admitted to prison, yet we note that in the Budget 2010, the staff is decreasing from 1,236 to 1,175 and it would be 1,167 in 2011/2012. So, there is a contradiction because prisoners are increasing and, at the same time, the staff is decreasing. Government is recruiting 900 police officers well and good, but what about recruitment in the prison sector? There is nothing in the Budget concerning recruitment of prison officers. This is why the Prison Officers Association, Mr Speaker, Sir, is feeling demotivated and is praying for an increase in the number

of staff. Not only Government is not recruiting new prison officers, but it seems that the existing vacant posts have not been filled. Is there any particular reason why those vacant posts have not been filled? Is there any particular reason why we cannot recruit more prison officers?

Earlier, I mentioned the attack on ASP Ramasawmy at Beau-Bassin prison but he is not the only one. Since 2007, four more prison officers have been attacked. You will recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, in 2007; the Superintendent Bhunjun was attacked at the roundabout in Quatre Bornes. The second case was attack on the person of Mr David, member of the Prison Supporting Squad. He was attacked while he was walking with his family on the street. Another attack on SP Aroldasamy while he was returning home after work, he was attacked by two individuals. The last one was on Mr Bissoo, prison officer who was attacked while he was getting in the prisons of Beau Bassin. So, all these cases, Mr Speaker, Sir, show that something has to be done, it is too much now. Something has to be done because the situation is already bad. Some prison officers indeed justify this rise in violence on prison officers by a lack of staff to deal with such a high increase of detainees. The officers complain because they have to do everything, they work at the canteen, they have to answer the phone, they have to act as nurses, as a result of which they do not have plenty of time to look at the detainees. Once again, I think we should increase the number of prison officers and fill the vacant posts. When there is a decrease in the number of prison officers, the job becomes even more difficult. It is high time to recruit more officers with attractive package to make their job easier. The prison officers should not feel that their lives are in danger each time they try to reprimand a detainee.

Another issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the construction of Melrose prison. Year in year out, Government is saying that the construction will soon start. Government should long have started the said construction. As things are, it seems that the Minister of Finance does not care much about the state of our prisons. When hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Minister of Finance, he catered for additional posts at various levels. If my memory serves me right, for his last Budget, he provided around 84 additional posts for the year 2004/2005. Here, we are in 2009, instead of increasing the number of prison officers, we are not even filling the vacant posts. Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the cost of maintenance of a detainee daily in prison is about Rs345? In other words, keeping a person in prison for non-payment of fine, costs the State around Rs9,000 monthly. So, if a person is sent to jail for non-payment of fine, the State has to incur a loss of Rs9,000.

Donc, il y a deux manques à gagner à l'État. Un manque à gagner à l'État c'est quand le détenu n'arrive pas à payer l'amende qui lui a été infligée et deuxièmement, l'État doit dépenser dans les environs de R 9,000 par mois pour le maintien du prisonnier.

M. le président, un projet de loi pénitencier a été présenté par le ministre de la justice, Rashida Dati et adopté le 13 Octobre 2009, a pour objet un meilleur traitement des prisonniers en vue d'une réhabilitation. D'autre part, ce projet vise également à développer les alternatives à la détention provisoire et les amendements des peines qui pourraient contribuer à diminuer le nombre des prisonniers et à contribuer à leur réhabilitation. N'est-il pas temps, M. le président, de revoir les lois pénitencières et donner des droits mieux garantis pour certains prisonniers ? N'est-il pas souhaitable que certains prisonniers, surtout les *first time offenders* continuent à maintenir les liens familiaux? Pourquoi ne pas donner une meilleure formation à des prisonniers qui regrettent leurs gestes ? N'est-il pas nécessaire de prévoir d'autres alternatives à la détention provisoire, c'est-à-dire assignation à résidence dans certains cas? Il est grand temps de considérer la mise en œuvre d'un système de bracelet électronique comme l'a récemment préconisé le président Sarkozy relatif à la violence domestique.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, we do have the Discharged Person Aids Committee, which was instituted with a view to helping prisoners integrate fully in society on their release. The committee meets only once monthly at the prison of Beau Bassin to interview detainees who are to be discharged from prison. The Government annual grant-in-aid to maintain financial assistance to discharge prisoners amounts to about Rs60,000 for 930 prisoners. Each prisoner receives about Rs60 on his release. Do we realise, Mr Speaker, Sir, once released from prison, the prisoner has only Rs60 in his pocket? Do you not think that it is high time to increase that sum?

So, I think it is high time that we open the debate on rehabilitation of our detainees. Obviously, not all can be rehabilitated, but, at least, a great number can. We must do away with obsolete and old method of dealing with prisoners. We need a *juge d'application des peines* as it exists in France to review the length of sentence of certain categories of offenders. We need a *juge d'application des peines* à la mauricienne.

Le juge d'application des peines does not mean that we have to increase the number of judges. It means that we need an experienced magistrate to work on the field of each prisoner

together with psychologists and sociologists and prison officers to review the length of sentence of certain prisoners for a better reinsertion and for a better family environment once a detainee is released. The hope of an early release helps not only the detainee, but also the prison officer in their daily work. Parliament, in its wisdom has passed law for an alternative to jail in the form of community services. I'll pause here to say that all Magistrates are doing a formidable job, but I am sure that the majority of them would agree with me that *la formation* is important even for Members of the bench. They may be brilliant, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the appreciation of the law, but there is also a *sociologie du droit* and it is also by the setting up of an *école de la magistrature* that our magistrate would be better equipped to be alert to the social background of suspect and accused when passing sentences. What is needed is a balance between sending somebody to jail which is a necessary protection of society when it comes to habitual criminals and community services for small offenders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before concluding, let me say a few words about my own constituency. The Minister of Finance has announced the renovation of Plaza, a project that is most welcomed. However, we need to know whether this will remain on paper or will be effectively implemented. I make this remark because many measures announced in the past Budgets have not been fully implemented. Another issue of concern is the football ground at Résidence Camp Le Vieux which needs regular trim and also all other leisure space needs uplifting.

The third issue relates to wastewater works in my constituency, more especially in Roches Brunes. All the areas where works are carried out are in a real mess. It seems that the work is not being done in a proper way. Drilling work is being done several times and the inhabitants are really very angry because there is dust everywhere. The wastewater work is causing trouble, inconvenience and annoyance to the inhabitants of Roche Brunes. Therefore, I would urge the Minister concerned to look into the matter so that the work could be done properly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would conclude by saying that my intervention was not prompted by any personal feeling against anyone. I have expressed a concern and as I said earlier a genuine concern about the degradation *des moeurs*. There is therefore, a pressing need that we bring a safer social environment in Mauritius. Let me say that without an adequate system where all household in this country would be able to afford not only food, shelter and clothing, but also

access to good education, I stress on the word good and a proper health care, I stress on the word proper, the economic system would deteriorate to such an extent as it happens in other urbanist society with a lack of social care. If this social unrest continues, we shall not be living in a safe environment in the near future. However, we want a green Mauritius which is, of course, commendable unless we attack the problem of law and order issue in a frontal manner, the future of our children and the children of our children is already in danger.

The police, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot be looked in isolation. The judiciary cannot be looked in isolation. The prison sector cannot be looked in isolation. Further, education and health should not only be chapters, but we must have a vision of a green Mauritius where all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle can fit together to make Mauritius – *C'est un plaisir*, for what that slogan worth. My apology to the Minister of Finance, I was not meaning to be offensive. When it comes Mr Speaker, Sir, to law and order we really need an integrated approach where the alleviation of poverty is looked at jointly with ways and means of promoting social mobility and, at the same time, to have checks and balances to maintain social rest.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(7.26 p.m)

Mr C. Leopold (Third Member for Rodrigues): Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. I have the floor this evening to say a few words on this Budget 2010. First of all, I am very happy as for the first time I am in this House I can feel that all those coming from Rodrigues will speak with the same voice and will place the interest of the country first. That is why I am going to thank the hon. Spéville who spoke before me. It was high time for all of us to look the right way and to show that not everything in Rodrigues is dark and when it comes to unite ourselves, when it comes to defend the unity, the integrity of our country, when it comes to place our island first, when it comes to place the people of Rodrigues first in the Republic of Mauritius, it is high time for we, Parliamentarians to join together. So, I thank the hon. Member...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget contains many positive measures, many social measures of which I am going to underline a few, but in order to avoid repeating those who intervened before me, I will put more emphasis, obviously, on Rodrigues. Among these social measures, there is no

doubt for the SMEs which obviously will receive boost with measures spelt out by the Minister of Finance for social justice, also. I can see that the eligibility, first of all, for SC and HSC exam fees has been raised up to Rs8500. The Solar energy scheme has been extended as well as the energy saving bulbs scheme. Even measures to eradicate poverty, Mr Speaker, Sir, have been spelt out in this Budget. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, what about Rodrigues? We were expecting more. What about the feel good factor for Rodrigues? I understand that most of these social measures that have spelt out will apply to Rodrigues. What are they expecting? Being given that this is the supposed last Budget before the election, at least, we should have got this special consideration as if we are brothers from some 650kms away from the mainland, Mauritius. But, in my humble opinion, this feel good factor for the special attention of Rodrigues has not been reached, so far as infrastructure is concerned: I am talking of the port and the airport and as well as the water sector.

To start with, Mr Speaker, Sir, my first point is on tourism. M. le président, le tourisme est un secteur d'avenir pour Rodrigues. A l'Assemblée régionale, depuis que le présent gouvernement MR est au pouvoir, bon gré mal gré, nous avons fait des efforts, nous avons apporté des changements, nous avons été à la table des négociations, nous avons fait tous les efforts, malgré nos moyens limités, pour essayer de donner l'impulsion qu'il faut à cette industrie, parce que nous croyons que si l'industrie touristique se développe à Rodrigues - on parle de l'exode vers Maurice, on parle de manque d'emplois - cela pourrait être un moyen de réduire tous ces maux qui rongent la société rodriguaise depuis belle lurette. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, nous participons, à Rodrigues, dans pratiquement toutes les foires, toutes les exhibitions, quand c'est possible, avec les finances qu'on a. Nous avons même créé la compagnie *Discovery Rodrigues*, qui fait un travail formidable dans la promotion de la destination rodriguaise. Tout récemment, depuis l'année dernière, nous avons mis en place une unité pour vérifier et certifier que les établissements qu'on a à Rodrigues travaillent d'après les normes, afin que les touristes qui viennent nous visiter à Rodrigues, reçoivent, ce qu'on appelle, *value for money*.

Je voudrais aussi féliciter le ministre des finances en partie, parce que je suis tout à fait d'accord avec ce qu'a dit mon collègue, l'honorable Spéville, juste avant moi, concernant le *Incentive Package for Increasing Tourism in Rodrigues* qu'on a eu en août 2009. Les statistiques, M. le président, parlent d'elles-mêmes, parce qu'en septembre de cette année, nous

avons eu à enregistrer une augmentation pour le mois de septembre, comparé à septembre de 2008, de 4.8% et, pour le mois d'octobre 2009, comparé à octobre 2008, nous avons eu une augmentation de 25,4. C'est énorme. C'est-à-dire que le *Incentive Package* qui a été donné à Rodrigues a donné des résultats. C'est pourquoi nous avons toujours dit dans cette Chambre, que nous ne venons pas ici à l'Assemblée pour demander monts et merveilles, mais pour demander de mettre à la disposition de Rodrigues des facilités, parce que nous aussi nous savons que nous avons des devoirs envers notre pays, envers la république, et c'est dans cette direction que nous travaillons. Mais, malheureusement, M. le président, si on veut vraiment que le tourisme de Rodrigues se développe, il faut qu'il y ait des places dans l'avion. Pour venir à Maurice assister à l'Assemblée nationale ce matin, j'ai dû me batailler, en tant que membre de l'Assemblée, pour pouvoir trouver une place sur l'ATR 72. C'est souvent le cas, M. le président. Vers la fin de la semaine, après l'Assemblée – moi aussi, j'ai ma famille, j'ai envie de rentrer chez moi – je ne peux pas être certain de trouver une place pour aller à Rodrigues. Et c'est un drame ! C'est comme les touristes venant de France qui, lorsqu'ils font leur réservation pour aller à Rodrigues, on leur dit que pour aller à Maurice il y a de la place, mais pour Rodrigues, non. C'est pourquoi, nous, dans cette Chambre, on a toujours dit que la solution au problème touristique de Rodrigues, c'est qu'il faut agrandir la piste de Corail. Mais, M. le président, quand je regarde dans le budget de cette année, il a été prévu plus de R 13,5 milliards pour l'aéroport SSR. Je trouve que c'est bien, c'est formidable ; c'est dans notre république. Qu'en est-t-il de Rodrigues ? On a fait des études et des études ; c'est comme si l'île est devenue maintenant un laboratoire par excellence ; depuis des années, des études et des études. La dernière étude en date nous donnait un chiffre de R 1,3 milliards. J'ai essayé de faire le calcul. Même si on dit que Rodrigues est le dixième district de Maurice, si on divise 13,5 par dix, Rodrigues devait avoir, au moins, son milliard pour l'aéroport, *but this is not the case*, et c'est ce qui me chagrine, M. le président. Surtout que, pendant le dernier discours du budget, le Premier ministre, lui-même, nous avait dit que, dans ce dernier budget – c'est vrai c'était vague – Rodrigues allait avoir une attention particulière. J'attendais dans cette attention particulière, toutes ces revendications qu'on a faites depuis des années, par exemple, l'aéroport de Corail. Pour moi, c'est quelque chose de vital pour le pays. On allait au moins dire qu'on va agrandir la piste de Corail qui porte maintenant le nom de Sir Gaëtan Duval - qui, au moment de donner le nom, on avait dit que c'était le *branding*, c'était le moment de donner l'impulsion pour

développer le tourisme à Rodrigues, et développer l'aéroport. Malheureusement, *this is not the case*. On est resté à la case départ. L'ATR a décollé, certes mais l'aéroport est resté à terre. Si on veut vraiment aider Rodrigues, si on veut vraiment que le tourisme soit le moteur de développement du pays - et on a la capacité de développer le pays, de développer ce secteur - il faut nous donner les moyens nécessaires. Ce n'est pas avec les R 275 millions de budget capital qu'on a données à l'Assemblée régionale qu'on va pouvoir faire l'aéroport de Rodrigues, qui nous fait R 1.3 milliards. Il faut être sérieux. Ou nous voulons aider Rodrigues - nous faisons les efforts, cela fait partie de la république - ou aider Rodrigues n'est qu'un slogan. Franchement, cela va friser la déception.

Concernant le développement touristique, notre port aussi, je crois, nécessite une attention particulière, et c'est justifié, M. le président. On ne vient pas ici pour demander n'importe quoi. Combien de paquebots arrivent dans les eaux de Port Mathurin, mais les touristes n'arrivent pas à entrer dans le pays parce que le paquebot ne peut pas accoster au port qu'on a actuellement. Combien d'études ont été faites par le *Port Authority* ! Jusqu'à maintenant, nient, zéro ! Le port, l'aéroport, rien ! Rien de grande envergure n'a été fait depuis les dix, quinze ans. Si nous voulons aider Rodrigues, je crois que la balle n'est pas dans le camp des rodriguais. Je crois que tout le monde sait où se trouve la balle maintenant. Nous, à Rodrigues, on veut travailler ; on ne veut pas être un fardeau pour la république ; on veut contribuer dans l'économie de la république. Mais, il faut nous donner les moyens. Sans les moyens, que peut-on faire ? D'autant plus, je viens de l'apprendre, qu'à partir de demain, le 1^{er} décembre, le *port freight* de Maurice vers Rodrigues va augmenter seulement par 17.5% ; et c'est applicable à partir de demain matin. Vous imaginez l'implication sur l'industrie de la construction, par exemple, à la fin de 2009 ! Et le coût de la vie à Rodrigues ! Toutes ces commodités qu'on importe de Maurice, de l'étranger ! Comment va-t-on faire ? On va mettre des subsides ? Où va-t-on trouver l'argent ? C'est pourquoi je dis, M. le président, qu'il y a beaucoup de mesures sociales, mais on n'a pas eu cette attention particulière.

Concernant les infrastructures, M. le président, je suis vraiment touché par rapport à ce qui se passe à Maurice. C'est vrai que vous avez la congestion routière ici – je touche le bois ; il ne faut pas qu'on en ait à Rodrigues - mais il a été dit ici *more than Rs15 billions for road extension and improvement*. Quant est-il de Rodrigues, M. le président ? 600 kilomètres de route ! Comme nous disons, en bon Rodriguais : '*même karo canne ena la route goudronnée*'.

A Rodrigues, par exemple, nos axes principaux, de l'aéroport pour aller au *Cotton Bay*, ne sont pas encore terminés. La route de Mourouk pour aller à Gravier, et de Gravier pour aller au centre, à Grande Montagne, n'a jamais été asphaltée. On attend toujours, M. le président, pour ne citer que ceux-là. Dans ces conditions comment veut-on attirer les touristes et l'investissement à Rodrigues ? Je suis content que dans le budget il a été dit que R 100 millions ont été retenues pour les infrastructures publiques à Rodrigues. En 2009, avec l'augmentation des prix des commodités et des frets de 17.5% qui va prendre effet dès demain matin, 17.5%, que va-t-il se passer dans le pays, M. le président ?

M. le président, le secteur de l'eau est un vrai problème pour Rodrigues. Tous ceux qui ont eu l'occasion de visiter le pays vous diront que ce n'est pas de la démagogie. C'est la base du développement sérieux, M. le président. C'est pourquoi nous, voyant le problème d'eau à Rodrigues, avec nos moyens limités, encore une fois, nous avons essayé de mettre sur pied une compagnie, le *Rodrigues Water Company* - comme vous avez, ici, la *CWA*. Et cela a été reconnu par le DCP et par l'Agence Française du Développement, l'AFD.

Là encore, dans l'esprit du *feel good factor* et de cette attention particulière, je m'attendais à ce qu'on ait, au moins, un encouragement à Rodrigues pour nettoyer nos réservoirs et barrages et aussi remplacer les tuyaux galvanisés en service depuis 20 à 25 ans. C'est malheureux, M. le président ! J'entends, par exemple, que pour le Bagatelle Dam, une somme de R 3 milliards est prévue, quand nous savons que la pluviométrie à Maurice est beaucoup plus élevée qu'à Rodrigues. Là, je trouve qu'il y a un traitement de deux poids, deux mesures ; je ne comprends pas. Alors que Rodrigues va créer une compagnie pour gérer l'eau, je m'attendais à des encouragements pour nous susciter à poursuivre dans cette voie. Hélas !

M. le président, c'est la première fois dans l'histoire de Rodrigues que les étudiants qui ont fréquenté l'*IVTB* et les lycées polytechniques à Maurice, ceux qui ont fait du *pipe fitting*, du *plumbing*, entre autres, vont être recrutés avec leur *NTC3* par la compagnie. C'est la première fois qu'on va donner la chance à ces enfants dont les parents ont trimé pendant des années ; les encourager à aller dans ces écoles techniques comme l'*IVTB* et pour qu'ils puissent trouver un emploi décent par la suite. Et ceci grâce au Rodrigues Water Company, là aussi, j'attendais, M. le président, ne serait-ce qu'un encouragement parce que, l'eau c'est la vie, l'eau c'est vitale. Mais, malheureusement, je n'ai pas vu ceci, M. le président.

M. le président, concernant le secteur de la pêche, je suis très content que pour le projet de *SEMPA*, R 30 millions sont prévues dans la région de Port Sud Est, Mourouk. Pour nous, c'est un projet qu'on tient à cœur. Le lagon de Rodrigues est surexploité et il faut créer des réserves. Avec la participation des pêcheurs et les communautés villageoises, c'est la seule façon de protéger notre lagon. Je suis très content de cela. On a pu trouver un terrain d'entente pour les pêcheurs qui ont des cartes, qui ont plus de 50 ans et qui, volontairement, ont voulu se retirer du lagon. C'est encore une façon de diminuer la pression sur nos lagons. Là, je remercie le ministre des finances d'avoir agréé à notre demande et d'aller dans ce sens. Ce sont les efforts qui vont nous aider à soulager nos lagons et, en même temps, favoriser la pêche en haute mer. C'est pourquoi, M. le président, tout récemment, on a eu une mission à Madagascar, dans le même sens, où, on a essayé de voir comment on pourrait élever des concombres de mer à Rodrigues – 'bambara' - surtout l'espèce *Hollothuria scabra*, parce qu'on a une grande communauté de pêcheurs et une grande demande de cette commodité sur le marché internationale. Pourquoi ne pas les exploiter à Rodrigues ?

D'après les analyses, et d'après ce qu'on a pu comprendre, c'est possible de faire cet élevage à Rodrigues. Là, justement, les pêcheurs qui ont volontairement quitté leur activité dans le lagon pour éviter de détruire nos coraux, pourraient gagner leur vie décemment.

(Interruptions)

Concernant l'achat des bateaux de pêche au paragraphe 68, ce n'est pas clair. Je ne vais pas répéter ce qu'à dit l'honorable Spéville. Il faut que ce soit clair, combien on aura pour Rodrigues. A ce moment-là, les pêcheurs seront plus tranquillisés par rapport à leur avenir.

Concernant le sport, je trouve aussi que des décisions ont été prises maintenant pour que les anciens athlètes à la retraite puissent, à l'avenir, devenir des *coaches* parce qu'il y en a pas mal à Rodrigues. Je trouve que c'est une façon honorable de leur rendre hommage. Très souvent, ces athlètes ne sont pas nécessairement ceux qui ont brillé académiquement, mais ils ont quand même le potentiel, et ils ont défendu les quadricolores, et les couleurs de la République ; ils ont de l'expérience. Donc, je trouve que c'est tout à fait honorable de leur permettre de partager leurs expériences avec les plus jeunes. Je remercie le ministre des finances pour cette annonce.

Par contre, M. le président, à Rodrigues, nous avons aussi créé ce qu'on appelle le Club 'R'. On vient de le lancer. C'est la sélection de football de Rodrigues. On a dit que pendant des années il y a eu des athlètes de qualité à Rodrigues, et c'est vrai. On parle de Milazar, d'Augustin, de Vieillesse, d'Antonio Félicité, etc. Même au niveau du football, on a eu pas mal d'exemples. Prenons l'exemple de Jean Marc Ithier, qui a brillé à Maurice, et qui est maintenant en Afrique du Sud. On aimerait redonner au sport roi sa carte de noblesse pour avoir ce Club 'R'. Là, j'attendais encore cette attention particulière du ministre des finances de donner cet encouragement dans ce sens. Mais, je n'ai rien entendu. A Maurice il y a le Club 'M', et nous à Rodrigues on a le Club 'R' pour la sélection. Il y aura sûrement des bons éléments à Maurice, tout comme à Rodrigues et ce sont ces bons éléments ensemble qui vont défendre la République de Maurice.

(Interruptions)

J'espère qu'on mettra les moyens nécessaires pour que ce club puisse aller de l'avant.

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can we expect to have fruits, if fruit trees are not planted? Si on veut des fruits, il faut arroser. C'est ce qu'on a commencé à Rodrigues. Des graines sont déjà en terre, maintenant il faut les fertilisants, l'eau et la lumière.

M. le président, concernant le *IT Sector*, on a parlé du *SAFE cable* dans le passé. On disait que c'était trop loin ou trop cher. Il y a eu pas mal de questions que les autres Membres de cette Assemblée venant de Rodrigues, y compris moi-même, avons posées. Tout récemment, on apprend que Maurice est connectée avec le *LION cable* ...

(Interruptions)

.... alors qu'à Rodrigues on a ni tigre, ni léopard, ni rien.

(Interruptions)

On a Léopold, on n'a pas léopard !

M. le président. On parle de *high rate of unemployment*, on parle des *call centres*, on parle de l'internet à haut débit, mais là je trouve qu'encore une fois, Rodrigues a été laissée- pour-compte. *Cerf passe, Rodrigues niet, lion passe, tigre passe, Rodrigues niet.*

M. le président, je voudrais revenir à un point : il s'agit du fameux exode à Maurice. C'est un problème à Rodrigues. Mais ce n'est pas un problème qu'on a inventé en 2006. Parce que si on regarde les statistiques des 17 dernières années, la population de Rodrigues se stagne aux alentours de 35,000 à 37,000 et la mobilité entre l'île Maurice et l'île Rodrigues a été toujours plus ou moins la même. Je trouve que c'est quand même mesquin parce que j'entends cela tellement souvent donnant l'impression que l'exode vers Maurice a commencé quand le MR a pris le pouvoir à Rodrigues en 2006. M. le président, dans ces statistiques de 8000/8500 qu'on avance, il y a les étudiants qui viennent à l'université de Maurice ; il y a les sportifs et les membres de l'assemblée aussi qui viennent à Maurice. On fait partie de ces statistiques quand on vient à Maurice. C'est l'exode vers Maurice! Il faut être sérieux ! Cela fait partie des Articles du Droit de l'Homme. Si ma mémoire est bonne, l'Article 13 parle de la liberté de mouvement, mais n'empêche, M. le président, ce que je n'aime pas c'est quand il y a quelque chose de mauvais qui se passe avec un Rodriguais, c'est tout de suite l'étiquette Rodriguais, mais quand c'est quelque chose de bon, c'est mauricien. Il ne faut pas aller dans ce sens là. Il ne faut pas faire cette distinction là.

M. le président, il faut bien que les Rodriguais viennent à Maurice. Comment est-ce qu'ils vont découvrir ce qu'on n'a pas à Rodrigues? Il faut bien venir à Maurice comme les mauriciens qui vont en Angleterre et en France. Pour moi, ce n'est pas un problème, mais si un Rodriguais vient à Maurice sans diplôme, sans degré, sans rien en poche, à être livreur, chauffeur de camion ou *enflé de camion*, là c'est un problème, mais le Rodriguais qui vient à Maurice, qui occupe une place de responsabilité, *where is the problem* ? Nous sommes dans la même République. Pour moi, ce n'est pas un problème. Si un mauricien va à Rodrigues, est-ce que c'est un problème? Pourquoi on ne parle pas d'exode ? Moi, je pense que c'est grand temps d'arrêter avec ces slogans parce que cela donne vraiment une mauvaise connotation au pays. Il faut qu'on soit sérieux là-dessus.

M. le président, pour terminer je voudrais vous dire que nous aussi à Rodrigues nous faisons des efforts malgré que certains veulent faire croire que tout est noir à Rodrigues. Le ministre des finances a eu l'occasion de constater lui-même malgré tout ce qu'on a dit sur Rodrigues qu'avec les moyens de bord, nous faisons ce qu'on peut. C'est pourquoi nous aussi nous voulons travailler dans les normes. C'est pourquoi vous allez voir, M. le président, on a, par exemple, le projet ICZM. Tout le monde est en train de travailler là-dessus à Rodrigues, parce

que nous croyons qu'il faut protéger l'environnement marin à Rodrigues. Nous croyons qu'il faut vraiment éviter à ce que demain où après demain l'île Rodrigues n'est plus ce qu'elle est actuellement, n'est plus *environment-friendly*.

Le 14 décembre, dans 14 jours, nous allons lancer officiellement ce qu'on appelle le SIDPR. C'est un grand projet qui va mettre les bases du développement durable du pays parce que nous croyons dans le développement durable et justement là je vais demander à mon collègue, à mon ami, l'honorable Spéville qu'il faut continuer dans ce sens. Avec le SIDPR c'est tout l'île Rodrigues qui est concernée. Donc, tout le monde doit travailler, main dans la main. J'ai toujours dit ici à l'assemblée, *enn la main batter pas fer son, donc nous bizin deux la main pour faire son*. Avec ce projet, j'invite tout le monde à Rodrigues de se joindre parce qu'il faut voir le pays d'abord. Il y a même le PME qu'on vient de commencer à Rodrigues. C'est pour vous dire que nous aussi à Rodrigues nous faisons des efforts pour être aux normes de la République parce que nous faisons partie de cette République arc-en-ciel. La force de la République, c'est sa diversité et l'unité entre nos îles.

Mais, M. le président le *feel good factor*, malheureusement, n'a pas été ressenti. L'attention particulière tant attendue promise par le Premier ministre lui-même pour ce dernier budget, on ne l'a pas ressentie.

M. le président, je vais terminer en disant : j'aime mon pays, j'aime ma patrie, mais j'aimerais bien quand on prend des décisions pour le développement que ce ne soit pas des décisions de deux poids deux mesures. Il faut qu'on sent, peu importe l'endroit où on est dans la République, qu'on soit à Agaléga, St Brandon, à Mahébourg, à Rodrigues ou à Grand' Baie, que les efforts fournis sont équitables. C'est dans cet esprit qu'on aura une république grande et forte. Rodrigues a besoin qu'on l'aide et Rodrigues veut qu'on l'aide.

Merci beaucoup, M. le président.

(5.57 p.m.)

Mr E. Guimbeau (First Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, c'est un plaisir pour moi aujourd'hui de m'adresser à cette auguste assemblée en tant que député indépendant, membre du Mouvement Mauricien Social Démocrate car le parti lui est parti de l'autre côté de la chambre. Le slogan du Mouvement Mauricien Social Démocrate c'est la

vérité, l'intégrité et la transparence. Trois mots absents dans la gestion du pays par l'alliance qui nous dirige.

M. le président, je voudrais dire que j'ai écouté nos deux frères Rodriguais et cela fait mal au cœur. Qu'on le veuille ou pas, les Rodriguais font partie de la République. Si j'ai un conseil à donner à nos frères Rodriguais aujourd'hui, je crois que le moment est arrivé pour que nos frères Rodriguais aillent eux-mêmes frapper aux portes de nos pays amis, des institutions financières car c'est inacceptable ce qu'on a entendu ici dans cette Chambre. L'île Rodrigues est toujours la cinquième roue de la charrue et l'enfant pauvre de tout développement de la République surtout sous ce présent gouvernement. Ceci est inacceptable et c'est malheureux de constater cet état de choses. Donc, nous dans l'opposition, nous sympathisons avec nos frères Rodriguais et dans quelques mois les choses vont changer. Prenez patience!

M. le président, je ne vais pas polémiquer, j'ai entendu l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing dire quelques mots. Je vais soulever un seul point parce qu'ils veulent essayer de se faire passer pour des saints. N'oublions pas la campagne en 2005! Je prends un item sur CTDS. Qu'est-ce que nous n'avons pas entendu venant des membres du gouvernement.

L'honorable ministre des finances, en parlant du CTDS, avait lui-même dit « scandale du siècle ». Il sourit, c'est vrai ! Et l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing parlait de magouille. Le Premier ministre martelait dans tous ses *meetings* qu'il allait faire une commission d'enquête *enn fois arrive dans pouvoir*. M. le président, j'ai posé quatre questions parlementaires pour demander où était la commission d'enquête. La première réponse a été qu'ils ont institué un *Fact-Finding Committee*. Finalement, je suis revenu à la charge pour demander où est le *Fact-Finding Committee*, l'autre réponse a été qu'ils ont fait un *High-Powered Committee*.

Finalement, je suis revenu à la charge, M. le président, pour demander où on en est avec le *High Powered Committee* et là il n'y a pas un mot. Ceci vient démontrer la démagogie infecte de la campagne qui s'est passée en 2005 et nous rentrons en pleine campagne dans quelques temps. Je fais un appel à nos dirigeants de l'Alliance Sociale de changer de disque parce que ce disque est rayé. L'île Maurice a évolué, M. le président.

Nous voici donc enfin arrivés au cinquième et dernier budget de l'Alliance dite sociale. Cette même alliance qui quatre ans et demi de cela avait promis monts et merveilles à toute la nation mauricienne, une alliance qui avait promis de changer la vie de tout ce peuple admirable

en cent jours, M. le président. Il ne faut pas oublier la démagogie dans laquelle la dernière campagne a été faite. Cette même alliance avait comme principal thème la démocratisation de l'économie avec toutes les connotations qu'elle véhiculait faisant ainsi croire aux mauriciennes et mauriciens la nouvelle terre promise, cette terre où le soleil brille pour tout le monde, une île Maurice pour tous. Aujourd'hui, nous ne pouvons malheureusement que constater une île Maurice à deux vitesses avec une consolidation de l'économie dans la main d'une poignée de petits copains et de gros requins proches du pouvoir qui font la pluie et le beau temps en criant sur tous les toits '*gouvernement dan nou la main*'.

M. le président, la PNQ de ce matin en dit long. Concernant le *Stimulus Package*, nous avons vu RS Denim appartenant à un député et le *Infinity BPO* appartenant à un *Adviser* au *Prime Minister's office*. Donc, cela démontre, quel genre de gouvernement que c'est. Aussi il ne faut pas oublier pendant la campagne, le Premier ministre disait: *ça fois là bef travay, bef manger* et, aujourd'hui, c'est *bef travay, ti copains manzé*, M. le président. Un favoritisme infect dépassant toutes les limites de l'acceptable; des passe-droits comme nous n'en avons jamais vus dans le passé. La méritocratie n'existe plus, les institutions sont bafouées. Le racisme, le castéisme et le communalisme sont à leur apogée et demeurent ainsi le critère prédominant dans tout exercice de promotion et de recrutement, M. le président. Nous sommes désormais tous témoins de l'émergence de cette île Maurice à deux vitesses.

M. le président, l'Alliance Sociale est à la fin de son mandat très, très bientôt et, bien entendu, l'heure est au bilan. Je profiterai de ces quelques minutes qui me sont accordées afin de démontrer en quelques points ce fameux bilan et le peuple sera libre de juger par lui-même s'il a été berné ou pas et si sa vie a vraiment changé pour le mieux comme promis durant la campagne de 2005 par les membres de l'Alliance Sociale, dirigée par le Parti Travailleiste accompagné de ses petites béquilles - si je ne me trompe pas à ce jour ils sont presque sept - le Parti Travailleiste, le PMSD, le PMXD, le MR, le MSD, les Verts et le MSM. Enfin, on ne sait pas pour le MSM, on attend. On disait Blanche Neige et les sept nains et, aujourd'hui, on dit Navin et les sept béquilles.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, un petit mot à mon ex-Leader, je le vois qu'il s'excite. C'est la deuxième fois qu'il *cross the floor* en espérant devenir un ministre et c'est la deuxième fois que le Premier

ministre lui donne un *body guard*, mais pas la fonction de ministre. C'est du jamais vu, M. le président !

(*Interruptions*)

Mr Speaker : Order, order !

Mr Guimbeau: Ce présent budget n'a été rien d'autre qu'un prolongement de fausses promesses des quatre précédents budgets. Les effets d'annonce se sont amplifiés budget après budget et nous sommes loin de constater le fameux '*rezilta lor rezilta*' un slogan creux dénué de tout sens, utilisé par certains afin de faire croire que le pays avance, que le pays progresse.

Les deux principaux secteurs qui maintiennent le pays debout le ICT qualifié d'éléphant blanc sans compter la démagogie communale infecte sur les terres d'Ilovo, où se trouve la Cyber Cité et les IRS qualifiés d'apartheid économique et de ghetto de riches. Aujourd'hui, ces deux secteurs qui ont pris naissance sous l'ancien gouvernement ont sauvé l'île Maurice de la catastrophe économique et cela l'Alliance Sociale doit le reconnaître. Sans ces deux secteurs, l'île Maurice serait en faillite totale aujourd'hui, M. le président. Le bilan de ce gouvernement fait honte. Entre les pertes de six milliards sur le *hedging* d'Air Mauritius, les trois milliards de la STC, sans compter tous les sagas de lait et de farine où les petits copains vont négocier les contrats de farine; sans compter le gaspillage indécent comme l'a démontré le dernier rapport de l'audit cinq milliards de roupies et le ministre des finances parlait de *war against waste*.

(*Interruptions*)

La guerre contre le gaspillage, *that is what the hon. Minister is saying. He forgot about that.* Tous les gros projets d'infrastructure sont restés des effets d'annonce, M. le président : le *Dream Bridge*, depuis cinq ans, on nous sonne les oreilles avec; le *Ring Road*, le fameux tunnel, le *bus lane* et j'en passe. Le pays perd des milliards dans les congestions routières et les propriétaires de voitures et voyageurs en bus sont de plus en plus stressés. L'Alliance Sociale a aujourd'hui rendu les mauriciens un peuple stressé. La CWA, la CEB, la NTA, la Wastewater Authority et tous les corps paraétatiques sont dans le rouge. Ils portent bien la couleur. Les autres projets annoncés depuis quatre ans et demi : Le Land Oceanic est toujours au stade d'annonce. Le *MID* - toujours rien de concret. Joël de Rosnay, où est-il ? Fantôme. On ne le voit plus. *Né pli tender. Ine dire li lève paquet.* L'aéroport, le port attendent toujours d'être modernisés. Le Procurement

Board est un leurre, M. le président et, ce matin, je vois le Central Procurement Board accusé de traitements de faveurs. C'était dit et c'était connu d'avance, M. le président - les petits copains ! La télévision privée est un bluff. La réforme électorale et le financement des partis politiques, un mensonge. L'Equal Opportunity un *eye wash*. Les scandales que nous avons vécus tels que le scandale de Boskalis. Les scandales à la douane : les whiskys - trois cents millions. A l'ICAC, la seule enquête qu'on ait entendu parler c'était le téléviseur de Bert Cunningham où il était accusé et, finalement, il était pris comme témoin contre le douanier. C'est du jamais vu, M. le président ! Scandale de passe-droits à l'aéroport. CCTV camera filmait où les petits copains passaient dans le *green channel* avec des produits. Scandale à la banque de Maurice - nous vivons cela actuellement. La fermeture de Desbro; l'arrêt d'opération de Catovair. Voilà les résultats. Tentative de fermeture des Moulins de la Concorde. Tentative de fermeture de KFC sans compter la façon de faire du ministre des finances avec les taxes sur l'épargne, le NRPT et toute une série, mais je m'attarderai quelque peu sur un secteur qui m'interpelle car il est selon mon humble avis celui où il y a le plus de scandales, c'est celui des terres de l'État. Et, malheureusement, le ministre, dans son budget, ne propose rien afin d'arrêter cette hémorragie, mais je le laisse libre à sa conscience, M. le président.

Je vais dire un petit mot sur les terres de l'État parce que le budget on ne souffle pas mot. M. le président, depuis 2005, j'ai tiré la sonnette d'alarme concernant les pratiques abusives sur l'allocation des terres de l'État. J'ai posé des dizaines de questions parlementaires qui, malheureusement, trop souvent sont restées sans réponse et je n'ai pas eu d'autre recours que d'aller frapper à la porte de la Central CID et, surtout, pas celle de l'ICAC car la confiance de cette institution, gouffre de fonds publics, est entamée.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has to come with a substantive motion if he wants to criticise.

Mr Guimbeau: Okay, but still it is.

Mr Speaker: I told the hon. Member that he could not continue unless he respects my ruling.

Mr Guimbeau: I do respect, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Je pensais sincèrement que dans le budget le ministre des finances serait venu avec certaines propositions afin d'amender la State Land Act qui aurait permis de mettre un frein à la braderie des terres de l'État. Malheureusement, le ministre des finances n'a pas soufflé mot et ce silence est inquiétant, M. le président.

J'ai une lettre d'un investisseur que je voudrais partager avec la Chambre pour venir démontrer les pratiques actuelles. Je cite -

"I am an investor and was proposed land for hotel construction. However, I was shocked that State lands are being sold at so exorbitant price to the benefit of politicians and their agents. I was proposed to pay the agent of politician in USD or Euro in Dubai or Switzerland."

C'est une lettre d'un investisseur, M. le président. Companies are being registered by agents, I won't name the party. The financial position of these companies does not justify land allocation to them. They identified State land, reservation letter is issued to them, they start finding investors. The conditions in the reservation letter are delayed intentionally because of delay in finding investors. The Letter of Intent must follow within a reasonable time after the reservation letter is issued. Officers are instructed to delay the issue till the agent finds customers for the State land. Investors are proposed to open an 'escrow' account to put the money which will be paid to a political agent in exchange of shares to the investors. This is a very clever scheme to make easy money, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I would like to ask a few questions. Why is it that *la clause 18 dans le lease agreement n'est pas amendée*? Why a certified bank statement is not asked from the bank on the financial soundness of the applicant? Does the Permanent Secretary examine the application in all fairness before submitting it to the Cabinet? Why is it that when there is so long delay to satisfy the conditions in the reservation letter, it is not cancelled? *Il y a un delay qui, malheureusement, n'est jamais respecté.* Why the Government does not invite tenders as in Singapore? Why the tenders are not opened in the presence of all the interested parties, Mr Speaker, Sir? *Nous connaissons tous la réponse.* Agricultural lands have also been allocated to political agents at Palmar, Trou- aux-Biches. I will come to details, Mr Speaker, Sir. These lands have never been cultivated and the lands will be converted later for industrial use and sold to investors.

Another letter received and I quote “Mr ‘X’, a former Senior Surveyor of the Ministry of Housing and Lands has been involved in many transactions. In this case he has obtained a cultivation lease of over 2 *arpents* of prime land *pied dans l’eau, Pas Géométrique* land at Flic en Flac for cultivation with permission to erect technician quarters. He applied for the conversion of land from cultivation to bungalow complex. Finally, he and his son sold their shares. *M. le président, j’ai posé des questions parlementaires sur tous ces issues*, but I never got any answers and that is why I went to the Central CID and gave all these details. I want to go through some of the scandals and I quote from press release : « *Après l’octroi des lettres de réservation des dessous de la surenchère des Pas Géométriques, qui sont traités comme des commodités, des pseudo promoteurs, hôteliers s’adonnent à des tractations. Dans la quête du jackpot ils vendent et revendent leurs compagnies. M. le président, une compagnie au capital de R100,000 vendue à R 35 millions* ».

(Interruptions)

Autre titre : « Concernant les lettres de réservation des *Pas Géométriques*, les nordistes sont en force parmi les bénéficiaires » Intrigant ! Il n’est pas donné aux communs des mortels ni à une petite compagnie de construire un hôtel touristique. Cependant le gouvernement Mauricien accorde des lettres de réservation des *Pas Géométriques* à des compagnies fraîchement mises sur pied par des particuliers. C’est ce qui ressort de l’enquête auprès du Registrar of Companies. *M. le président*, je vais vous citer quelques compagnies. Lotus Resort Ltd. : 7 arpents à Balaclava avec pour capital R10,000 ; Kohinoor Investment Holdings : 11 arpents 7 perches à Balaclava en Juillet 2008 ; Sai Hotel Ltd. : 2 arpents à Balaclava en 2007 ; V.K.A. Ltd : 1 arpent à Belle Mare ; BR Property Ltd : 12 arpents à Merville ; Red Pepper : 3045 mètres carrés à Cap Malheureux.

(Interruptions)

J’ai demandé à plusieurs reprises dans la presse et au Parlement « Une commission d’enquête est nécessaire » mais on attend toujours, *M. le président*.

(Interruptions)

Pas gagne tracas journal là ! Leaside Ltd.: 11 arpents à Bel Ombre; les Holly's :1277 mètres carrés; White Water Consulting: 4 arpents à Balaclava; Nath and Nath: 2 arpents à Balaclava. I can go on, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Bientôt 350 arpents à distribuer avant les élections ! *Nous pou guette film ! Big business* pour les spéculateurs ! Je vous ai expliqué tout le mécanisme de l'octroi. M. le président, nous voilà en présence d'une série de scandales. Malheureusement, le gouvernement pratique toujours la politique de l'autruche. Il y a des milliards de roupies sur les transactions des terres de l'état et des centaines d'arpents de nos plus précieuses terres sont sujettes à des spéculations outrancières. Le gouvernement ne réagit toujours pas. La révision des baux industriels pour *bungalow complex* et appartements et autres activités commerciales se fait toujours attendre, M. le président, car politiquement parlant, cela risque de faire mal. Nos meilleurs sites sont loués à quelques roupies tels que l'île aux Bénitiers, l'île Plate, l'île au Gabriel, des centaines d'arpents à Balaclava, Palmar, Flic en Flac et à Merville et autres terres sur le littoral dont récemment le *President Bungalow* et j'ai posé une question parlementaire pour demain. Apparemment, le bungalow du président aussi sera donné aux petits copains à Anse-La-Raie. Nous attendons la réponse.

Maintenant nous pouvons nous étendre sur les terres autre que la côte où les terres de l'état sont louées à quatre sous. Prenons le projet Tianli. Je sais quelle est la position du ministre là-dessus. Nous ne sommes pas contre le développement, M. le président, mais c'est un développement privé sur des terres de l'état. Ce que nous demandons c'est le *fair share paid* à l'état et non pas R 100 l'arpent comme cela a été fait, d'autant plus qu'il y a des centaines de millions de roupies dans les infrastructures routières, CWA et Wastewater. Des centaines de millions de roupies sont données pour une location de R 100 par arpent. Un investissement privé comme Apollo Bramwell Hospital à R 50 l'arpent. Ici aussi, nous ne sommes pas contre, mais ce sont des investissements privés. Gamma Coventa, en contradiction totale avec le State Land Act, une industrie polluante tout à fait opposée à la vision du MID. Aujourd'hui Gamma Coventa va construire sur des terres de l'état. Dans toute cette saga des terres de l'état, seule une petite catégorie a été ciblée et le ministre a annoncé récemment que le gouvernement a récolté près de R 1.5 milliards sur ces baux. Toute cette catégorie de locataires sans exception ont eu à se plier à la volonté du ministre sous menace d'être expulsés de leurs maisons. Malheureusement, les

vieux que le ministre pensait ne seraient plus là aujourd'hui, sont toujours là. Nombreux sont ceux qui ont eu à tout vendre afin de pouvoir rester sous un toit durant les derniers jours de leur vie. Je fais un appel et lance un défi ici dans cette Chambre au ministre des finances en tant qu'homme responsable de demander l'institution d'une commission d'enquête sur l'allocation des terres de l'état de Juillet 2005 à ce jour. Il est incapable de le faire, M. le président, et il connaît la raison pour laquelle il ne peut s'aventurer dans une telle démarche.

(Interruptions)

Mo là depuis 2005! If they want to talk about 2000, go ahead and do it! They can go ahead and do it just like I did! I went to the Central CID and I gave in all those cases there! So, they can go ahead and do it as well!

J'attends toujours la réponse à ma question parlementaire du 12 août 2008 concernant la liste des baux transférés, le montant du *land transfer tax* et *registration duty*. Donc, M. le président, comme je disais, tous ces dossiers ont été référés à la Central CID, et pourquoi ? C'est parce que dans la Chambre quand on pose des questions aux ministres, ils ne nous répondent pas. J'insiste et le Speaker cite Erskine May. Je respecte le *ruling*. Aujourd'hui, j'ai un deuxième parlement qui se trouve aux Casernes Centrale et j'espère qu'ils pourront faire le travail correctement.

Un autre scandale que j'ai soulevé dans cette même Chambre, c'est celui de SSS Triolet sur des terres agricoles sous *drip irrigation*.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry. I heard the hon. Member saying that there is a second Parliament in *Casernes Centrales*. What does he mean? Does he mean that he is prevented from speaking in the House or from doing his work in this House? Can I have some clarifications?

Mr Guimbeau: Yes Mr Speaker, Sir, I can tell you why. Every time I put a question, I never get the answer. When I come back three months later, I also never get the answer.

Mr Speaker: That is the point. The hon. Member is criticising those who do not answer ...

Mr Guimbeau: Yes and when I insist to get the answer you stand up and say you cannot force..

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has been a Member of Parliament for the last ten years in this House. He reads Erskine May. In the Erskine May, it is stated that the Chair cannot force a Minister to give his answer.

(Interruptions)

Wait! If a Minister had promised to do something and he has not done it, the hon. Member can come back with the question after three months. If that same thing happens, this is the Standing Order, I am helpless, and he must understand that.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, what you are saying is exactly what I was saying. We are talking the same language Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Yes, but the hon. Member must not say that the Chair prevents him from doing his work, this is casting aspersion on the conduct of the Chair.

(Interruptions)

I do not want to hear anybody. I am clear on this.

Mr Guimbeau: Mr Speaker, Sir, I never said that the Chair is preventing me from doing my job. I said when I insist, you talk about Erskine May and I do respect that.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Ok, thank you.

Mr Guimbeau: Of course, this is what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir!

Mr Speaker: I apply the Standing Orders.

Mr Guimbeau: There is no problem, I respect that and I respect the Chair as well, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am coming to SSS Triolet, *where* the Government Valuer *a donné son chiffre et le* Board of Assessment *le tient. Aujourd'hui, quand je pose des questions, le ministre, bien sûr, se cache derrière le* Board of Assessment. I put a PQ No. B/1054, asking release of land which has been compulsorily acquired. So when I go on the list I see a construction of Sebastopol SSS, assessed by Government Valuer : Rs465,000, the actual amount compensation paid: Rs465,000, this is ok. Construction of roundabout at junction Montagne Blanche, assessed

by Government Valuer: Rs1.7 m., actual amount paid Rs1.7 m. on 14 February 2007. When I go down the list Mr Speaker, Sir, I see market fair Triolet, Rs408,000 assessed by Government, Rs408,000 compensation paid, perfect. But now I come to the extension of SSS land for construction of schools at Triolet Mr Speaker, Sir, assessed as per Government Valuer: Rs680,000. Board of Assessment award Rs7, 575,810, *le 02 juillet 2007*. Extension of SSS: Land for school at Triolet, this is another plot assessed by Government: Rs692,000. Board of Assessment award Rs7, 698,486, *le 02 juillet 2007*. *Troisième terrain évalué à R 380,000*, Board of Assessment award : Rs4,217,166 *M. le président, une déposition a été faite à la Central CID et je souhaite que le Board of Assessment award puisse prendre l'entière responsabilité du chiffre qu'il avance M. le président.*

M. le président, je voudrais maintenant dire un petit mot sur un autre scandale qui nous fait mal surtout quand nous parlons du *social housing*. J'ai été témoin oculaire de l'éviction des malheureuses familles de squatters de Karo Kalyptis à Belle Mare quelque temps de cela. *Special Mobile Force*, chiens loups, matraques, mitraillettes, enfants traumatisés, hurlant alors que la SMF écrasait leurs abris de fortune. Une fois leur carnage terminé, les hommes du gouvernement sont repartis laissant derrière eux des dizaines de familles, bébés, enfants et les femmes à la belle étoile. Aucune provision n'était faite pour ces familles en détresse. Elles étaient traitées comme de vulgaires criminels, des hors la loi. Depuis ce jour, il y plus de quatre ans, j'ai vite réalisé que l'Alliance dite sociale n'était rien d'autre qu'une alliance faisant partie d'un gouvernement sans cœur M. le président.

La priorité du gouvernement était loin d'être celle promise durant la campagne électorale. La politique du gouvernement 'un toit pour toi', a été un échec total, un effet d'annonce afin d'attirer les plus pauvres de la société dans leur filet, leur faisant croire que chaque famille serait pourvue d'une maison.

Pour nous tous ici présents, la NHDC a été conçue pour venir en aide aux familles très modestes, afin de les aider à se procurer un logement. L'Alliance Sociale nous a gavés de ce slogan 'un toit pour toi'. Une honte M. le président ! Nous voici au 5^{ème} et dernier budget de l'Alliance Sociale. Le ministre des finances a promis tout au long de son mandat, des maisons pour familles pauvres. Rien n'a été fait! Dans ce budget subitement on annonce 5,000 maisons à la fin du mandat, pour les familles dont les revenus dépassent R 5,000. 5,000 autres maisons

pour ceux qui touchent entre R 5,000 et R 10,000 et 2,500 lots de terrains pour ceux qui touchent plus de R 16,500.

(Interruptions)

Zéro pas fine faire.

Subitement à la veille des élections générales, on vient promettre plus de 10,000 logements et la réhabilitation de 8,200 appartements de la NHDC pour R 280 millions. C'est malhonnête M. le président. L'Alliance Sociale n'a jamais cru dans la construction des maisons pour des familles pauvres. Du reste, dans les grandes dépenses de l'état, dans ce budget le *Social Housing* reste une fois de plus l'enfant pauvre quand on compare la santé : R5.5 milliard, l'éducation R10 milliard et R1 milliard pour le *Social Housing*.

Un logement aussi modeste soit-il est une priorité, un besoin *sine qua non* pour qu'une famille puisse grandir, s'épanouir. Comment imaginer qu'une famille pauvre s'en sorte, si elle n'a pas un toit pour s'abriter ! Comment voulez-vous que les enfants issus des familles pauvres puissent étudier et réussir à leurs examens, s'ils n'ont pas un toit pour s'abriter et apprendre ! Par contre, M. le président, l'Alliance Sociale a démontré ses priorités en terme de logement. Les masques sont tombés!

Récemment j'étais sur un site internet *Servihoo* et à ma grande surprise, j'ai pu lire dans les petites annonces : 'Mont Choisy, appartement NHDC meublé, deux chambres à coucher, R16,000 par mois. Voilà le *Social Housing* sous l'Alliance Sociale, les maisons qui ont été faites pour les petites familles!

Mr Speaker, Sir, just wait a few more months and you will see!

(Interruptions)

Attend to pu conner. La vérité va triompher M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Ne me menace pas! What I am saying is the truth and nobody will prevent me from telling the truth in this House. Go back to the slogan of the MMSD and that will tell you everything.

Nous sommes tous au courant de la saga des appartements de la NHDC à Mont Choisy. Ce dossier a aussi été déposé à la Centrale CID, M. le président. J'ai posé une question parlementaire le 29 Juillet 2008, le no. B/975 voulant ainsi connaître les heureux bénéficiaires des maisons de la NHDC. Le ministre a répondu qu'il y a un *Fact-Finding Committee* qui a été institué. J'ai demandé que le rapport soit déposé est tel ne fut jamais le cas. Donc, ce dossier a aussi été déposé à la Centrale CID et j'espère que le *Board* de la NHDC ainsi que le ministre prendront l'entière responsabilité !

(Interruptions)

Non zot pu prend responsabilité pas moi !

Un autre scandale M. le président, the casting of *Slabs Scheme*. Certains ont bénéficié plusieurs fois du même avantage. J'ai demandé à ce qu'on dépose la liste des bénéficiaires, à ce jour zéro, sous prétexte qu'il y a 1,000 ou 2,000 demandes.

(Interruptions)

Riez !

Mr Speaker, Sir, je vais dire un petit mot sur le *law and order*. Concernant le *law and order* à l'item 350, je cite « *we have made good progress to increase security for our citizens.* » *This is a joke Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a big joke!* Il faudrait que les ministres descendent de leur tour d'ivoire et aillent voir *out there* – comme notre ami l'honorable Dr. Arvin Boolell disait quand il était dans opposition, *out there* - ce qui se passe. Il se ne passe pas un jour où on n'entend pas parler de crime, viol, massacre, vol, kidnapping, suicide, violence sur les enfants. La situation s'est gravement détériorée. Aujourd'hui, le mauricien ne se sent plus en sécurité dans sa propre maison. Ecoutez les radios libres – heureusement, sous l'ancien gouvernement nous sommes venus avec les radios libres - un samedi, un dimanche ou les après-midis et ils jugeront par eux-mêmes! Récemment, je suis tombé sur un autre article sur l'internet et cela vaut la peine de lire. « Ile Maurice, premier drogué du continent africain » Une grosse seringue comme symbole, M. le président! Voilà, notre symbole! Cela aurait coûté moins cher que 'Mauritius, c'est un plaisir'. Une seringue comme symbole, c'est honteux, M. le président! Je vais lire l'article: « Ile Maurice, premier drogué du continent africain » posté sur Nouvopresse dans le monde le 13 novembre 2009 -

« Palaces luxueux, soleil, plages de sable fin. Cette île de l'Océan indien est aussi le paradis des drogués. L'île Maurice se voit ainsi « primée » dans un secteur cette fois peu reluisant : la consommation de drogues. Selon le rapport 2009 de l'Office des Nations unies sur la drogue et le crime (UNODC), les Mauriciens sont, proportionnellement à leur nombre, les Africains les plus accros aux opiacés. Avec un taux de prévalence de 1,95 consommateur pour 1,000 habitants, le pays se situe même à la deuxième place mondiale derrière l'Iran... sous le soleil exactement. »

Cela valait la peine de le lire, M. le président. Maintenant je voudrais dire un mot concernant les étudiants handicapés moteurs. C'est bien d'avoir penser à eux. Le ministre des finances parlait de *upholding with values of compassion* et au paragraphe 285 de son discours du budget, il dit -

« Some of these students have made extra efforts to reach the tertiary level. Government wants to give them all the support they require, so that their disability does not stand between them and their aspirations. For these students we are providing motorised wheelchairs for use at the University of Mauritius and University of Technology »

Et là, je voudrais lire l'article de Jacques Lim Kee, président de la fédération des associations des personnes handicapées de Maurice et président de la fraternité des malades et des handicapés ayant pour titre « ridicule de mettre la charrue devant les bœufs ». Je cite Jacques Lim Kee -

« J'aurais préféré entendre de la bouche du ministre que le coût du voyage en taxis pour les enfants handicapés sera remboursé car il y a beaucoup de petits handicapés moteur qui ne sont pas scolarisés parce qu'ils ne peuvent voyager en bus alors que le taxi est coûteux. A l'université de Maurice et à l'université de technologie, ils sont peu nombreux et il y aurait, apparemment, un seul handicapé moteur à l'université de Maurice et personne à l'UTM, selon les services des admissions de ces deux institutions. Je trouve cette mesure ridicule, sans compter le fait que les infrastructures à l'université de Maurice ne permettraient pas un étudiant en fauteuil roulant de se mouvoir pleinement ...»

Quelles infrastructures !

« ...Il aurait fallu aider les enfants handicapés moteur à avoir les mêmes chances que les autres du même âge, qu'ils puissent être scolarisés normalement et de pouvoir briller. »

Ainsi, serait-il allé au primaire, puis au collège, et plus tard à l'université. L'actuelle mesure est pour ainsi dire, mettre la charrue devant les bœufs. Le paragraphe 286 dit –

« *We are refunding taxi fares for university students with disabilities* »

It is only for university students, Mr Speaker, Sir. But this is not fair when we all know how hard it is for a student with handicap to go by bus. What we are asking is to get a refund of the taxi fares. The taxi can come in front of the door, pick up the children and then they can go to the school. Why the Minister does this just for the university student? That is not fair!

(Interruptions)

When they do it, they should do it for all! On ne peut pas faire de la discrimination entre les enfants handicapés, M. le président. *This is not fair, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

(Interruptions)

Je fais un appel au ministre des finances s'il peut reconsidérer et voir que les enfants handicapés soient remboursés des frais de taxis.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, he is the Minister of Finance, he is asking me what I have done! I have not been Minister of Finance. If I were Minister of Finance, I would have done it a long time ago, Mr Speaker, Sir. Hon. David asked me to speak fast while we spent three hours listening to the Minister of Finance. At least, we should have a few minutes.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has been given 45 minutes.

Mr Guimbeau : Autre point, le gouvernement a *backpedal*, concernant l'accès au stade pour les concerts. Le gouvernement *has backpedaled* afin d'autoriser à nouveau les concerts au stade Anjalay et cela doit s'appliquer à tous les stades. Au paragraphe 194, il a dit-

« *Such facilities are important to organise performances ...* »

They removed it and now they say it is very important. We are a bit perplexed. Mais le plus important pour nos artistes est passé aux oubliettes. J'avais posé une question

parlementaire No. B/211: “*if Government will consider introducing entertainment laws and if Government is proposed to work on a salary scale structure for the sector.*” Hon. Bunwaree replied to me –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, I am aware of the problem prevailing in the entertainment sector due the absence of legal frameworks. The quantum of pay to performing artists in the entertainment sector is a matter of great concern to me. In fact, it has come to my knowledge that there exist some sorts of exploitation of artists going on in that sector.”

Quand je lui ai demandé une question concernant le Copyright law, il a dit: “*We are working on it very actively*”, Mr Speaker, Sir. Les élections sont dans quelques mois *and we are still waiting*. Rien n’est mentionné dans ce budget concernant le salary scale structure, le quantum of pay et le Copyright law en ce qui concerne nos artistes.

M. le président, je voudrais dire un mot sur l’*Equal Opportunity Bill*. J’ai soulevé ce point pas moins que cinq fois concernant une promesse électorale faite par certains membres de l’Assemblée ici.

(Interruptions)

Une promesse est une dette, M. le président !

J’ai une lettre du président de l’Assemblée de Dieu qui m’est adressée et je cite -

« Vous verrez ci-joint une lettre adressée au premier ministre, l’honorable Xavier Duval et à l’Attorney Général, l’honorable, Rama Valayden. Ils sont tous intéressés à faire passer un Act of Parliament pour reconnaître l’Assemblée de Dieu. Mais rien n’a été fait jusqu’ici. L’honorable Xavier Duval est venu me voir juste avant les élections générales me disant que- le premier ministre avait changé, qu’il n’était plus contre l’Assemblée de Dieu et qu’il allait faire de son mieux pour nous aider. Il m’a invité à son bureau quand il était nommé ministre et on a discuté ensemble des critères à être exigés pour la reconnaissance. Nous n’avons rien entendu depuis de sa part. Notre Attorney General est venu chez moi pour me donner son consentement et son appui au projet de reconnaissance. La cause est juste, a-t-il dit. Il a honoré de sa présence une convention de pasteurs à la rue Ambrose pour nous dire qu’il est avec nous dans cette démarche. Nous attendons toujours. »

Dans une autre lettre adressée au premier ministre en mai 2007, je cite -

“Hon. Xavier Duval called on me before the general election of 2005 and said that you had promised to pass that Bill as soon you would come into power.”

He is close of losing power and we are still waiting, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In another letter addressed to the Prime Minister -

“I am sure that you remember that hon. Xavier Duval called me on the eve of the general election and told me that you would do your best for the passing of a Bill.”

Enfin, l'espoir fait vivre ! Mais ce qui n'est pas juste et où il y a de la discrimination, c'est qu'il a une liste de pas moins d'une vingtaine d'organisations reconnues et je cite quelques uns : Anglican Church Incorporation, the Hindu Mahajana Sangam Act, the New Jerusalem Society Act etc. projets de loi ont passé, mais pas celui de l'Assemblée de Dieu jusqu'à présent. *This is unfair, but Government will pay the consequences.*

Je voudrais soulever un autre point toujours en référence à l'Equal Opportunity. M. le président, cela me paraît *unfair* et je l'ai dit au Parlement mardi dernier. Tous les ans, depuis l'indépendance - le ministre Bachoo avait répondu - le gouvernement alloue une somme d'argent pour les infrastructures et autres facilités concernant les pèlerinages et autres activités religieuses. Je pense que ce serait juste qu'une part de ce budget soit versée en tant que *sponsorship* sur le billet d'avion des hajees qui vont à la Mecque, surtout ceux qui n'ont pas les grands moyens. *C'est unfair*, M. le président.

Ce n'est pas une faveur qu'ils demandent. Ce sont des *taxpayers*, c'est un droit qu'ils ont,. C'est un appel que je fais à la Chambre et je ne demande pas d'augmenter le budget, mais de puiser dans ce budget existant et c'est cela le vrai *equal opportunities*, *Mr Speaker, Sir.*

M. le président, avant de conclure, il y a une tendance ces derniers temps de changement de noms, d'infrastructures et de rues afin de les remplacer. Nous avons été témoins récemment à Rose Hill, à Port Louis, où, on a retiré le nom d'un ancien maire pour mettre le nom d'un nouveau maire. C'est inacceptable !

(Interruptions)

Ce qui fait que nous allons passer notre vie à changer des noms. Demain, quand le ministre des finances, l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen ne sera plus là, il y aura un nom, on changera de nom et cela ira comme ça. Cela ne se fait pas, M. le président. Nous passons notre temps et notre énergie à effacer et à réécrire les noms des rues et des emplacements ; ceci n'est pas correct. Nous ne sommes pas contre l'ajout des noms de ceux qui ont contribué, mais ce n'est pas correct de changer les noms. Je vois à Curepipe, le seul développement qu'on a fait c'est le changement de nom du Stade Georges V. Je n'ai rien contre, au contraire. La dernière fois j'ai dit qu'on reconnaissait la contribution de M. Ram Ruhee dans le domaine du football. Justement lors du Discours du Budget, le ministre des finances a parlé d'un stade dans le sud. Un stade digne de ce nom serait plus souhaitable et non pas un pigeonier comme le Stade Georges V.

(Interruptions)

Non, mo pas bizin mo nom lor stade moi !

I am not like the Minister of Finance who wants his name everywhere. I am not this kind of person, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Donc, tout cela n'est pas digne d'une République.*

Pour conclure, on entend souvent du côté de la majorité, que l'opposition ne propose rien. Mais il n'y a pas de pire sourd que celui qui ne veut entendre ou celui qui ne veut écouter.

(Interruptions)

Depuis des années le responsable du dossier économique du MMM, M. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo n'a pas manqué...

(Interruptions)

Qui arrivé là, gagne di mal là! Boubou ça ! Depuis des années...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am concluding. Depuis des lustres, le responsable du dossier économique du MMM, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, order! Order, please!

Mr Guimbeau: ...M. Vishnu Lutchmeenaraidoo n'a pas manqué une occasion de conseiller, au gouvernement et à l'honorable Dr. Sithanen, d'investir dans l'or. Le ministre Sithanen a ridiculisé cette proposition, -l'a traité de stupide, d'imbécile et tous les mots qu'on peut imaginer. Si seulement l'actuel ministre des finances avait écouté la proposition du futur ministre des finances, le pays aurait bénéficié de R 22 milliards...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guimbeau: Quoique les R 22 milliards auraient été insuffisants pour absorber toutes les frasques et les gabegies du présent gouvernement. Donc, M. le président, il ne sert à rien pour les membres de la majorité de parler de proposition de l'opposition, nous serons traités d'imbéciles et de stupides. Nos propositions, nous les mettrons en pratique dans quelques mois, après que le peuple appliquera à son tour la politique '*lève paquet*' envers un gouvernement sans cœur, ni humaniste, un gouvernement de répression qui durant les *four and a half* dernières années a traumatisé tout un peuple en le menant ainsi au bord de la détresse morale et financière. Dans quelques mois ce peuple admirable qui a été profondément déçu par tant de fausses promesses...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I said order now! Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Dr. David, please! Hon. Bhagwan, please! Order!

Mr Guimbeau: *I am concluding, Mr Speaker, Sir.* Dans quelques mois ce peuple admirable qui a été profondément déçu par tant de fausses promesses se rendra aux urnes et on sent déjà à l'approche de 2010 ce *wind of change*...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Guimbeau: Ce wind of change *est dans l'air*, le wind of change towards a true Mauritius, towards a one and only Mauritius for all, where all the people of this motherland will work and live in peace and harmony, together as a true nation, just as a bird of the same feathers

flock together without -the ‘nou banne dimoune’, ‘nou dimoune’, ‘banne-là’, Mr Speaker, Sir.
C’est une atrocité.

M. le président, je souhaite à l’île Maurice un joyeux Noël et une bonne fête de fin d’année à tous les collègues, ici présents, à tout le staff de l’Assemblée Nationale et à la presse. Je voudrais vous remercier pour tout et je vous souhaite une bonne année, M. le président.

Merci.

(6.45 p.m.)

The Minister of Agro Industry, Food Production and Security (Mr S. Faugoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, I stand here with a great sense of pride as I belong to a party which has marked the history of this country. Unlike the party of hon. Guimbeau, there is only one person, one leader and that also as soon as it was born, it is dying, it is on the way of toll. No symbol, no colour! So, it is a *mort-né*, as is said, Mr Speaker, Sir. It would appear that it is his last speech in the House. There is an Indian proverb, Mr Speaker, Sir, which says: ‘When the oil is finishing in the lamp, it tries to light brighter.’ And this is the last speech of the hon. Member.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I come from a party where has emerged a giant, a true patriot, the Father of the Nation. It is a party which is the guardian of democratic values, national unity and tolerance, the Welfare State, and which has upheld the principle of separation of powers and the rule of law.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we, on this side of the House, are indeed privileged and honoured to serve the country, under the leadership of a man of vision who has not departed an inch from those values and principles, and who is committed and believes in *une île Maurice moderne, une île Maurice égale et une île Maurice pour tous*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is no doubt that this Government is surfing on the height of popularity. Unprecedented! We are reaching the end of our mandate, but we are surfing on the height of popularity whereas the Opposition is in complete disarray, dismay and distress, to say the least, Mr Speaker, Sir.

In these circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, what would have been the easiest option for the Government? The easiest option would have been to present *un budget populaire, un budget*

électorale and rush for elections and win them, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the popularity that we have.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the easiest option is not always the best option. We have dared to depart from the norm. We have put the country first. We have put the economy first. We have put the social first. We have 'Put People First', Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

This is diametrically opposite to what the previous Government did when approaching the end of their mandate, presenting, as you recall, a popular, et un *budget électoraliste* in April - unprecedented again - and calling for elections immediately after, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is a choice which we refuse in the interests of the country, for the future of the country and for the future of the children of this country, Mr Speaker, Sir.

With us, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is no longer business as usual. This is called a responsible Government. This is a reform in itself, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the way forward and this is, us, compared to them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have carefully listened to Members from the other side of the House and the impression gathered is that they have quick fixed solutions to all the problems of the world, let alone Mauritius.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when you listen to them, they tend to suggest that –

- They can eradicate poverty overnight.
- They can construct houses for all the homeless overnight.
- they can produce all that we import overnight;
- it was said that they can reduce the price of basmati rice, cheese, milk and all other basic staples when the prices of these commodities are soaring all over the world, Mr Speaker, Sir;
- there will be no drop-out in our schools;
- the problem of law and order – we have just listened to hon. Guimbeau – will be solved once and for all and there will be no need to have prisons because criminality will disappear altogether. This is what they pretend to do.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! I am calling for order for the last time. If some people are tired, they may retire from the House.

Mr Faugoo: They pretend they can reverse the trend and incidence of HIV/AIDS and diabetes, Mr Speaker, Sir. But when they had the chance and the opportunity to solve all these problems with their quick fix solutions, what did they do, Mr Speaker, Sir? We all know of their *bilan*, their mismanagement and their failures. In support of what I am saying now, let me refer to one of the quick fix solutions proposed by hon. Bodha. Unfortunately, he is not around. He proposed something in his intervention to address the food crisis and to reduce imports and hence boost up self-sufficiency, Mr Speaker, Sir. If you'll allow me, I will cite what he said in his intervention –

“(…) there is something which we could have done for the SME sector – for having been a former Minister of Agriculture. We could make a list of all that we import and then decide that we are not going to import and we are going to produce locally.”

This is the solution he proposed, Mr Speaker, Sir.

“In fact, we have a paragraph in the Budget which says so, which will allow us to reduce 10% of our imports, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.”

Then he goes on –

“Do you know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, how much is our import for milk and dairy products? It is Rs2 billions. So, if we were to reduce only 20%, it is already half a billion rupees and we could have targeted. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is the new agriculture that we need.”

This is what he said.

What happened when they were in power for five years?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Listen, please! Quiet!

Mr Faugoo: This is incredible, Mr Speaker, Sir! Such a simplistic formula to solve the major problems caused by food crisis! I am flabbergasted, Mr Speaker, Sir, to say the least. The more so that it comes from a former Minister of Agriculture.

The House is aware of the economic mess left by the previous Government. Let me give the House some facts and figures which illustrate how poorly they had performed in the Agricultural sector! They will be shocked more than us because I am sure they are not aware of the figures. These facts and figures are officially statistics published by the Central Statistical Office. I am not going to quote Shakespeare where we can have a debate. There is no debate on this. These are facts and figures as they appear in official documents, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, he stopped with milk and dairy products. Let me start there! The import bill for milk and dairy products rose, in fact, from Rs1.32 billion in 2001 to Rs1.81 billion in 2005, representing a 38% increase. And they have solutions to the problem. He was talking of increasing 20% of our self sufficiency in the production of fresh milk, Mr Speaker, Sir. The production of fresh milk was 4 million litres in 2001 and decreased to 3.8 million litres in 2005, representing a 5% decrease. Where is the 20% increase, Mr Speaker, Sir? The dairy cattle herd size remained stagnant around 7,900 heads over the period 2001 to 2005.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House of what we have done under the Food Security Fund in this very short span of time! In fact, we started implementing the Food Security Fund from the beginning of this year. The cattle herd size has increased with some 800 additional heads of improved breed, representing an increase of 10 percent over this short span of time.

The local fresh milk production, Mr Speaker, Sir, went down by 5%, that is, from 4 million litres to 3.8 million litres. In fact, the local fresh milk production has increased to 5.2 million litres, that is, a 31% increase, Mr Speaker, Sir. At this rate, we will easily achieve the target of 10 million litres, that is, 10% of our self -sufficiency by 2012 according to our plan, Mr Speaker, Sir. In terms of self-sufficiency, we have raised it from 2.5% to 3.3% in this very short span of time, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the food crop sector, the situation is even more dramatic. This is something very, very interesting. The totality of food crop production declined from 129,000 tonnes in 2001 to 96,780 tonnes in 2005, that is, a 25% decrease. They are talking of increase in self-sufficiency and reducing import and this is the result, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do not propose to give details on each food crop, but only on two commodities that we, in the plan that we have elaborated, call strategic commodities. These are potatoes and onions, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The potato production recorded a 22% reduction, that is, from 16,350 tonnes in 2001 to 12,780 tonnes in 2005. This is decreasing self-sufficiency and increasing import, Mr Speaker, Sir. The onion production declined from 10,950 tonnes in 2001 to 5,640 tonnes in 2005, that is, a decrease of 49%, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am sure they are not aware!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now give some figures about the food import bill over the same period. The total food import amounted to Rs7.6 billion in 2001 and increased to Rs12.9 billion in 2005, that is, a 70% increase in import bill. And they want to reduce import bill now and they increased self-sufficiency.

Import Bill for live animals for slaughter in Mauritius recorded an almost three-fold increase, that is, 280% in the five years, Mr Speaker, Sir. The increase in import bill for vegetable oils and fats increased by 80%. Mr Speaker, Sir, indeed an analysis of the food import bill shows that the level of self-sufficiency in food crop which we locally produce dropped from 33% in 2001 to 24% in 2005, that is, the level of food imports has increased from 67% in 2001 to 76% in 2005, Mr Speaker, Sir. I heard some Members saying that they had a plan of action to boost up the agricultural sector and why should not we adopt that particular plan? Adopting this plan, Mr Speaker, Sir, would tantamount to a perfect recipe for disaster as evidenced by the figures I have given.

It is clear from these figures that the previous Government had failed to manage properly the agricultural sector. These statistics, no doubt, constitute a window; hon. Bodha wanted to be mirror and reflect the achievement of this Government. It can be a mirror if he wished that to be so and an eye-opener of the mess not only in the agricultural sector, but over all the different sectors of the economy, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is what they left us behind with back in 2005, skeleton apart. Who knew about the facts and figures of the agricultural sector? They were hiding behind it. We always talk in terms of investment in FDI, public debts, but who knew about all these figures? These figures only reflect the other sectors, Mr Speaker, Sir. When did that happen, Mr Speaker, Sir?

How did they manage to bring it down by 49% Mr Speaker, Sir? Can you believe that such was their performance at a time when all the predisposing factors were in their favour. As we say, the sun was shining, the sky was blue, land resources were there, prices of seeds were

not so high, there were no triple shocks, there was no energy crisis, the Multi-Fibre Agreement was not yet dismantled, the sugar protocol was still existing, there was no 36% cut in the export of price of sugar, there was no severe drought, cyclone or flood as far as I remember in that particular period, there was no African Swine Fever, although the then Prime Minister was chairing meetings on the pig sector - for what we don't know! There was no *Chikungunya*, no dengue fever, no swine flu, no H1N1 virus, no economic crisis and yet they failed miserably.

They failed miserably and they want us to learn from them. We have faced all these dire circumstances and yet we have been able to save the country, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are 1 billion people who go to bed hungry every day, that is, one-sixth of humanity. 16,000 children die every day of hunger, that is, 11 children per minute, Mr Speaker, Sir. The price index in 2007/2008 rose by 52% worldwide, the price of basic staples was five-fold, Mr Speaker, Sir and this led to people in no less than 30 countries to come down to the streets to manifest causing riot and lootings to obtain food to feed their families. Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has been very quick and proactive to address the problems of food crisis. In fact, for the first time ever in the history of Mauritius a sum of Rs1 billion has been voted to enhance food security.

Let me now inform the House of what this Government has achieved during this year in the context of the food security programme -

- (i) We have introduced a Seed Potato Purchase Scheme whereby 80% of the costs of seed are being advanced to potato growers to encourage them to grow the commodity on a larger scale. With this measure it is expected that potato production would increase by 2000 tonnes this year. The target under the Food Security Programme is to produce 20,000 tonnes by 2015, that is, 80% of national consumption and we are getting results. Only in six months - because I am getting feedback from AMB, I am getting feedback from all the cooperatives societies - we are getting very good yield because of the scheme that we have put in place and we are going to get positive results and I am sure that with this we are going to reach the target that we have set.
- (ii) We have similarly introduced a Seed Onion Purchase Scheme. Onion production is expected to increase by 1,000 tonnes this year. The target is to produce 12,000 tonnes, that is, 80% of our requirements by 2012.

- (iii) A Food Crop Insurance Scheme has been set up to encourage planters to ensure their food crop plantation against adverse climatic conditions such as drought, cyclones, floods and excessive rainfalls. This scheme unlike the previous scheme covers 27 crops for three crop cycles annually as compared to one crop for one crop cycle which was set up by the previous Government. But what is more important, Mr Speaker, Sir is that the Food Security Fund is directly contributing 50% of the Insurance Premium for each *arpent* insured. This is the significant difference because formerly the planters had to pay the totality of the premium.
- (iv) 100 *Arpents* of land at Bananes Cluny belonging to Rose-Belle Sugar Estate and 100 *Arpents* of land at St-Avold belonging to the S.I.T have been leased to vegetable planters to boost up production of vegetables and fruits on a cluster basis. The Food Security Fund has finance land preparation on these two sites and the purchase of starter kits including seeds and fertilisers. Today, these planters are already selling their produce on the market, Mr Speaker, Sir.
- (v) A first model orchard for the production of banana and citrus has been set up over an area of four acres at La Chaumière which is managed by La Chaumière Agriculture Marketing Cooperative Society. Under the same project, the Cooperative Society has benefitted from onion seeds, land preparation and the rehabilitation of the canal and drainage system.
- (vi) The setting up of a farmer training school at Wooton - this is first of its kind - to provide formal training to school drop-outs leading to NTC3 certificate. This will qualify them as skilled workers and increase their employability in the agricultural sector. The school also offers training to planters and breeders on good agricultural and breeding practices. We have so far trained 1,046 planters, breeders, agro-entrepreneurs and young school drop-outs.
- (vii) The setting up of an Agro Processing Resource Centre at Wooton to provide training and mentoring to entrepreneurs in agro processing. So far, 350 trainees including women entrepreneurs have participated in the training programme.
- (viii) The setting up of a Research Experiment Station at Pamplemousses for conducting research, development and training on food production and

processing. This is a first station of its kind which will be replicated in other parts of the island eventually.

- (ix) The accreditation of the Plant Pathology Laboratory of AREU to ISO 17025 and the Entomology Laboratory of the Agricultural services to ISO 9001. The National Food Technology Laboratory which has been designated by COMESA as a regional reference laboratory for food safety is in the process of being accredited.
- (x) The launching of a national sensitisation campaign to mitigate damages caused to fruits by bats through demonstration on utilisation of nets and dissipation of pamphlets and affixing of posters on good agricultural practices. Bats destroyed from 40 to 70% of our litchis and mangoes. A scheme to encourage the purchase of nets by food growers and small orchard owners have also been introduced whereby a grant of 75% of the cost of the nets for a maximum of five trees is being provided and a sum Rs15 m. has been earmarked.
- (xi) The introduction of a new monitoring system for control of pesticide residue level in vegetables. It would appear from figures that we have and from evidence that we have that there is a direct link between people suffering from cancer in this country and the pesticide residue level in the vegetables that we grow, Mr Speaker, Sir. The collection of samples for testing will be effected at ex-farm level instead of the usual market basket survey to ensure traceability and immediate corrective measures. The Food Security Fund will finance the upgrading of the analytical facilities at the new Food Technology Lab to cover more pesticides over a broader range of vegetables.
- (xii) The launching of a national campaign on Household Food Security through the distribution free of charge of one fruit tree or one food producing tree (like breadfruit), Mr Speaker, Sir, to each household to encourage backyard gardening. 10,000 trees have so far been distributed and this programme will extend over the next three or six months, if the need requires.
- (xiii) The setting up by cooperative societies engaged in milk production of pasteurisation units to improve the quality of the milk and to facilitate marketing.

Support has been provided to these cooperative societies to purchase and commission four pasteurisation units which are being operated.

- (xiv) The successful relaunching of the pig sector after the outbreak of the African Swine Fever which has seen the pig population declined from 18,000 heads to 4,000. With a support provided by Government the pig population has quickly increased over a short span of time to reach the pre-outbreak level. The support included direct income support, development of infrastructure, training of breeders and import of boars and piglets from South Africa.
- (xv) Government is supporting research in hybrid rice seed production and it is promoting rice production locally.
- (xvi) A Food Security Development Centre has accordingly been set up comprising the MSIRI, AREU and Vita Rice, a Singaporean company which has recognised expertise in hybrid rice production. Field tests carried out on varieties introduced so far have been promising. Commercial plantation has already started and the first harvest is scheduled in December of this year.
- (xvii) Within the control of democratisation of access to land, a total of 1,695 arpents of land has so far been allocated to 788 beneficiaries for fruit and vegetable production and livestock projects. 82 projects have also been selected for the 1,000 arpents of MSPA land which will be allocated on a cluster basis.

- (xviii) The setting up of a land bank to ensure that State lands leased for agricultural purpose are being optimally used, and keep a database of all unoccupied land owned by small planters with a view to their eventual lease to interested agro entrepreneurs.

Let me now inform the House of the schemes which have already been approved and which are in the process of implementation under the Food Security Fund -

A scheme comprising a grant component and a loan at 3% interest rate, for the purchase of improved dairy breeds to enhance the genetic potential of the local herd with a view to increasing milk productivity and this is already giving results, Mr Speaker, Sir;

A scheme with a grant component and loan at 3% interest rate, for the purchase of improved breed of goat and sheep to enhance genetic stock;

A loan scheme bearing 5% interest rate for the purchase of young bulls for fattening to increase local meat production;

A grant scheme for the development of high yielding grass and fodder species for livestock to support the development of livestock through the improvement of nutritional status and productivity. This will also help to reduce dependency on concentrates, Mr Speaker, Sir;

Loan scheme at 5% interest rate for the purchase of agricultural and agro processing equipment and machinery to modernise the sector and to promote value addition;

Loan scheme at 5% interest rate for the construction and upgrading of infrastructure for cattle (dairy and beef), sheep, goat, poultry and to modernise the livestock sector and promote good breeding practices;

Free mechanical land preparation, namely for lands to be released by the MSPA, for food crop and livestock activities;

Improvement of an irrigation network at l'Espérance Trébuchet to enhance food crop productivity;

Renovation of an onion curing facility at Belle Mare and construction of a curing house at La Marie to improve quality and prolonged shelf life of onions;

Construction of four model dairy farms to showcase modern livestock management practices;

Launching of the national livestock census to develop a livestock database for proper decision making and monitoring.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the shortcomings of the food crop production system in Mauritius is unplanned planning. Unplanned planning and production which frequently results in glut situation and significant drop in prices has been to the detriment of small planters who have been sustaining heavy loss of revenue. In order to address this situation, my Ministry is setting up an agricultural production and marketing information system which will provide the correct

information on a real-time basis to planters to enable them to plan their planting and production properly. This will also benefit the consumers as there will be no wide fluctuations in prices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our farmers are beginning to suffer from the effects of climate change. In fact, their crops have been badly affected in recent years as a result of drought, floods, excessive rainfalls and cyclones. In order to protect their plantation and allow them to adopt modern techniques of production, a high-tech sheltered farming scheme is being set up to encourage growers to shift from traditional open field activities to sheltered cultivation enterprises. A special fund is being set up under that scheme to offer soft loan facilities and grant for the purchase of the materials required for the construction of sheltered production units, related accessories and fertilisation systems. My Ministry is also launching a loan scheme with 5% interest rate, for the purchase of agricultural and agro-processing equipment and machinery to assist growers to improve productivity.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to the fisheries sector. Mauritius has run the serious risks of seeing its fish exports to the EU market prohibited as from next year, Mr Speaker, Sir. However, following the implementation of the necessary measures by both my Ministry and the seafood sector, these risks are now behind us. I am pleased to announce that the FVO mission of the European Commission, which was in Mauritius recently to assess the control mechanism set up for the export of fish and fish products to the EU, has expressed satisfaction that Mauritius is complying with the EU sanitary and phytosanitary requirements. Our competent authority which we set up is today fully functional, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am also pleased to inform the House that Mauritius has now been placed on the EU list of countries eligible to export fish and fish products to the EU in 2010 in relation to the EU/IUU regulations which will come into force on 01 January next year. This confirms that Mauritius has put in place the necessary enabling environment and quality assurance system to conform to the European Commission requirements in terms of notifications for export of fish and fish products under the EU/IUU regulations, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The FAO legally binding instrument on Port State measures - to prevent, deter and eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing - is a laudable initiative to combat IUU fishing. We do not foresee any difficulty to ratify the instrument as we are already implementing the Port State measures based on the FAO model.

Mr Speaker, Sir the seafood sector is growing steadily. Seafood exports are worth over Rs8 billion rupees and the turnover of the seafood hub is Rs18 billion, Mr Speaker, Sir. The number of direct employment has reached 12,000 . Investment in the seafood sector in 2008 attained Rs327 m. With the developments at the level of the EU which I have just mentioned, this sector will be called upon to further expand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as the House may be aware, fish resources in the lagoon are being depleted and measures are being taken by my Ministry to encourage a larger number of fishers to fish off lagoon. In this context, the Food Security Fund has earmarked funds for the purchase of six fishing boats for artisanal fishers for off lagoon fishing. A grant of 75% of the cost of the boats will be offered to the beneficiaries who can also avail of loan facilities for the remaining 25% of the costs, at an interest rate of 5% only.

Mr Speaker, Sir the Fishermen Investment Trust is funding activities that were previously inaccessible to artisanal fishers. These include fish farming in cages, integrated fish culture in Barachois and purchase of boats for off lagoon fishing in Mauritius and Rodrigues. The Mauritius Exporters Association is also participating in the programme for the purchase of boats and one boat has already been constructed. In fact, I shall be proceeding with the inauguration ceremony of this boat on coming Wednesday. The hon. Member is by all means invited. It is in his Constituency anyway.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I visited Japan in July last and I have successfully negotiated with the Japanese authorities for the provision of boats to Mauritius for off lagoon fishing. The Japanese authorities have agreed to donate eight fully equipped semi industrial boats under a grant scheme for fishing around fish aggregating devices.

Mr Speaker, Sir, 487 fishers have been trained to fish off lagoon around the fish aggregating devices. 243 fish mongers have been trained in fish handling, preservation and marketing techniques. Provisions have been earmarked under the Food Security Fund for the training of 100 skippers and mechanics to support outer lagoon fishing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

My Ministry is proceeding with the implementation of the Fish Auction Market. Tenders for the construction of the market will be awarded early next year. This is an important project as the Fish Auction Market will provide a conducive environment for fish marketing in line with stringent sanitary requirements and will support the further development of the seafood sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must add that my Ministry has recently initiated a Marine And Agricultural Resources Support (MARS) programme which is supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). This programme is designed to empower small scale fishermen including octopus fisherwomen in Rodrigues to engage in alternative means of livelihood. In addition, fishers are encouraged to fish around the FADs and off lagoon. This programme will extend over the next six years.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to the sugar cane sector. This Government has again made history by transforming the sugar industry into a sugarcane industry, with the setting up of multi-flexi factories that can produce a wider variety of products from sugarcane, namely refined white sugar, special sugars, industrial rum, ethanol and electricity, Mr Speaker, Sir.

This Government, caring as always, has ensured that the planters, workers and artisans have a share in these new ventures. Government has, to that effect, purchased on behalf of these planters and workers 35% shares in the two refineries at Omnicane and FUEL. The ownership of the shares will be transferred to the beneficiaries soon, and a Cane Democratisation Fund will be set up to facilitate this transfer, as announced in the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the prompt action taken by this Government to modernise the sugar industry to ensure its competitiveness, as well as empowerment of small and medium planters to enable them to stay in cane cultivation, has been well appreciated by the European Commission. In fact, our Multi Annual Adaptation Strategy has been hailed as a model by the European Commission and ACP sugar producing countries. Mr Speaker, Sir, the funds under the accompanying measures have been provided by the European Union to ACP sugar protocol countries to finance the reform of the sugar industry in the wake of the 36% cut in the price of sugar exported to the EU market. The countries were also allowed to use these resources to finance the implementation of projects in other sectors of the economy. Mr Speaker, Sir, in Mauritius, the funds earmarked for the sugar sector have so far been utilised to finance the retirement of workers and the VRSII, ERS and the Blueprint, the implementation of the Field Operations Regrouping an Irrigation Project (FORIP), aimed at modernising and upgrading the production system of small and medium planters, with the ultimate objective of reducing cost and improving productivity. Mr Speaker, Sir, the FORIP is a key feature of the MAAS, as 15,000 out of the 20,000 hectares of land belonging to small and medium sugarcane planters

would be regrouped and derocked. Irrigation facilities will be provided over 7,000 hectares, Mr Speaker, Sir.

By June this year, 2,400 hectares of land had been regrouped and derocked. The extent of land to be derocked was utilised as a performance indicator by the EU in 2007 and 2008 for the purpose of disbursing funds. We have successfully attained the objectives set in both years, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The *métayers* have not been left behind. Negotiations have been finalised on the issues concerning them, as mentioned in the agreement reached between Government and the MSPA on sugar reform.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the timely implementation of the measures contained in the MAAS has enabled the disbursement of funds by the EU under the accompanying measures, and has allowed the industry to overcome the initial difficulties.

I was recently in Brussels to chair the ACP ministerial consultations on sugar, and I was amazed to know that many ACP countries were having difficulty to access funds under the accompanying measures because of the delay in the implementation of the MAAS. These countries run the risk of losing these funds and, as always, Mauritius was cited as a good example of a country, which has succeeded to secure the necessary funds under the accompanying measures. Mr Speaker, Sir, my Ministry and the Sugar Authority will ensure that all remaining programmes and projects of the MAAS are implemented in a timely manner, so that the objectives set maybe achieved by scheduled dates for the benefit of all the stakeholders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, five cooperative societies of small sugarcane planters have recently been awarded the Fair Trade Accreditation, which will enable them to obtain a premium of USD 60 per tonne of sugar and, that also, at a time when there is 36% cut in the price of sugar, Mr Speaker, Sir. They can utilise this sum for a number of projects, including purchase of agricultural equipment and machinery, as well as computers. However, the cooperative societies have to pay an application fee of Rs150,000 and consultancy fee, to go through this accreditation process. This is discouraging most of the cooperative societies to apply for the Fair Trade Label. Government is accordingly coming up with a scheme to encourage them to join this programme and, to this effect, funds on soft terms will be advanced to them to meet up to 75% of the consultancy cost and the application fee of Rs150,000, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me conclude on this chapter by congratulating all the stakeholders for their efforts and contribution, which has enabled the transformation of the sugar sector into a sugarcane sector in a very short lapse of time. We should be proud as a nation, that we are today producing and exporting refined white sugar, which guarantees better revenue to the planters, especially the small and the medium ones, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some Members on the other side of the House have nostalgically referred to a number of measures that were proposed during their last mandate, and they are regretting that this Government has not implemented them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is worthwhile to recall that this Government has been elected on the basis of a programme, and has been given the mandate to implement the measures contained therein. We have a duty towards the population. We definitely do not owe any obligation to the Opposition. They should remember that they were severely sanctioned by the electorate for their mediocre performance. They should stop giving us lessons on how to manage the country, especially with their so-called quick fix solutions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me conclude by congratulating the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Empowerment, for presenting yet another brilliant and well inspired budget that will ensure the continued progress and prosperity of the nation and, above all, for avoiding the easy option of a popular and electoralist Budget which could have done more harm than good to the country. I must also express my thanks to the hon. Prime Minister for his able leadership, vision and guidance that has enabled the country to surf smoothly over the troubled waters and reach safely to the shores.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of our biggest challenges today is to ensure that the population, especially the old and the young, have access to adequate nutritious food at affordable price in a context when a second world food crisis is looming on the horizon. At the last World Summit on Food Security, the Director General of the FAO, Mr Jacques Diouf, has stated the following, I quote –

“The gravity of the current food crisis is the result of 20 years of under investment in agriculture and the neglect of the sector”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the previous Government, by not investing in the agricultural sector during their mandate, as evidenced by the facts and figures that I have given earlier, had caused much harm to this sector, and shares a large part of responsibility in the sufferings of the

population during the food crisis. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has, for this year alone, spent Rs37 m. over and above the normal Budget voted for agriculture, on schemes and projects to promote food security. We shall spend Rs500m. next year. In fact, we are turning the challenges of food insecurity into new opportunities for stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the measures that I have announced earlier, in the context of the Food Security Programme, will not only help to increase food production and reduce dependency on imports but, more importantly, will empower our planters, breeders and fishers, especially the young generation, to move away from traditional agriculture to modern methods of production, which is in line with the vision of the Prime Minister and this Government, for a modern, sustainable and inclusive society.

I shall now conclude with a quote from Mike Myatt, a famous guru of CEOs and author of 'Leadership Matters' –

“Average leaders deal with trouble when it occurs, good leaders steer around it and great leaders turn trouble into opportunity”.

and so goes the saying –

“Difficulties mastered are opportunities won”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is exactly what this Government has done.

Thank you.

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Mrs Bappoo rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Ag. Prime Minister: Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Tuesday 01 December 2009 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. Sithanen rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.32p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 01 December 2009 at 11.30 a.m.