

No. 22 of 2011



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

WEDNESDAY 09 NOVEMBER 2011

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 22 of 2011

Sitting of Wednesday 09 November 2011

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTIONS**MED POINT CLINIC - PURCHASE**

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development whether, in regard to the purchase by Government of the MedPoint Clinic, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the name of the -

- (a) bank in Mauritius in which the cheque of Rs145 m. was deposited and the bank in Mauritius into which money was transferred, and
- (b) bank in London in which money has been transferred, indicating, in each case, the sums transferred and the date of the transfers.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development (Mr X. L. Duval): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed as follows -

On 22 December 2010 the Ministry of Finance was requested by the Ministry of Health to send a Departmental Warrant for the amount of Rs144,701,300 representing the cost of acquisition of Land and Buildings, known as the MedPoint Clinic, as funds were earmarked under the proceeds from the National Lottery.

On 23 December, the then Minister of Finance gave his approval for the Ministry of Health to re-allocate the sum of Rs144,701,300 from its savings under capital projects to enable the acquisition of a Geriatric Hospital.

On 24 December, that is, Christmas eve, the decision of the then Minister of Finance was conveyed to the Ministry of Health.

The 25 being Christmas Day and 26 December being a Sunday, the Departmental Warrant was issued on Monday 27 December.

On Tuesday 28 December the Ministry of Health made the required reallocation. On that very same day a cheque was issued by the Ministry of Health to MedPoint Ltd for an amount of Rs144,701,300.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole transaction, took just six days, which included Christmas Eve and the Christmas week-end.

The bank statement of the Ministry of Health, which I am tabling, indicates that the cheque was cleared on the very next day, that is, on Wednesday 29 December 2010. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also tabling a copy of the cheque.

In regard to the issues of movement of funds in the banking system, Government can only be aware of the withdrawals from its own bank account. Beyond this, Government is not in a position to know which bank account the payment was made into nor if money would then subsequently be transferred outside Mauritius.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by SIC that as a shareholder of MedPoint Ltd that it has been active to protect its interests in ensuring that its investment in MedPoint is secured. In this respect, SIC wrote -

- To MedPoint Ltd. on 01 August 2011, that is, five days after the resignation of the then Minister of Finance, to protect its position by requesting the Distribution of Surplus arising from sale of assets to all shareholders.
- To Bank of Baroda on 03 August 2011, to request that no transfers be made from the account without Board or Shareholder's decision.
- To MedPoint Ltd on 23 August 2011 to reiterate the request in the letter of 01 August.
- To the legal adviser of MedPoint and its accountant to ask them to finalise pending matters including distribution of surplus to shareholders.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am also informed by SIC, as a shareholder of MedPoint, that out of the proceeds of Rs144,701,300 paid to MedPoint's account at SBM, Rs5.2 m. have been deducted in order to clear the company's debt to SBM. I am further informed that the following requests for transfers were made by MedPoint Ltd -

- Rs15.5 m. to Mrs Shalini Devi Malhotra to repay a shareholder's advance, and
- Rs120 m. to be deposited in the Bank of Baroda.

Mr Speaker, Sir, having given these details, as provided to me by SIC Ltd., I wish to stress that MedPoint Ltd. being a private company, like any other private company, I would not, in normal circumstances, have released such details. I have exceptionally given these details in the light of the fact that such details have been widely publicised in the local press for quite some time and have remained unchallenged, whether by way of a press communiqué or otherwise by any concerned party. I again stress, therefore, that it is in these exceptional circumstances that these details are being provided.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, on 25 October here, in the House, the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development made certain statements in reference to Med Point and the hon. Prime Minister was categorical. He made a statement of fact to the effect that the money was deposited in a local bank, transferred to another local bank and to London. Has the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development checked with the hon. Prime Minister and with SIC whether, in fact, money has been transferred to London?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the first thing is to get the record straight. In this case it is quite easy, because we have Hansard, and this is what exactly the words of the hon. Prime Minister were -

“It seems...”

So, it is not fact.

“It seems that part of the cheque has been sent abroad.”

And, I read the full sentence -

“So, even before ICAC has started its inquiry, the very next day, all of this was done, so what can they do?”

So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a statement of fact. It says -

“It seems that part of the cheque has been sent abroad.”

Mr Bérenger: Let me quote another paragraph. From the verbatim, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not...

Mr Speaker: No, I am sorry.

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, you are allowing the hon. Minister to talk and not me!

Mr Speaker: I am going just to say that according to Standing Orders 22 (1) (b) -

‘Any debate taken place in the House cannot be subject matter of any question.’

So, I am asking now both parties have to rephrase their question. Rephrase it instead of quoting what the hon. Prime Minister said.

(Interruptions)

But, this is the Standing Order.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: You allow the hon. Minister to use one paragraph and I cannot use another paragraph!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Being given that the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development has quoted, I will allow. But, that will be the end of quoting paragraphs from the debate.

Mr Bérenger: Well, then, I think it is not of good faith for the hon. Minister to quote one paragraph and not to quote another paragraph which, I quote, the hon. Prime Minister speaking and saying -

“SIC said...”

In fact, the text says, “They said...”, but it is SIC.

“SIC said that they tried, but the money is gone, already cashed and transferred to London.”

It was a categorical statement made in good faith probably, unlike the quote. So, has the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development checked with the hon. Prime Minister on the basis of what information did he say that the money has been transferred to London?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the best advice I can give to the hon. Leader of the Opposition is to turn over the page and to see that on the very next quote from the hon. Prime Minister he qualifies that by saying – “part of the money” and “it seems”. So, it is quite...

(Interruptions)

Let me finish. I am answering. The previous Minister of Finance did not even answer questions on Med Point. I am giving the information. So, give me the credit.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I am saying, if you turn over the page, the hon. Prime Minister qualifies his statement by using the word “seems” - such as just quoted - and by saying “part of”. The matter is crystal clear.

Mr Bérenger: No. It is not crystal clear. The hon. Prime Minister said at one point that the money has been transferred to London. In other parts he says -“it seems that part...”. I am asking which part of the money, how much has been transferred to London, if any? My information is that no money has been transferred to London.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say this. That information we have given is in good faith. We are not privy to the personal bank accounts of people. I cannot say who has what money in the House. It is not my right to obtain this amount. But, what I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is from the information that we have, as a shareholder of MedPoint Ltd, that an amount was paid to Mrs Malhotra. It’s her decision to take the money outside or not - we don’t know. But, what we do know...

(Interruptions)

Let me answer. What we do know is that the balance of Rs120 m., the bulk of the money, is still in Mauritius in Baroda Bank, as I am speaking now, unless this morning it has been taken out.

Mr Bérenger: There is nothing wrong in the hon. Prime Minister agreeing to the fact that his information was wrong. No money has been transferred to London, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, today we have information which I could not obtain although I pointed at the SIC to request

information. Is it not a fact today that reference is made to the SIC to provide information? Is it not a fact that SIC holds 14% of the shares and that the representative of the SIC, Mr Golam, in fact, chaired the Board of Directors until July 2011?

Mr Duval: That is absolutely true, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I will further inform the hon. Leader of the Opposition that until the resignation of my predecessor, the Minister of Finance, also in charge of SIC, not a little finger was lifted by SIC to recover this money. Not a little finger!

(Interruptions)

I don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir, if there is...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know what is behind this question, whether there is some sort of masochism or something. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, until his departure, on 26 July, SIC did absolutely nothing to protect its shares. It is only a few days later, on 01 August - I think before I started, even - that SIC started to write to Baroda, started to write to legal advisors, and ask for the money to be blocked. So, I cannot answer for until July. That is not for me to answer.

Mr Bérenger: Has the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development checked, through SIC, whether it is not a fact that all the money paid was transferred to a current account at State Bank first; then, *in toto*, transferred to a fixed deposit account at Baroda?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't know whether it is current or fixed, but I understand that the cheque from the Ministry of Health - the famous cheque - went, if my memory serves me right, to SBM. Then, the next day that Rs120 m. - everything was done so quickly, you know, at times you get lost - went to Baroda and also, to the lady and you see, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have the decency not to reveal where the bank account of the lady is.

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development tell us whether it is not the fact that it is in January 2001, under the chairmanship

of the representative of SIC, Mr Golam, that a special resolution was voted unanimously by the Board to reimburse the two loans to Mrs Malhotra, which the hon. Minister referred to earlier?

Mr Duval: It may well be so, Mr Speaker, Sir. I haven't checked, but I will also remind

...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member wants to answer! Let him answer!

(Interruptions)

He cannot interrupt the House. Let the hon. Minister answer!

(Interruptions)

Don't Challenge me! I am telling the Member!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I presume the hon. Leader of the Opposition means 2011, but not 2001. I haven't checked, but I wouldn't be surprised. As I mentioned, SIC does fall under the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and you would assume what you can assume.

Mr Bérenger: I meant 2011. But, I was thinking I was ten years younger than I am, Mr Speaker, Sir.

So, the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is trying to give the impression that the SIC did nothing to prevent all this until the former Minister of Finance left. Well, is it not a fact - that under the present Minister - what the SIC did was to whitewash the whole thing. They did not try to stop anything. They write to Med Point to request for the distribution of proceeds of sale. That is whitewashing everything, asking that all the shareholders get their money. If that is not whitewashing, what is it? Why did not the hon. Minister give directives to SIC to freeze all this, instead of asking for distribution of proceeds of sale?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I will do better in a moment, but I wish to inform the Leader of the Opposition and the House that SIC has legal advice that it cannot proceed by way of the court to have an attachment made on the account. Otherwise, he could have done so. It has also, after the departure of my predecessor, sought legal advice whether he could do so. Now, Mr

Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned - and all these correspondences exist - the SIC wrote to Baroda Bank asking for the money to be frozen. What is left of this poor taxpayer's money to be frozen in the Bank of Baroda before it flies off to wherever other greener pastures. So, that is there. Mr Speaker, Sir, I was also a little bit busy these few days. I have also spoken to SIC and SICOM and this is what these two organisations which together, I think, own, little bit more than 20% of the shares so not sufficient to force a resolution that these two organisations are proposing that the remaining amount in the Bank of Baroda - the other one has gone, I don't know where - be placed in an Escrow account until the resolution of this court case and this is what SIC ...

(Interruptions)

... and what SICOM will suggest. They will try to obtain a shareholder's meeting to pass its resolution, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister which is which? We are told that SIC sought legal advice. We are told that SIC wrote to Med Point. At the same time we are told that SIC wrote to Med Point also to request a distribution of the proceeds of sales. Which is which?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not on the same day that all this is being done...

(Interruptions)

The hon. Leader of the Opposition seems to say all this is done on the same day.

On 01 August, they tried that, then they went directly to the Bank of Baroda because they had no joy coming from MedPoint as to what was going to happen, so they proceeded by steps. That was before. What is being suggested now is not at all in contradiction with what we were trying to do before, that is, we cannot obtain an attachment order. Medpoint does not want to distribute it either. So, what we are trying to do now is to have the whole amount placed in an Escrow account. What is wrong in that? Why is the hon. Leader of the Opposition not agreeable to that? Let it be placed in an Escrow account, stays in an Escrow account a few months until the whole matter is sorted out, everybody takes its share or perhaps, more thankfully, Government gets its money back and gives the clinic back.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister of Finance whether he is aware that the legal adviser of Dr. Malhotra, yesterday and this morning, on the radio, has said that all the money is still in Mauritius and Rs129 m. apart from the sum paid to Mrs Malhotra, are still at Baroda?

According to my information there has been a leak and Dr. Malhotra has confirmed that to ICAC also?

Mr Duval: In that case, it is very simple that we agree on the Escrow account and we place it, that's it.

Mr Bérenger: I can't say this for MedPoint or for Dr. Malhotra. The SIC has made the proposal. They do their business. But, my point is the following, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister of Finance is now track going through SIC trying for an Escrow account. But, in the past we have seen, in the case of Suzanne, for example. The courts have acted. The hon. Minister of Finance tells us that SIC cannot, through the courts, freeze them. But, of course, either ICAC or the Police or the Bank of Mauritius can start the legal procedures to freeze that. We can't just hope that an Escrow account will be agreed to. Why doesn't Government act to freeze that account at Baroda and elsewhere?

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I don't understand where the Bank of Mauritius will get the power to do that.

Mr Speaker: Order! Hon. Peetumber, please! You cannot from where you are speak to somebody on the other side of the House across the floor!

Mr Duval: I am not a lawyer, so I cannot say, but obviously, ICAC works in total independence, not because we allow it. But, it is under the law. I will, in fact, quote from the law relating to ICAC. I quote –

“The Commission shall act independently, impartially, fairly and in the public interest. Subject to this Act, the Director General shall not be under the control, direction of any person or authority”

So, I am unable, Mr Speaker, Sir, to deal with the questions on ICAC, neither am I able to give them any instructions.

Mr Bérenger: I am not talking about an Escrow account, but the possibility that we are dealing with proceeds of crime, is there and will remain there until ICAC, if it ever concludes its inquiry, refers it to the DPP and the DPP takes the decision. That is why I am asking why isn't Government prepared to find the legal channel required to freeze those accounts?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand, ICAC may be able to do so, but that is not my purview. I can say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all since *les claquements de cette affaire*, all since that, the Prime Minister and the Government of Mauritius has not wished to interfere at all in the ICAC inquiry and it is still going on and we have been transparent and providing the information today to the House. Not only that, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is only when my predecessor left office that we have any correspondence of any sort through SIC representing the Government in this issue to try as a shareholder of MedPoint to act and protect the interest of the other, ultimately, the tax payer. I think we have shown our goodwill all the way and it would have been in our interest. Public opinion would have been so happy if tomorrow we were able to block this account. So, why wouldn't we do it? Except for the fact that we respect the independence of ICAC and it is up to them to do it. Otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, the whole nation would have carried us up, *sur un piédestal* because we have been able. So, we would love to do that because everything that we have done so far has shown that we want to see these things sorted out and to see that the culprits are taken to court. Thank you.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister of Finance says ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! Order now!

Mr Bérenger: ..that he through SIC or otherwise has done all that they can, I have heard him just before to say, to recuperate tax payers' money. Then, has the hon. Minister directed the SIC to withdraw its request that the proceeds of the sale be distributed to all the shareholders including SIC? Has this been withdrawn?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is so easy to answer. On 01 August, we write to say distribute. On 03 August, we write directly to the Bank, to freeze the account. So, how come the account be frozen and at the same time be distributed? It does not make sense. So, we did rescind that demand, not even two or three working days later, that was rescinded and we asked the Bank of Baroda to freeze everything.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister says that the Bank of Mauritius cannot come in. It is a serious situation, where on 25 October, the hon. Prime Minister categorically stated: that the

MedPoint money had been deposited in a local bank and transferred to another local bank and to London. I repeat my information ...

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of order. To be fair, I quoted - whether rightly or wrongly - the words "it seems" that cannot be categorically stated. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has not the right in saying so, and I should correct him.

Mr Bérenger: Again I am referring to the Bank of Mauritius. My information is that no MedPoint money left Mauritius. It is here in Baroda Bank, in the account of Mrs Malhotra, the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank. Has or will the hon. Minister check through the Bank of Mauritius..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: ...whether that money has been transferred to London or not? That the Bank of Mauritius can do.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, deliberately I did not wish to reveal the bank details of this private citizen, Mrs Malhotra. I cannot say whether it is in HSBC. I do not think it is in HSBC. Unless the Leader of the Opposition has more information than me, it was not transferred to HSBC. Now, whether the Leader of the Opposition has privilege information as to what Mrs Malhotra has done with the money from whichever bank it was to HSBC, I can say that no transfer was made to any account in HSBC. So, the Leader of the Opposition again should be a little bit careful. He may be right, but that is not the information that I have as ultimately a shareholder of SIC Ltd, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is not what I have.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are in good faith. We have no reason not to attach this. If the Leader of the Opposition seems categorical that there must be some way that the Bank of Mauritius can act, the hon. Prime Minister and I will be more than happy to consider the way it can be done. It is in our interest, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are here to protect the interest of the taxpayers. It is in the interest of the taxpayers. If he does not want to talk to me, there is no problem; the Prime Minister is here. Let's have the solution, and we will act on it.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister of Finance is saying that he has information to the effect that the money has not been transferred to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking

Corporation. This is also Med Point money. We have been informed of what *démarche* supposedly, belatedly SIC is taking to freeze, to stop that Baroda account. Now, whether it is at Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation or elsewhere, if money has been transferred - and my information is that money has been transferred from the Baroda deposit account to another account Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation or whatever. But, this is taxpayers' money also. So, why does not the Minister of Finance find where that money is and go ahead with the same *démarche* to freeze that also?

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I must explain where I got the information. I am not getting the information from any bank. In fact, if it was a cheque that was drawn, I wouldn't know where it has been cashed or deposited. The fact is that transfers were made. Transfer is a letter to say to transfer so much to the Bank of Baroda, transfer so much to Mrs Malhotra at this bank. This is why I know where the money has been transferred. What has happened to it afterwards, I don't know. I really don't know, truthfully. So, that is what happened to the money. We are interested to freeze the money. Of course, we are! The Leader of the Opposition - whatever his partner may be saying - is interested. Let us get together. We are saying that the easiest way, if everybody is agreeable, is the Escrow account and we do it. Let's do it! What can be any reason why we do not want to freeze the account? There is no reason! Today itself, if the Leader of the Opposition comes up with how the Bank of Mauritius can act, we will do so. But, I pray for your indulgence, Mr Speaker, Sir. As for the ICAC, I cannot act.

Mr Bérenger: The way hon. Minister of Finance is speaking is as if I decide whether there will be an Escrow account or not! This is out of this world.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bérenger: Can I know from the hon. Minister of Finance...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order please!

Mr Bérenger: What happens...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order please!

Mr Bérenger: ...if Medpoint or Dr. Malhotra refuses to agree to that Escrow account? Will action be taken to freeze the funds both at Baroda and at Mrs Malhotra's account, wherever it be?

Mr Duval: With great pleasure, Mr Speaker, Sir. With great pleasure, we would like to do so. We are in the hands of ICAC and, from the beginning - even to protect our own people at the time - we did not put pressure on ICAC. It is not now that we will do so. We have to trust our institutions and to trust that ICAC will find a way - whatever way - to do so, and I hope so. If there is any other way to block the account, I am the first guy to accept that. This is why, Mr Speaker, Sir, I make an appeal to the hon. Leader of Opposition, to his partner: let's have it, let's do it, and then the public will be happy. Because everybody now is a little bit on tenterhooks as to whether the money will suddenly disappear from these accounts again. I said that SIC, on 03 August, about a week after the departure of my predecessor, did act to ask Baroda Bank to freeze the account.

Mr Ganoo: With regard to this question of freezing of assets, may I ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister to liaise with the Attorney General? Section 62 of the Act provides specifically for this question of freezing of assets, that is, the DPP may apply to the Supreme Court when somebody is charged or about to be charged under the POCA legislation for the attachment or the prohibition of any person to transfer or to pledge or to dispose of any money or other property so attached. So, the law is very clear. The DPP may apply to the Supreme Court and apply for this freezing order, and the money shall not be disposed in any way!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I would not wish to argue with such an esteemed lawyer. But, I understand that there must be a suspect. I presume that's why the confusion arose about London, because ICAC actually went to London to meet the Malhotra's, and that is why we assumed that the money had flown there as well. But, that is not the case.

Mr Ganoo: There are several provisional charges already!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot argue on this issue. If the hon. Member wants to ask the hon. Attorney General, it's with pleasure. But this has been addressed to me, and I am answering. I understand that this is not possible. But I can give the guarantee of the whole

Government that we will do everything possible; and we have done everything possible to recover taxpayers' money.

Mr Bérenger: My last question would be the following. From what I have heard the hon. Minister of Finance say on behalf of Government and what I have said in my capacity as Leader of the Opposition, it is clear that both sides would wish to see ICAC take legal action. My point is that we are not putting pressure on ICAC. But today's proceedings should be sent to ICAC, so that they are aware that there is unanimity on both Government side and Opposition side for ICAC to take legal action under the law.

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I cannot say whether ICAC already has an attachment order or does not have an attachment order. It may already have an attachment order; I don't know, Mr Speaker, Sir. The solution is two-pronged, Mr Speaker, Sir. If this side of the House agrees with Government, we can have an Escrow account - finish *là même*. Otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, if the Government agrees and the Opposition agrees, then we

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am reiterating ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am reiterating our offer for an Escrow account. Not to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, because he does not have anything to do with it, but to our friends next-door to him. That is the first thing. The second thing Mr Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order, I said!

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, obviously, with pleasure, I will send the whole proceedings to ICAC ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: He keeps on going as if we decide here; this side or this side; we decide on an Escrow account! He is out of his mind! He is out of his mind to say things like that! My point is that the will of the House has expressed itself today unanimously, and that, therefore, with due respect to ICAC, the necessary must be made to inform ICAC of the will of the House on this matter.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am happy that the Leader of the Opposition has dissociated himself from the whole thing, and is...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: This is rubbish!

(Interruptions)

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what I understand!

Mr Speaker: That is the end of question time. There is a consensus that today's proceedings of the House be sent to the ICAC, and that's the end of the matter!

(Interruptions)

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

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

The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.

PUBLIC BILL

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2012) BILL

(No. XXVI of 2011)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second reading of the Appropriation (2012) Bill (No. XXVI of 2011)

Question again proposed.

(12.11 p.m.)

Mrs B. Juggoo (Third Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): Mr Speaker, Sir, unlike the Leader of the Opposition as he calls it a budget of confetti, I would like to say that it is simple and straightforward. This budget strikes almost a perfect marriage between two conceptually conflicting approaches.

The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, means business. Displaying unusual skill, he has laid a strong foundation for creating a propitious climate for doing business on the one hand and providing sufficient social measures to ease the destitute and the vulnerable segment of the population. It is an audacious Budget that reconciles social imperatives with economic fundamentals while creating the conditions to boost growth against a backdrop of a hostile international economic environment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, besides playing the devil's advocate for the welfare of my constituency, I shall focus on three specific areas for want of time space namely – creation of an Afro-Asia hub; the SMEs, including a special attention devoted to pig breeders; of course, without forgetting women and the measures proposed to widen their participation in the socio-economic arena.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the simplicity of this Budget has led to a perception that it has focused on merely the abolition of taxes as we heard or the introduction of only social measures. It is important to remember that we are still the 24th country in terms of doing business out of 167 countries and the Minister aims to put Mauritius among the 10 best countries for doing business and makes Mauritius a quality destination as well with various interconnections to Africa. It is precisely for these reasons that these taxes were abolished as they sent the wrong signals at the beginning.

This budget is visionary in more than one way and it seeks to exploit opportunities that have been optimally tapped so far. It throws the idea of creating a hub in Mauritius to serve as a link between the emerging markets of Asia, mostly China and India and the nascent markets of Africa.

The budget mentions that efforts will be deployed to explore and set links with African countries. In this respect, investments need to be geared towards strengthening our port and cargo handling services. We have to enhance our productivity to make us a competitive,

innovative and efficient port. Our airport is becoming busier day by day and, despite the economic turmoil in Europe, will be hosting nearly one million tourists this year, if not more.

Africa is waking up from its slumber and the shift in economic power towards Asia will soon touch Africa. Already many African countries such as Botswana – where I had the opportunity to live - Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda or even Namibia for that matter are achieving impressive growth rates exceeding 5%, higher than that of Mauritius.

Our future lies in Africa, Mr Speaker, Sir. We are already a respected member of SADC, COMESA, the African Union and many others as well. By creating the proper conditions we stand to diversify and consolidate our trade and tourist markets. Our trade with African countries has increased, albeit not as strongly as we wish to.

Africa is a source of limitless raw materials, and a potential market for our increasingly outward looking educational and health sectors.

The recent visits of our hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and the subsequent triangular agreement, the Prime Minister artfully managed to reach with the Republic of Congo on the one hand and Singapore on the other is a clear signal of the vision of this government towards greater integration and expansion of economic development.

With a similar endeavour towards Africa, the Prime Minister is charting new vistas of development for a country with a narrow resource base. The budget goes one step further, and hon. Xavier-Luc Duval deserves all our congratulations for taking on board the African sector to achieve our development goals and widen our market sources.

The opening of air access policies has taken a bit long; but, with his experience as both Minister of Tourism and External Communication, I have no doubt the hon. Minister of Finance will accelerate the process of further liberalising air access policies to link Africa through Mauritius to the rest of the world and simultaneously show the way for Air Mauritius to become a great airline, if not the biggest airline on the African continent. We must take risks because, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing comes without trial.

As Shakespeare puts it:

“There is a tide in the affairs of men.

Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;

Omitted, all the voyage of their life

is bound in shallows and in miseries.
On such a full sea, are we now afloat.
And we must take the current when it serves,
Or lose our ventures”.

The Lions in Africa have awakened from their slumber. The cub needs to establish itself through strategic decisions at the opportune time, if we are to rise to the expectations of our people. This shift towards Africa needs to be given further push for our own benefits as the Afro-Asian link is the latest trend and the best link for the time being. Africa is going to unleash the potential for our SMEs which is my next focus.

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Xavier Duval has, with reason, identified the micro, small and medium enterprises as the spearhead of the economy recovery. While the 4% growth recorded against conspicuously difficult times, is an achievement in itself, the hon. Minister is determined to do better. He has in his context introduced a comprehensive package to stimulate and maximise the potential of the sector.

The MSMEs today are of strategic economic importance. Recognised worldwide as the engine of inclusive growth and equitable development, MSMEs are the vehicle *par excellence* to democratise wealth, ownership and alleviate poverty.

The major advantage of this sector is its employment potential at low capital cost. There is no better way to fight poverty than giving a job to a person, showing him or her how to fish rather than fish for himself or herself. The labour intensity of the MSMEs sector is much higher than that of the large enterprises. The MSMEs constitute the bulk of enterprises today and are credited with generating the highest rate of employment growth with a share of slightly less than 50% of the labour force and accounting for 37% of the GDP, more than what king sugar represented during the 1960s. The MSMEs sector has consistently registered higher growth rate compared to the overall industrial sector. A job not only helps poverty, it equally anchors an individual firmly in life protecting him or her from socially undesirable conduct. Hon. Xavier Duval has picked on the MSMEs as his Trojan horse to create jobs, fight poverty and protect against social scourges. He deserves all our support in this endeavour as this strategy touches more people than can be imagined.

The hon. vice-Prime Minister has left no stone unturned to unleash the potential force. With its agility and dynamism, the sector has shown admirable innovativeness and adaptability to survive the recent economic downturn. It varies from the unsophisticated nut seller in the corner of the street to the highly professional lawyer or medical practitioner, not to mention the experts in international finance.

Never in the annals of history has so much been proposed in one stretch to boost the MSMEs –

Interest rate at a reasonable 8.5%, rate instead of the prohibitively 14% stifled full development of the SMEs.

The Minister has successfully improved to accessibility of finance by getting the banks to agree to the release of Rs3 billion.

To stimulate entrepreneurship and reduce operation costs, all processing costs and related charges are waived.

The Equity Fund will offer risk cover for an amount up to 35%.

Tax deduction is offered to banks with regard to SMEs bad debts.

Access to an additional 175 units in industrial estates at five sites.

Discount of 50% on the rental in the first three years.

Market accessibility to upcoming entrepreneurs and producers from MSMEs provided they can meet competitive conditions in two schemes is of interest.

The hon. vice-Prime Minister takes a broad approach of triple bottom line focusing on the PPP, the 3Ps –

Profit,

People, and

The Protection of the planet.

No one can deny that such measures, if implemented with the same seriousness and zeal with which the Minister has taken the pain to introduce, would not in wishful theory create the enabling environment for a robust SME take off. It is indeed a revolutionary scheme for you to

take the opportunity now. Things are given to the population, now it is up to you to take the opportunity and get a better life out of it.

As we are aware, on the issue of SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to take the opportunity to invite the consideration of the House to the plight of pig breeders. Many of them are in debt and face tremendous problems, having lost their animals through no fault of theirs. They keep toiling without seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. They are an integral part of the MSMEs and they have deployed great efforts but were victims of nature, as we all know.

I suggest we make a special effort to compensate them for their loss and provide them with a fresh enabling environment to make a new start in that sector. For example, we have a few suggestions of writing off their debts – because they went through the swine fever, by protecting the local industry by means of decreasing imports and also providing them with start-up capital and technical assistance. We should also try to see if they could be provided with a subsidy on animal feed on that sector as the animal factory got close. We may also consider putting up a marketing infrastructure at a later stage for them so that they could make progress and have a good way of marketing their products. Lastly, to reallocate the SME funds from the European Union and earmark some Rs400 m. to fishermen/pig breeders and planters also. This will create this enabling environment to boost these sectors, with, of course, without forgetting that planters are also going to be given equipments, but this distribution from the SMEs Fund could most probably give them a better way of raising capital and starting over in a new manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot leave without talking of women. Women are closely linked with MSMEs. It is largely through the vehicle of MSMEs that we have witnessed the rapid emancipation of women with the consolidation of financial independence. We remember in 1995/1996, there was the Grameen Scheme that was given to women, then came the micro-credit. Today, women are emerging as a strong economic force, fulfilling both the productive and reproductive roles. The Budget once again addresses some of the problems specific to women, whether with regard to health, entrepreneurship, teaching or lower jobs. No one is left unattended. It also addresses a problem that no one has addressed before. We cannot have development with differentiated treatments for members of our society.

Thousands of Mauritians, both men and women, who are casual workers, do not participate in the benefits of the National Pension Fund. This Budget has made a special effort,

and to cater for these long forgotten men and women who have served our society with care. They comprise informal workers, household workers, gardeners and the like. Our Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance have shown a golden heart in their initiative to correct this societal anomaly. Although from a money perspective, it is not likely, to some of us, to be a significant sum of money, yet in terms of both tangible and intangible benefits these bold measures will bring a smile to many of them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when the market forces fail, a caring Government should intervene to correct the imperfection of the system. This is what the hon. Minister has done just now. Government will henceforth pay the share of the contribution of the NPF as well as their share of the transitional unemployment benefit. This obviously strengthens the welfare state and the equal opportunities for all. This Budget has provided so much and it will take ages if we really want to go and elaborate on all of them.

Before concluding, I would like to respond to some of the urgent problems in my constituency. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am flooded with complaints, and there is a general perception among members of the public - maybe they don't see or I don't know. They think nothing is being done. But this is not true. Lots have taken place and I wish to take this opportunity to reassure my constituency in particular that every step is being taken to give them satisfaction. A regional hospital is nearing completion at Long Mountain and we hope that the second phase will be implemented soon as well with X-ray machines and so forth. While a health centre initiated in 2008 will be inaugurated soon at Cité La Cure, as hon. Lormus Bundhoo mentioned recently, in Ste Croix. There is a problem, of course, of drains and roads everywhere which hon. Bachoo is taking care of and I would say that our priority in Constituency No. 4 would be most probably the projects like Saint Cecile Road in Riche Terre and drains at Briquetterie. Both have had lots of issues and, ultimately, now with the guidance of the Minister, I am sure this will be implemented soon. Similarly, roads and drain works at Vallée des Prêtres have started and they are in progress, I must say. For many bridges like Parampot Bridge, Blackburn Bridge in Congomah, Tosca Bridge in Crève Coeur, work has already started and we leave it under the good guidance of hon. Bachoo. All will be implemented soon. There is a little request as well that we wanted to make to the Minister of Local Government. At Camp La Boue, Montagne Longue, there have been many requests to change the name from Camp La Boue to Vallée du Paradis as when you enter Camp La Boue, it is such an exotic place that one would think that we

are in *paradis*, as Mark Twain said, Mauritius was designed before paradise. We made various requests for Montagne Zacot as well as Montagne Longue to be named after Bikram Singh Ramlallah as he was born there and we hope these two changes will come up soon.

I am sure that the Ministry of Local Government will put in all the efforts to clear and realise these matters. Environmental work has been done and we must also thank the Minister of Environment. It is a question of time and work should start soon wherever it has not started. There is little doubt that in his first Budget, the vice-Prime Minister has accomplished a splendid job under the able leadership of the Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, in a dauntingly challenging international context. Against a backdrop of euro crisis and the impending perils of yet another recession which experts claim may last longer than the financial crisis and credit crunch the world lived just a few years ago. Hon. Xavier Duval has navigated with remarkable skills through troubled water to present a Budget that generally seems to meet expectations nationwide. No Minister of Finance can claim to bring in a medley of measures that will please everyone. As such we cannot help that many a critic may spend time finding faults with the Budget proposals instead of giving the Budget a break. Maybe we can draw inspiration from the following saying of wisdom of Matthew Awujoola -

“Those who choose the path of a fault-finder will never be a pathfinder.”

This is what we should learn and accept what we are given and look further for better.

I would like to thank you for having paid attention to me.

(12.37 p.m.)

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal): M. le président, nous voici au deuxième budget de ce qui reste du gouvernement sorti des urnes en mai 2010. Je me fais l'économie du terme gouvernement résiduel, comme avait mentionné une ancienne parlementaire dans cette Chambre. Donc, ce qui reste de ce gouvernement sorti des urnes en mai 2010 nous a présenté son budget. Mais je dois dire d'emblée, M. le président, qu'innovation il y a eu. Si ma mémoire ne me fait pas défaut, je ne me rappelle pas avoir vu la photo d'un ministre des finances dans les discours du budget. Dès que vous ouvrez ce livre à la première page, quelle belle photo! Très belle photo!

(Interruptions)

Mais c'est une innovation! On n'a pas vu cela!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! Order!

Mrs Labelle: A chacun son style, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now! Hon. Bhagwan!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, let me come to the Budget itself. The first thing that I would like to say is that I am very surprised by the ease with which measures which have been announced several times, are announced very proudly and referred to as innovative measures. I am surprised by the ease with which we do that. As a matter of example, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is the legal framework to encourage the setting up of a film industry. At paragraph 166, the hon. Minister of Finance stated, when talking about high value added industries and so on -

“Government is also introducing the legal framework to encourage the setting up of a film industry to attract international film producers of repute.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the two last Budgets ...

(Interruptions)

I will continue when they have finished, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mrs Labelle: So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was saying that this was announced last Friday and when we look at what was announced in 2009, the then Minister of Finance talked about the

good potential for developing Mauritius as a location for film industry and he mentioned, I quote

–

“...we need to have the proper framework, to this end the Ministry of Industry is being provided with Rs10 m. to develop proposals in collaboration with BOI...”

and so on and so forth. The following year, in November 2010, the then Minister of Finance, another one because as the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday, within two years we have got three, *il fallait le faire*. The other one said and I quote at paragraph 128 of the Budget -

“...we will create the environment conducive to the creation of a film industry. To put this endeavour on a solid footing, we are providing for consultancy services to give advice on the way forward on a filmmaking framework....”

Last Friday, “...we are introducing the legal framework to encourage the setting up of the film industry...”

Must we take it that from what was announced during the two last Budgets, nothing has been done? Nothing? Let's be serious, Mr Speaker, Sir, let us do what has been announced instead of announcing it again. We have other examples, Mr Speaker, Sir. I am going to take the last one because I am not going to talk about this much. The hon. Minister at paragraph 172 talking about training said –

“I am introducing an innovative measure - the Sponsored Pre-job Training Initiative, which I hope will be used extensively by employers....”

Mr Speaker, Sir, job training for the youth exists since several years. The hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance mentioned that this is the seventh Budget of the two consecutive mandates of this Government. Maybe it has escaped his attention that since the very first Budget of this Government, a lot of measures were announced regarding training of unemployed, be it youth or women, Mr Speaker, Sir. These measures were being introduced very lengthily by the then Minister of Finance.

In the Budget 26-27 “broadening the circle of opportunities; we are going to tackle high female unemployment and low earnings of women; training is a key component of the

Empowerment Programme; to create employment opportunities for women and youth who need them the most; we are going to accelerate the development; we are going to create 5000 jobs”. I can go on this way.

All these measures were announced. I must add, Mr Speaker, Sir, that previous to these measures, the Skills Development Programme was on and the 2005-2006 Budget made provisions to extend the Skills Development Programme to SC and HSC as well as those who have studied the CPE. If we change the name, if we put a different mode of payment, is it serious talking about innovative measures? I will come back, Mr Speaker, Sir, to the job training again a bit later.

Regarding the empowerment of women, as I have said, measures have been announced during the past six years and in this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, at paragraph 175 the hon. Minister stated, I quote –

“The Commission for the Democratisation of the Economy will work with relevant Ministries to implement a pilot programme to empower vulnerable women through small scale farming projects.”

So, there is a particular role for this Commission for the Democratisation of the Economy. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, last year when hon. Ms Deerpalsing was having her speech, she talked about this. *Elle avait dit « ...avec le ministre de l’agriculture et la démocratisation de l’économie, on a travaillé plusieurs plans surtout pour les femmes, comme vous le savez, le chômage des femmes est plus élevé » etc. Elle mentionne même: « on a travaillé avec le ministre de l’agro industrie, avec l’honorable Cader Sayed-Hossen et moi-même pour un plan où les femmes pourront cultiver plusieurs choses et leur donner de l’emploi, etc.»*

Donc, cela a été dit et là nous voyons une mesure innovante qu’on en parle encore ! Ma première réaction en lisant cela, je me suis dit : *« comment dire bizin donne ene role sa commission la. »*.

M. le président, nous avons le *National Empowerment Foundation*, le *Women’s Entrepreneur Council*, nous avons toutes ces structures et institutions mais est-ce que c’est à la Commission sur la démocratisation d’économie qu’on vient maintenant donner cet *assignment*

particulier? Quel est le rôle maintenant du *Women Entrepreneur*? Est-ce que ce n'est pas un aveu d'échec pour dire que ces institutions ne peuvent pas le faire parce que ces institutions ont été mises en place pour justement *the empowerment of women*. Il faut bien trouver des bons rôles pour la Commission de la démocratisation de l'économie!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I can of course give other examples, but I would prefer to stop here and come to the main subject of my speech which is one of the four main objectives announced by the hon. Minister, that is, to improve our social protection. Mr Speaker, Sir, improving our social protection implies giving a helping hand to the most vulnerable and most needy citizens. At paragraph 236, the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned –

“Government spending on transfers, housing, health care and education, in other words on social spending, can make a big impact on sharing prosperity.”

We all agree with that, Mr Speaker, Sir. We all agree that the spending on housing, health care and education will help people to get out of poverty. It will help to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor, as the Minister himself said. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, what has this Government done during the past years for the most vulnerable, most needy in the areas of housing, education and of health?

Let me take housing. Under the chapter Decent Housing Units for Every Family, the hon. Minister stated at paragraph 254 –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, another most conspicuous manifestation of poverty in our country is the number of people who live in poor housing conditions – men, women, children and the elderly.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, how can it be otherwise for the number of people who live in poor housing conditions? How can it be otherwise when during the past 7 years with 6 Budgets presented, this Government has only finalised the construction of 533 houses? It started before 2005 and has started new projects of social housing only 550 units and this only in 2009, and we talk about poor housing conditions. I am not sure whether these 500 houses started in 2009 have been delivered. Mr Speaker, Sir, I fear that for projects initiated and completed during its first mandate, this Government has built zero house. I repeat it for projects initiated and completed

during its first mandate, it is zero housing and the Minister of Finance is right in stating the poor conditions of so many people in this country. The facts and figures that I have just given, I took it from replies to PQs we have put to the different hon. Ministers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think we can talk about a failure of housing policy during the past seven years. After this failure, this Government through his Minister of Finance is coming with a *nouvelle trouvaille*; the not-for-Profit Housing Development Trusts. Mr Speaker, Sir, I sincerely hope that this Government will be able to do what it has not been able to do with the different measures he announced during the past years, with this ‘innovative new vehicle’ to take the words of the Minister of Finance. Mr Speaker, Sir, talking about housing, I must say that I really appreciate paragraph 265 of the Budget. The hon. Minister of Finance stated -

“We can build houses. But it serves no purpose if they are not affordable to low-income families.”

I agree. Later on, the hon. Minister of Finance qualifies low-income families as families earning less than Rs10,000 per month. Mr Speaker, Sir, nowadays a family earning above Rs10,000 per month, can we really say that they are not in low-income families?

At this stage, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would most humbly request that the hon. Minister sees to it that family income is not the only criteria because the situation of a family with one child, for example, earning Rs10,000 is not the same as a family with two children. If we take the only income of Rs10,000, I don’t think that this will make justice to many families. I would suggest, Mr Speaker, Sir, that above the family income, we can have other criteria, such as the number of children; whether this family has a handicapped child, and whether this family is paying rent. With all these criteria, we are going to make justice to a lot of families.

To close this chapter under social housing, Mr Speaker, Sir, I must say that I welcome the measure taken for the existing housing estates regarding the setting up of a functional syndic.

M. le président, si le *Leader* de l’opposition a rappelé à cette Chambre hier, le nombre de fois qu’il a lui-même soulevé la question ; permettez-moi, M. le président, de rappeler qu’une des douze mesures prioritaires de notre projet de gouvernement - le projet du MMM, - était je cite -

“*La prise en charge par l’état des frais de syndic de la NHDC.*”

Donc, cette mesure a été préconisée de notre projet du gouvernement MMM. M. le président, on ne peut que se réjouir de cette mesure que nous préconisons et qui a été prise en considération.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now have some words on another area mentioned by the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, where Government spending will contribute a lot for poverty alleviation, to break the cycle of poverty and to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor.

I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, education. My hon. friend, Mr Obeegadoo, will certainly deal with the issue of education. I am just going to take these measures that were announced for the most needy, the most vulnerable and those who badly need that helping hand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are all aware that we have a considerable amount of young people, who have dropped out after CPE failures or at lower secondary. We are all aware and we all agree that these young people need special training to increase their employability. During the past years, we have heard a lot. We have heard the Second Chance Programme and by the way I don't think that I have heard the hon. Minister talking about Second Chance Programme yesterday. I don't know where this programme is. I think that the Second Chance Programme *'ine fonn' comme dit ma collègue*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on this side of the House, we did express our apprehension that this Second Chance Programme, as it was designed, would not satisfy the needs of those who need a second chance. Unfortunately, after some years we have been proved right. Last year, I have spoken lengthily on the Second Chance Programme, and it is unfortunate that nothing has been done to improve this programme and I just wonder whether this programme is still on.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding pre-vocational; the hon. Minister has announced several times and yesterday he has confirmed, that he is extending the pre-vocational by one additional year. Mr Speaker, Sir, extending the pre-voc by one additional year, will not be much useful to these young persons, if the whole system is not revisited. The hon. Minister has talked about a new curriculum yesterday and it is not the first time that he makes such statement. Let us hope that this time this new curriculum will happen.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, the pre-voc needs more than one year and more than a new curriculum. We have to revisit the methodology of teaching, but reviewing the methodology of

teaching, can we do it with the present teachers we have in the pre-voc sector? Mr Speaker, Sir, those teachers who are working in the pre-voc sectors, we are asking them to revamp the sector, we have to do this and we have to do that. Do you know, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these teachers who have been working for six and seven years, they are still on contract, which means, Mr Speaker, Sir, by now, beginning of November, these teachers have received a letter stating -

“Your services are not required”.

So, for the months of November and December, they won't get a salary. Regarding the end of year bonus, it will be paid during the second week of February next year. And, for the end of year bonus of 2010, I am aware of cases where the end of year bonus has been paid in August 2011. Can anyone in this House imagine receiving his end of year bonus nearly one year after? This is the treatment we are administering to those pre-voc teachers. So, in November they receive a -

“We don't require your services”,

and in January they are going to receive a letter stating -

“Okay, we are offering you employment on a month to month basis.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I raised this issue several times in the House. In 2009 the hon. Minister said -

“Yes, I do agree that we need permanent teachers in the pre-voc centre. I am going to advertise these vacancies”.

He did it, Mr Speaker, Sir. But, after some time when you went on the website of the PSC, you know what you could have seen, Mr Speaker, Sir, these vacancies have been cancelled following recommendations from the Ministry. This is what has happened.

In 2009, this was put, and we are at the end of 2011 these vacancies have not been re-advertised. These people had great hopes at that time and all their hopes have vanished. For these two years nothing has happened regarding the situation of the pre-voc teachers and now we are saying that we are going to extend the pre-voc by one year. Where are the teachers whom we will need in January? Where are they?

So – ‘*pre-voc sa, bé pas nou problem*’ - *nous traitons les enseignants de ce secteur comme nous traitons les enfants que nous envoyons à ce que je qualifierai de garderie.*

Mr Speaker: May I interrupt the hon. Member? I suspend for one and a half hour.

At 1.00 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.32 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Members, please! I know that after lunch you are a bit excited, but I want to hear Mrs Labelle speak in calm and silence. I invite Mrs Labelle to take the floor.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Mrs Labelle: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have the temptation to move for the adjournment of the debates, because I know that we have the majority. I am not going to do so, but the temptation is very strong. *La tentation est forte.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to resume my speech where I left it. I was talking about the sectors where government spends money to alleviate poverty, to break the cycle of poverty. I was talking about these sectors, and about education. I mentioned, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the pre-voc sector, and I was talking about the very bad conditions of pre-voc teachers. I was just asking myself how we can expect something good out of the pre-voc sector when we treat these teachers so badly. I don't recall whether I mentioned their meagre salary of Rs11,000; this is what they draw. In this sector, there is no special allowance; nothing else to help them face the difficult situation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after the pre-voc sector, I would like now to turn to the children in the primary sector, particularly the difficulties that the children face at primary level, and what

has been announced to help these children. We have heard about remedial education at schools. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't have any details! Who is doing the remedial class? When is it being done? How is it being done? Nothing has been said, but we are being told that there is remedial education at primary level. M. le président, tout le monde sait que cela n'existe pas. C'est tout simplement une annonce qu'on a trouvé nécessaire de faire.

After remedial education, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have heard about *Enhancement Programme*. Alors là, M. le président, c'est la plus grande tromperie. Faire croire à certains parents qui ont vraiment besoin d'aide qu'on prend en compte leurs enfants à travers l'*Enhancement Programme*. Et quand nous regardons ce qui a été dit sur le site du ministère concernant l'*Enhancement Programme*, et je cite -

“The objective is to identify weaknesses, and provide consolidation and reinforcement of knowledge and competencies for all levels of learners”.

C'est le premier objectif. Il y a tellement de littérature, M. le président. Quatre pages pour expliquer tout ce qu'on va faire à travers l'*Enhancement Programme*. On dit même que -

“This innovative programme aims at the reinforcement of work in the following core subjects; English, French, Maths, Science, etc. and is supplemented by a variety of pedagogical practices”.

Belles paroles, M. le président. Mais, dans la réalité, nous savons que c'est tout à fait faux. Je connais même une école où les enfants sont supposément là pour apprendre à jouer de la flûte pendant trente minutes - et c'est un volontaire qui vient pour enseigner de la flûte à des élèves. Le temps que l'enseignante arrive, installe les élèves et commence, il est déjà temps pour ramasser, parce qu'ils n'ont que trente minutes. Comme si l'on pouvait enseigner une classe de musique à trente élèves en trente minutes ! Donc, c'est du bluff, M. le président. L'*Enhancement Programme* est un bluff, et je suis révoltée, parce que ce bluff est orienté, si je puis dire, vers les enfants qui en ont le plus besoin, vers des familles qui n'ont pas les moyens de payer des leçons particulières etcetera. Ils ont vu un salut dans cet *Enhancement Programme*, mais, finalement, après quelque temps, ils réalisent que leurs enfants n'apprennent rien. Il n'y a absolument rien qui identifie *weaknesses*, qui *provide consolidation, reinforcement of knowledge*. Tout cela n'existe que sur du papier, M. le président.

Je sais que cet *Enhancement Programme* coûte de l'argent à l'Etat. Jusqu'à l'heure, le ministre a refusé de faire une vraie évaluation. Cela nous aurait permis de voir ce que nous recevons en retour pour cette somme importante que nous dépensons sur l'*Enhancement Programme*.

Donc, M. le président, après le pre-voc, où on voit que c'est une garderie pour adolescents, le *remedial* n'existe pas ; l'*Enhancement Programme* c'est du bluff. On se demande comment on peut continuer à essayer de tromper les gens, et je pense qu'on continue à essayer, M. le président.

Cette année-ci, qu'a-t-on entendu ? *Summer school*. Maintenant, nouvelle trouvaille ! *We are going to have summer schools*. Hier, M. le président, je crois avoir entendu le ministre de l'Education annoncer, et cela non sans fierté, que le *summer school* va débiter cette année-ci du 15 novembre au 15 décembre. M. le président, c'est du délire ! Est-ce qu'on peut m'expliquer le pourquoi ? Est-ce pour prouver à ces enfants qu'on les considère comme des nuls et qu'ils ne méritent pas de vacances ? Est-ce que M. le ministre sait ce que cela veut dire pour un enfant de 10 ans, 11 ans ? Il n'a même pas dit quel âge ; on ne sait pas, on est dans le flou. Il pense qu'il doit aller à l'école parce qu'il a besoin d'aide, il a besoin d'apprendre encore, parce qu'il est bête. Il n'a pas pu travailler pendant toute une année, et maintenant il doit aller au *summer school* du 15 novembre au 15 décembre. *This is a compassionate government, a caring government! And you treat the kids like that!* C'est des travaux forcés pour ces enfants ! Mais c'est de l'*overdose* M. le président !

Ces enfants ont besoin du *remedial education*. Ils ont besoin du *enhancement education*. *Mais, tou ça pann marcher !* Maintenant, qu'est-ce qu'on dit ? *Summer School !* Et on va les envoyer prendre des cours pendant les vacances de fin d'année. M. le président, je ne trouve pas de mots pour exprimer ma colère devant le manque de considération vis-à-vis des enfants en bas âge.

(Interruptions)

Je ne sais pas mais j'espère que le ministre vienne nous expliquer comment va dérouler ce programme, et surtout, pourquoi il veut venir punir nos enfants. Si les programmes qu'il a mis en place n'ont pas marché parce qu'il n'a pas fait ce qu'il fallait faire, ce n'est pas aux enfants de

payer les pots cassés en allant au *Summer School* pendant les vacances de fin d'année. Je souhaite de tout cœur, M. le président, que le ministre nous en parle.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before leaving this chapter let me say a few words on job training. Give it whatever name you want: Placement and Training, Skills Development Programme or now Sponsored Pre-job Training Initiative.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, up to now, CPE failures, and lower secondary dropouts aged 16+, they don't get placement and training. These categories of young persons are being left with NGOs. We have schools like Montfort, St Gabriel, St Ignace, which cater for this particular group of students. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are the students who, once again, need much more this helping hand and they don't receive it from the State. For this category of young people we need a holistic approach. They need the basic literacy and numeracy, and the prevocational. We can't do it piecemeal. At times, we talk about second chance, now we're talking about the placement, but for this category they don't have this. If we go to the list of persons who have been on job placement we can see that CPE failures and early dropouts do not form part of this category.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in some quarters, it is being said that the placement and training programme has been set up to now much more for a subsidisation to the private sector than training the youth to increase their employability. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we look at the list of companies which have participated in the placement for training programme and the amount disbursed, we can understand the feeling.

Let me give you some examples, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. And this information, of course, is in reply to PQ 1B/564. We received a list of companies and the amount disbursed to the companies under the placement and training programme. A company like Apollo Solution Ltd : R 531,000 - I don't know Apollo Solution. Une compagnie telle que *Client Center Alliance Mauritius (Ltd.)*; R 555,000; le Doha Academy : R 542,000; ICT Programme Placement - Group of Companies : R 1.6 millions; Infinity, notre chère Infinity : R 2.8 millions, et je sais qu'il a eu plus que ça après ; KBC Restaurant & Caravan Co. Ltd. : R 434,000; Mungroo & Sons Ltd - R 784,000; Soie du Sud : Rs 40,000 ; SPY Trading : R 222,000; Sara Entreprise : R 255,000. Il y a toute une liste.

M. le président, est-ce que nous savons combien de personnes ont vraiment reçu une formation après avoir dépensé autant d'argent ? Et est-ce que ces jeunes ont effectivement été employés par la suite? On n'a pas cet élément d'information, M. le président. L'on ne sait pas ! Et lorsqu'on demande une évaluation, c'est toujours renvoyée.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, billions of money have been spent on different sectors *sous prétexte de* alleviate poverty, to eradicate absolute poverty but no proper evaluation has been made to see whether those for whom these programmes were designed have effectively benefitted from this programme. For years now, we have been hearing about 7,000 *familles* who live below poverty line.

In 2008, the then Minister of Finance said -

“We have sought to find out who are the poor, where they live, why they are poor and why many of them remain poor. We wanted to know their plights and predicaments so that we can tailor our actions to their needs and to reach them more effectively.”

What has been tailored? How do we know whether this has been effective when we don't do any evaluation? What has been done to monitor and evaluate these 'tailored actions taken'? Do we know what has happened to the children of these 7,000 families? Do we know about their schooling? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we don't know!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think it is very important when we give NGOs, let's say, some Rs2 m., to know whether we do have a monitoring mechanism. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here too, following a question, I received some information regarding the special collaborative Programme for Women and Children in Distress. Here, we have NGOs: *Fondation pour L'Enfance: R 1.9 millions; Morcellement St. André Women Association: R 1.8 millions; Century Welfare Association: R 1.5 millions; SOS: R 2 millions et ainsi de suite.*

Est-ce que nous savons comment cet argent a été dépensé? Est-ce que nous savons quel a été l'impact de ces dépenses sur ces femmes et enfants en détresse? L'on ne sait pas ! Mais, on dépense des millions. Je crois R 50 millions dans le budget; on dépense, on donne à des associations mais on ne cherche pas à savoir quel impact ces soi-disant actions ont eu sur les destinataires de cet argent.

Je trouve cela, M. le président, très aberrant. Je peux dire la même chose en ce qui concerne la plupart de ces programmes. Allons voir ce qui a été dépensé pour offrir des feuilles de tôle à des familles très pauvres. Association pour la protection de l'Environnement : R 1.8 millions; Association Communautaire de Cité-Tyack : R 1.6 millions. Je ne prends que les chiffres de R 1 million ou plus. Le Centre de L'Amitié de Camp la Paille – R 2.6 millions; La Lucy Roy Women Association – R 2.9 millions, Child Hope : R 3 millions; le Savanne Arya Samaj Federation : R 12.5 millions. Mouvement Social Féminin : R 4.8 millions.

De toutes ces associations, M. le président, est-ce qu'on sait combien de familles en ont bénéficié? L'on ne le sait pas, M. le président. Le 05 avril, j'avais posé une question pour savoir le nombre de familles qui ont bénéficié à travers ces associations. Il y a des associations comme le Beau Vallon Football Club, le Beau Vallon Arya Samaj, Association pour le Bien-être et Progrès. J'avais toute une liste des ONG qui avaient bénéficié de grosses sommes d'argent, allant de R 2 millions à R 12 millions, pour aider ces familles en détresse, ces familles qui ont besoin de quelques feuilles de tôles pour se protéger.

J'avais demandé combien de familles ont bénéficié à travers chaque ONG et la réponse était –

« *The information is being compiled and will be tabled shortly.* » *Shortly, it was on the 05 of April, we are now in November, I don't know what shortly means, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.* Donc, je me demande si jamais on aura cette réponse. Là, on parle de ce qui a été fait à travers l'intégration sociale, etc. C'est dommage que le ministre des finances qui était aussi le ministre d'intégration sociale ne soit pas présent. Il rompt un peu la culture que les ministres des finances soient présents au cours des débats. Donc, il veut peut-être rompre un peu avec cette pratique que les ministres des finances soient présents dans l'hémicycle au cours des débats. Peut-être il a décidé de rompre avec cette culture.

Donc, M. le président, nous voyons que sous différents programmes qui ont été initiés pour aider les démunis, ces démunis n'ont pas reçu ce qu'on leur avait promis. Que ce soit dans le secteur de l'éducation. J'en ai parlé. Le *pre-voc*, l'*enhancement*, le *remedial* et maintenant notre fameux *summer* pour donner un coup de massue à nos enfants. Que ce soit dans l'éducation, que ce soit dans le domaine du logement, nous avons vu la politique gouvernementale. Donc, nombre de maisons construites sous des programmes initiés et terminés pendant le premier mandat, c'est zéro. Nous voyons les différents programmes que ce soit les

femmes en détresse ou les pauvres qui ont besoin de quelques feuilles de tôles. On ne sait pas qu'est-ce qu'ils ont reçu et qui sont ceux qui bénéficient le plus de ces programmes, M. le président.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now say a few words on the different social aids that we receive. Here too, all of us, as Members of Parliament, we know the sufferings of the people. We know the distress of the people when they can't understand – they tell us “I can't work and they have cut down my BIP”. There is, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, so many differences. I know personally.

Je connais deux femmes, M. le président, de deux secteurs différents qui ont fait des opérations de l'ablation du sein. Il y a une femme qui est fonctionnaire et l'autre femme est coiffeuse. La femme qui est fonctionnaire continue à recevoir son BIP, je suis contente pour elle, mais cette femme qui est coiffeuse, qui a besoin de son bras pour brosser les cheveux et avec lequel elle souffre, pour cette femme on coupe la pension après quelque temps. Donc, comment expliquer à la personne : tu as besoin de 60% d'handicap ? Mais est-ce que l'autre qui est fonctionnaire et qui s'assoie dans un bureau, elle a 60% d'handicap et moi qui ait besoin de gagner ma vie en brossant les cheveux et j'ai subi la même opération et je n'ai pas la pension. Donc, je connais beaucoup de cas comme cela. M. le président, je crois qu'il est grand temps qu'on revoie, vraiment, cette question de différentes allocations, de pension, etc. Et là, je suis contente que Madame la ministre soit arrivée.

Je voudrai humblement faire une suggestion. Je disais qu'il nous faut regarder les différents bénéfiques et je parlais de *Basic Invalidity Pension* et je citais ce cas où deux personnes ont subi la même opération ; elles sont de deux secteurs différents. Une personne continue à avoir la pension et l'autre n'a pas sa pension. Une est fonctionnaire et l'autre est coiffeuse.

M. le président, là je voudrai humblement faire une proposition. Je crois qu'on ne peut pas considérer seulement le 60% d'handicap pour décider si on doit accorder le BIP ou pas. Il est très important de considérer la profession de la personne.

M. le président, j'ai toujours en tête une dame que j'avais connue quand j'étais à la circonscription No. 20 à Canot. Cette dame était laboureur. Elle avait subi au moins quatre ou cinq opérations du ventre, etc, maman Dhiraj, je la connais. Et cette dame n'avait pas la pension parce qu'elle n'était pas handicapée à 60%. Comment peut-on s'attendre à ce qu'une femme qui

ait subi trois ou quatre opérations puisse retourner aux champs et travailler ? Cela m'avait frappé parce que je commençais à faire de la politique active et je me suis dit : mais comment est-ce qu'on ne peut rien faire pour cette dame ? Cela est un cas qui m'avait frappé. J'en ai connu beaucoup d'autres par la suite. Mais, il est fort probable qu'une autre femme travaillant dans un bureau, etc., ayant subi la même opération peut continuer à travailler. Mais, cette dame ne peut pas. Donc, on ne peut pas lui dire : tu n'as pas 60% d'handicap, donc tu n'auras pas cette pension. Parce que même si on peut travailler et qu'on a 60% handicap, on bénéficie de la pension. Cela, très souvent, on l'oublie. Si on a 60% d'handicap, on travaille, ces personnes bénéficient. Je ne crois pas qu'il y ait eu des changements à ce sujet. Je crois que Madame la ministre avait hérité d'un très gros dossier à ce sujet quand elle avait pris après 2005. C'est resté pareil. Mais il ne faut pas oublier ces personnes qui même s'ils n'ont pas 60% d'handicap, leurs professions ne leur permettent pas.

J'ai vu la semaine dernière, M. le président, un maçon, après un accident, tous ses doigts sont déformés, c'est fermés. Il a très mal quand il travaille. Cette personne, certainement n'a pas 60% d'handicap, mais il est un maçon et il travaille. Le pauvre, il essaye de travailler. Il doit gagner sa vie. Après deux heures, cela fait pitié de voir cette personne. Là, il m'a dit : *'madame, mo pas réussi faire plus ki enn demi-journée.'* Mais je comprends. Donc, il n'arrive pas à faire plus qu'une demi-journée. Et cette personne, on trouve qu'il ne mérite pas. *We can't say we are compassionate, we are caring when we don't take these issues into consideration, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.* Donc, ma requête c'est que nous ayons d'autres critères en plus des 60% d'handicap pour allouer la pension d'invalidité de base, M. le président.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when I talk about social aids, there is another issue which really makes me very sad. The question of nappies ; des couches pour des personnes handicapées. Les réglementations du jour disent que des personnes, après 70 ans, peuvent bénéficier des couches *when they are bedridden, but for those younger than 70 years*, c'est un parcours de combattant. Là, je tiens à remercier la ministre qui récemment m'a aidé dans un cas. Elle l'a fait très vite. Elle a vu quand même ce cas. C'était une fille de 13 ans qui est handicapée et qui a fait une demande depuis le début de l'année et que cela traîne. Il y a deux semaines quand j'ai parlé à la ministre, elle a fait le nécessaire tout de suite et cette fille a pu recevoir les couches. Vous imaginez le calvaire de la maman ! Cette fille n'a donc pas de couches et c'est une famille

pauvre. Cette fille a 13 ans, c'est l'âge de puberté, imaginez ce qui se passe quand cette enfant n'a pas de couches.

Je connais plusieurs cas. Il y a quelqu'un d'autre. Un homme de 40 ans qui a fait un accident. Il est devenu paraplégique, allongé complètement dans le lit. Il a 40 ans, on ne peut pas lui donner des couches ! Là il a fait des applications. Cela tarde. Je crois que cela fait six mois qu'il attend ces couches. Je ne manquerai pas de faire appel à l'honorable ministre et je suis certaine qu'elle va tout faire pour aider ce cas là aussi.

M. le président, je demanderai qu'on revoie cette question d'âge. Si nous considérons que la personne a vraiment besoin, parce qu'actuellement qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Vous demandez ces couches à travers la *National Solidarity Fund* qui vous donne R 15,000 en trois *instalments*. Après, vous recommencez, vous redemandez. On vous dit : vous aviez bénéficié l'an dernier, attendez encore un peu. Comme ci vous pouvez attendre de ne pas vous salir. Franchement ! Attendez un peu et puis vous aurez ! Donc, là vous attendez, vous resoumettez l'application, vous prenez encore une année, peut-être que vous aurez, peut-être que vous n'aurez pas. Ce n'est pas sûr que vous ayez. Donc. M. le président, voilà pourquoi je demande à ce qu'on puisse revoir cette question d'âge concernant les couches pour les personnes handicapées.

M. le président, en parlant de ces aides sociales, je dois dire il y a quelque chose dans le budget qui m'a fait plaisir *under the social protection and so on*. Au paragraphe 249, il a été dit:

"I am pleased to announce that for all those earning up to Rs3,000 a month, government will now pay their share of the contribution to the National Pension Fund as well as pay their share of Transitional Unemployment Benefit."

M. le président, c'est une bonne chose mais, pour moi, ce n'est qu'un commencement. Il y a autre chose urgente à voir. M. le président, à chaque fois que je passe devant un chantier de construction, surtout pendant la journée, et que je vois ces maçons en haut des bâtiments et peut-être ils ont été sous-contractés, ils n'ont pas de contribution de pension. Arrivées à l'âge de soixante ans, ces personnes n'auront pas une pension. Ces personnes qui ont travaillé si dur pendant toute leur vie, arrivées à 60 ans, 62 ans elles sont cassées et elles n'ont pas de pension. Donc, M. le président, il y a vraiment une trop grande différence dans le plan de pension pour nos compatriotes. Je crois sincèrement que le gouvernement peut encourager les travailleurs saisonniers qui font leur petit travail par eux-mêmes à contribuer dans un fonds de pension. Par

exemple, M. le président, on peut leur dire : « si vous contribuez Rs100, le gouvernement vous donne Rs50. » Bien sûr, on a besoin de faire des études pour savoir jusqu'où c'est viable. Mais il y a quelque chose qu'on peut faire. Donc, si on demande aux gens : « vous contribuez et le gouvernement contribue », je suis sûre qu'en même temps nous ferons quelque chose de bon pour ces personnes qui travaillent dur et qui ne sont pas dans un plan de pension et, en même temps, cela aiderait peut-être le gouvernement dans notre plan de pension que nous savons n'est pas en très bonne situation. Donc, M. le président, c'est une suggestion que je fais, de considérer un plan de pension pour les travailleurs saisonniers, les contractuels etc, qui ne sont pas dans un plan de pension. M. le président, je pense qu'il est très important que nous regardons ces employés dans ces secteurs, que se soit la construction ou ailleurs.

M. le président, je voudrais terminer en disant quelques mots sur ma circonscription. Nous avons actuellement le gros problème de dispensaire à Floréal. On nous a dit qu'on a lancé l'appel d'offres pour un bâtiment, qu'on ne voit pas venir, et ces personnes sont dans des situations vraiment désespérées parce que le transport coûte cher, de Floréal pour aller à Allée Brillant et ailleurs pour un dispensaire. Donc, je demanderais au ministre de la santé si on peut voir au plus vite comment soulager la souffrance de ces personnes.

M. le président, depuis que je suis députée au No 16 - cela fait bientôt six à sept ans - à chaque discours de budget, je parle de deux endroits. A Rivière Sèche, il y a un gros problème d'érosion sur la route d'accès, et à Camp Savanne, il n'y a pas de route d'accès. Depuis six ans, j'en parle et je ne suis pas fatiguée d'en parler ! Je vais en parler encore aujourd'hui et je fais encore un appel parce que moi, à Rivière Sèche, je crains qu'un accident grave va arriver. Je crains aussi qu'il y aurait un de ces jours une grande bagarre entre les habitants parce que quand une voiture passe, l'autre ne peut pas passer, ou bien la voiture passe, une personne est au bord de la route, elle entre dans un champ de cannes. Donc, je crains qu'on ait une bagarre sérieuse un jour ou il y aura un grave accident à Rivière Sèche.

Concernant Camp Savanne, M. le président, il se trouve au bord des cascades à Henrietta. Vous imaginez, nous sommes en 2011, des personnes doivent traverser une rivière pour arriver chez eux ! Vous imaginez qu'un enfant allant à l'école doit traverser une rivière pour aller prendre le bus ! Imaginez quand il pleut, combien c'est glissant ! Imaginez le danger auquel on expose ces enfants !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker : Order !

Mrs Labelle : Si certains membres veulent avoir d'autres renseignements, je dirais que pour Camp Savanne, le plan d'accès a été finalisé en 2005 et les PPS actuels peuvent certainement rouvrir ces dossiers, et ils vont voir que tout avait été fait. Naturellement, après six ans, le coût n'est sûrement pas pareil, mais tout avait été fait. Il fallait implémenter. Depuis ce temps, c'est resté comme cela. Encore une fois, je fais un appel pour l'accès à Rivière Sèche, le problème d'érosion et la route d'accès à Camp Savanne.

M. le président, avec ces quelques mots, j'espère que les suggestions que j'ai faites, que ce soit pour la pension, que ce soit pour le logement, et que ce soit pour le besoin dans l'éducation, vont être entendues et que l'année prochaine lorsqu'on en parle, on pourra dire au moins quelque chose a été fait dans ce domaine.

Je vous remercie M. le président.

(3.06 p.m)

Mr R. Issack (Fourth Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): M. le président, le monde est malade.... Déjà, je vois l'opposition malade... Le monde est malade... mais l'île Maurice ne l'est pas. L'île Maurice était malade. En 2005, elle était aux soins intensifs, admise en urgence économique à l'hôpital, mais heureusement que dans notre camp il y a de très bons médecins, de très bons chirurgiens, et on a pu sauver l'île Maurice. Aujourd'hui, on prétend que le pays est malade mais, en réalité, nous avons des petits bobos, comme tout le monde, et ça rend malade les autres, parce qu'on est en bonne santé, on est en pleine forme... Maladie imaginaire ? ... Essayons de voir tout d'abord ce que c'est l'imaginaire ! L'état de l'Afrique 2011 - que dit 'Jeune Afrique' sur l'état de santé de l'île Maurice ? Palmarès 2010, valeur sûre et, bonne surprise. Au classement index 'Jeune Afrique', sur 54 pays africains, le premier c'est l'île Maurice. Ce n'est pas l'île Maurice qui le dit, c'est l'Afrique qui le dit.

Voyons autre chose ! Politique - retour à la démocratie. On lit souvent dans la presse : l'île Maurice, république bananière... les élections municipales viendront... ils ne doivent pas s'en faire. J'ai entendu le ministre des finances leur demander : *'pa finn assez gayn batté ?'*. *Mais atan !* L'île Maurice, république bananière ? Que dit Jeune Afrique ? En terme de démocratie, sur 54 pays, le pays le plus démocratique en Afrique, probablement l'un des pays les plus démocratiques au monde, premier est Maurice. Encore une fois, Maurice ! Ecoutez, il ne

faut pas trop s'exciter... Croissance : PIB par tête d'habitant, Maurice, sur cinquante quatre pays, classée quatrième derrière la Libye, Guinée équatoriale, Seychelles, Gabon. L'île Maurice est classée avant l'Afrique du sud pays émergeant. On est quatrième avant l'Afrique du sud. Alors, dire que l'île Maurice est malade ? Disons que la population n'est pas malade – au fait, la population de l'île Maurice n'est pas malade, mais certains esprits oui. Ces jours-ci, dans certains quartiers obscurs, on est en train de noircir ce budget, de le diaboliser. On est en train de vouloir tirer un capital politique à partir de ce budget, mais en vain. On est en train d'ethniciser ce budget ; on empoisonne les esprits mais, heureusement la population mauricienne n'est pas dupe.

M. le président, la vie est ainsi faite. On ne peut pas tout le temps plaire à tout le monde. On ne peut pas tout donner à tout le monde. Vous savez, même les prophètes ne sont pas tous aimés par tout le monde. Même Dieu a des ennemis ! Et maintenant vous voulez qu'avec un budget tout le monde soit heureux, tout le monde soit content ? On ne peut pas, c'est impossible. Le gouvernement a présenté un budget, et l'opposition a présenté un bide jeu.

(Interruptions)

Vos remarques sont aussi ridicules que celles de l'année dernière. Vous savez on adore ou on abhorre. L'opposition évidemment doit jouer le jeu et nous apprécions quand, par exemple, l'honorable Paul Bérenger lui-même avoue qu'il y a quand même des points positifs dans le budget. Laissez-moi-vous dire une chose. Je voudrais dire ceci, M. le président, à l'intention des membres de l'opposition.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Issack: Vous savez dans le mercato on veut tout le temps les meilleurs joueurs, et les meilleurs joueurs se trouvent ici.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Issack: M. le président, *zott enkor pé lé acheter mwa.*

(Interruptions)

Evidemment, l'opposition doit jouer son jeu, mais si on porte les lunettes de l'opposition parlementaire ou extra parlementaire - mais pas des lunettes d'Abdullah Hossen qui fabriquent les meilleures lunettes du monde - on verra tout en noir. L'opposition peut critiquer. On accepte de critiquer un budget, mais on ne doit pas être aussi pessimiste que ça. L'opposition est trop pessimiste. L'opposition théâtralise, surdramatise.

(Interruptions)

Le gouvernement, le ministre des finances et le premier ministre ... on les anathématise. L'opposition diabolise. Oublions les membres de l'opposition et oublions les membres du gouvernement. Écoutons la rue, écoutons les experts, écoutons les analystes. Écoutons les éditorialistes. Écoutons les économistes, ceux qui savent, ceux qui connaissent vraiment la valeur d'un budget et la philosophie gouvernementale. Même ceux qui étaient contre nous aujourd'hui acceptent que c'est un des meilleurs budgets de ces dernières années.

(Interruptions)

Alors, est-ce qu'on peut venir banaliser, dire tout simplement que rien n'est bon ? Quand le budget est présenté, l'opposition sort la même rengaine, la même vieille chanson, même *disque rayé* – « budget pour le gros capital... » « budget capitaliste; »

(Interruptions)

Taler nou guette confetti la kot pour sorti la ; pour ena confetti tou taler.

Hier l'honorable Paul Bérenger a dit que le secteur privé a eu plus que ce qu'il demandait. Vous savez, dans ce pays il y a plus de cinq cents mille travailleurs. Ils ne sont pas tous de la fonction publique. C'est le secteur privé qui contribue à faire vivre autant de familles et qui paie ... le gros capital. Au contraire, ce budget vient en aide aux petits entrepreneurs pour que demain ils soient eux aussi de gros capitalistes. *With the incentives that we give them they can improve and enrich themselves.* Le capitalisme est le poumon de l'économie. Il faut encourager le secteur

privé. En 1982, quand le MMM/PSM est arrivé au pouvoir, dès qu'il avait présenté son premier budget, l'île Maurice avait crié c'était un budget en faveur des capitalistes.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross talking please!

Mr Issack: Je ne vous blâme pas parce que justement il faut aider et les capitalistes et la fonction publique. Pourquoi catégoriser une section productive de l'économie mauricienne? Il faut aider toutes les entreprises en difficulté. D'ailleurs, le secteur privé reconnaît que le présent budget est très motivant, très encourageant et c'est le pays finalement qui en sort gagnant, c'est la population qui travaillera. Donc, ce budget permettra à tout entrepreneur de fructifier son capital. Alors, au lieu d'encourager le pays, au lieu de booster le moral du pays, voilà qu'hier l'honorable Paul Bérenger, le *Leader* de l'opposition a dit : « L'année prochaine il y aura des licenciements des fermetures d'entreprises. » On n'a même pas encore décollé et déjà - des oiseaux de mauvais augure - il ne faut pas décourager une population. Est-ce cela le travail de l'opposition, ne pas donner au moins une chance à ce budget ? Donnez au moins une chance à la population, aux travailleurs. Qu'ils essaient, qu'ils démarrent et après, s'ils échouent, l'année prochaine, vous allez nous dire : 'Vous avez échoué.' Mais au moins, donnons la chance aux autres de démarrer.

Autre argument : tout est cher. Depuis que le monde est monde, tout devient cher chaque jour que Dieu nous donne et tout augmente tout le temps. Les prix à l'île Maurice augmentent par rapport aux facteurs exogènes. Nous importons. Les prix vont augmenter, mais quand même il faut reconnaître que le gouvernement fait tout pour maintenir les prix au plus bas. Jusqu'à maintenant, on maintient les subsides sur le riz, sur la farine, sur le gaz. A côté, à l'île de la Réunion, une baguette de pain, une ficelle coûte 1 euro, R 42 et ici...

(Interruptions)

Oui, mais c'est cher. Oublions l'île de la Réunion, l'honorable Lesjongard! Citez-moi un pays dans le monde où le pain est à meilleur marché qu'à l'île Maurice. Il n'y en a pas.

(Interruptions)

Voilà, ça c'est un défi.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order! Hon. Baloomoody, order, please!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Baloomoody, you will have the opportunity to talk later on, please.

Mr Issack: Et maintenant, voilà une preuve de surdramatisation ! On a mis une taxe de 10 sous sur les SMS. *Dominere* ! Ecoutons les cris des putois ! On va crier, on va hurler : 'c'est cher'. Ici, dans cette Chambre, on a dit que c'est une taxe sur les jeunes. Mais, est-ce que vous avez écouté les jeunes ? Est-ce qu'ils se sont prononcés ? Est-ce qu'ils vous ont dit : c'est cher ? 10 sous ! Ce que vous n'avez pas dit aux jeunes...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order, please. Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Issack: Ce que l'on ne dit pas aux jeunes, c'est qu'ils sont en train de contribuer, eux-aussi, à la solidarité, ils sont en train de contribuer à alléger les pauvres, les nécessiteux. Cette taxe est une taxe participative, c'est une taxe de solidarité, de tout le monde, de tous les mauriciens. Quand il y a une taxe, il faut....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Issack: M. le président, il y a certainement des professeurs parmi nous. Je vais vous citer un petit exemple.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Issack: Vous savez, il y a des élèves à qui on donne des leçons gratuitement, mais il y a d'autres élèves qui prennent des leçons, mais qui paient.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Issack: Est-ce que vous savez que les élèves qui reçoivent les leçons gratuitement sont les plus inconscients, les plus négligents, ils ne font pas leurs devoirs...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Soodhun, order!

Mr Issack:...tandis que même si c'est une taxe - aussi petite soit-elle - c'est une façon de conscientiser, de responsabiliser les jeunes. Vous savez pourquoi on met cela sur les jeunes, parce qu'il y a beaucoup d'adultes qui utilisent leurs portables pour envoyer des SMS. C'est une taxe sur l'amour aussi, monsieur !...

(Interruptions)

Il y a cela. Oui, dix sous. Il ne faut pas en faire un drame. Imaginons un instant – il y en a qui sont victimes des SMS – que cela représente une taxe lourde pour ces jeunes mais, en retour, ils doivent réfléchir, réaliser ce qu'ils reçoivent en retour. Le transport est gratuit, l'éducation est gratuite du pré-primaire jusqu'à l'université, les examens sont payés, on leur donne des livres, on leur donne beaucoup et, en retour 10 sous c'est beaucoup, c'est peu à la fois. C'est une façon de responsabiliser ces jeunes.

M. le président, à travers vous, je m'adresse à eux ! Mais, ce que l'opposition ne dit pas, c'est une taxe sur le SMS, mais il n'y a pas eu de taxe sur les appels. Si j'ai bien écouté mon ami, le ministre Pillay, bientôt il y aura une baisse sur l'internet. Et nos jeunes sont intelligents, ils savent utiliser l'internet pour ne pas payer des appels internationaux.

(Interruptions)

Vous tirez sur tout ce qui bouge ! Ce matin j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention, avec une certaine passion également, la députée, l'honorable Mme Juggoo qui a fait référence à l'Afrique, et l'île Maurice forme partie de l'Afrique.

L'Afrique, c'est un grand continent riche, mais exploité et inexploité en même temps. Il y a 54 pays africains. Et je crois que c'est une très bonne chose, c'est très intelligent de la part du ministre des finances de songer à envoyer deux ambassadeurs pour sillonner l'Afrique. L'Afrique, ce sont des ressources, l'Afrique c'est le pays, non seulement de l'or et du diamant, mais du manganèse, du fer, du cuivre, mais l'Afrique c'est aussi la grande culture ; l'Egypte : les pyramides, le Sphinx, Alexandrie... l'Ethiopie ... Il y a à côté, l'Afrique du Sud ... Les pays africains, les savanes. Il y a également la Tunisie, il y a la grande ville historique. Il y a beaucoup de potentiels en Afrique. On s'est tellement tourné vers l'Orient, vers l'Occident, on n'a pas

regardé du côté de l'ouest. L'Afrique c'est un marché de plus d'un milliard d'habitants - 54 pays - et nous avons la chance d'être un pays comparativement, de loin, plus stable. C'est le pays le plus stable en Afrique, l'île Maurice. Et nous avons la main-d'œuvre, nous avons les intelligences, nous avons les capacités, on peut investir en Afrique.

D'ailleurs à travers la SADC et le COMESA, nous touchons une partie du marché africain. Mais nous pouvons aller beaucoup plus loin, avec des ambassadeurs qui vont sillonner le continent noir. Il y a beaucoup de potentiel. A un certain moment, on avait à Maurice une liaison aérienne directe avec l'Afrique ; Air Malawi, Air Tanzanie, Kenya Airways et Quantas. Mais pour les pays africains surtout, il y avait beaucoup de liaisons aériennes. Aujourd'hui il n'y en a pas. Il faut se fier à notre ligne nationale ou alors au South African Airways. Il y a le potentiel touristique que représente l'Afrique pour l'île Maurice. Il y a des îles telles les Comores, Madagascar ; il y a plusieurs riverains qui viennent à Maurice pour s'approvisionner, parce que comparativement nos prix sont intéressants. Donc, l'île Maurice peut devenir un marché de l'Afrique. Et d'ailleurs, le premier ministre l'a dit, l'île Maurice devrait devenir un pont entre la Chine, l'Inde et l'Afrique. Profitons-en ! Voilà une mesure qui va certainement rapporter gros à l'île Maurice. On peut faire venir des investisseurs, ou on peut aussi aller investir en Afrique. D'ailleurs, il y a des Mauriciens qui investissent en Afrique. Donc, il y a l'exportation, il y a des investissements, il y a le tourisme.

Dans le budget présenté, il y a du très bon, du bon, mais il y a aussi du moins bon. Là, il a été décidé que certaines catégories de fonctionnaires auront à travailler les samedis. On travaille, oui, mais *it will be considered as overtime, and they will be paid for that*. La fonction publique mauricienne doit impérativement devenir plus productive. Nous devons tirer des leçons de ce qui se passe ailleurs, M. le président. Si aujourd'hui, la Chine est ce qu'elle est, pays émergent, c'est parce que c'est un pays qui travaille, qui bosse du matin au soir. Il y a des pays où l'on travaille 24 sur 24, 7 sur 7. Mais, évidemment, il y a un *planning*. On ne va pas exploiter physiquement, psychiquement les fonctionnaires mauriciens. Il y aura une rotation. Il y aura certainement un système qui sera mis en place, mais nous devons devenir une nation travailleuse. Mais il faut le dire quand même qu'à Maurice, il y a des Mauriciens qui deviennent paresseux également. Le nombre de travailleurs étrangers que nous importons évidemment, ils ont leur savoir, leurs compétences, mais il y a des Mauriciens également qui auraient pu prendre leur place. Mais ils ne travaillent pas ; ils ne veulent pas travailler. Donc, il faut encourager cette culture du travail.

Hier, j'ai écouté le *leader* de l'opposition. Il a dit qu'il n'y a rien sur les réformes des corps paraétatiques, rien sur les gaspillages. C'est vrai. Mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'on ne va rien faire. Il ne faut pas tout dire. *They were expecting that in the Budget.. we would talk about the coming municipal elections.* C'était un discours du budget, mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'y aura pas d'élections municipales. Il y en aura. Mais chaque chose en son temps, chaque chose à son heure.

Hier, je crois qu'il y a eu même une prise de bec quand on a parlé d'une ambassade mauricienne en Arabie Saoudite. Mais vous allez trop vite en besogne, messieurs ! Oui, c'est une promesse électorale ; oui, cela a été dit ...

(Interruptions)

Il n'a pas dit non. Mais il faut savoir : 'non' dans quel contexte, et pourquoi. L'honorable Shakeel Mohamed hier me faisait une confiance. En 2001, je crois que l'honorable Soodhun, qui était alors ministre, avait fait une demande auprès de l'OIC pour qu'on puisse devenir membre. En 2001! L'Arabie Saoudite a donné la réponse avant-hier.

(Interruptions)

Demandez à l'Arabie Saoudite ! On ne peut pas être plus Arabe que les Arabes! Il y a des procédures. L'honorable ministre des Affaires étrangères a fait comprendre qu'il y a des procédures. Il y a une délégation qui aurait dû s'y rendre, mais le roi est décédé.

(Interruptions)

Ecoutez! On a cinq ans ! A la fin de notre mandat, on espère qu'on aura activé les choses et que ce sera chose faite. Mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'on ne va pas le faire, que ce n'est pas de notre intention. C'est de notre intention, mais tout ne dépend pas que de nous.

(Interruptions)

L'Alliance de l'Avenir ! Nous serons toujours là, même après ! Ne vous en faites pas!

(Interruptions)

Voilà! Donc, il ne faut pas aller trop vite en besogne. Ceci dit ... Je vous ai dit que, dans ce budget, il y a du bon et du moins bon.

Sur la fonction publique, les dépenses, comme je l'ai dit, il faudrait qu'il y ait le travail ; il faut que nous devenions une nation qui bosse, une nation qui bouge, une nation qui produit. On ne peut pas vivre de manière parasitaire ; il faut aller de l'avant. Mais pour cela, il faudrait revoir certaines choses au niveau du gouvernement, au niveau de nos institutions. Il faut fluidifier le mécanisme, le système ; il faut bien huiler nos appareils pour que nous soyons beaucoup plus productifs encore. Le gouvernement, je suis sûr, va s'atteler à la tâche. On va tout faire pour corriger certaines anomalies, pour rattraper certains retards. Dépensons utile!

Là, je me permettrai de m'adresser au ministre des Arts et de la Culture. Je l'ai déjà dit dans le passé, et je le dis maintenant également. En ce qui concerne le Centre Culturel Islamique, c'est un centre culturel, mais il faudrait qu'il y ait de la culture dans ce centre culturel.

(Interruptions)

Personne n'est à blâmer, parce que ce centre a été utilisé dans le passé contre l'honorable Dr. Rashid Beebeejaun comme une base électorale. A partir de ce centre sont sortis des pamphlets hautement diffamatoires, qui ont fait mal aux hommes, mal aux femmes, mal aux membres de sa famille. Il ne faut pas utiliser un centre. C'est le sacré. Le Centre Culturel Islamique ne peut pas devenir et ne doit pas devenir un centre politique.

(Interruptions)

Pas maintenant, pas hier et pas demain. Jamais! Et pas seulement le Centre Culturel Islamique, n'importe quel centre. Il ne faut pas mélanger tout le temps. Le politicien et le religieux sont deux choses différentes.

(Interruptions)

Le politicien peut être religieux, mais qu'un religieux soit un politicien ce n'est pas bien.

(Interruptions)

Il le faut. Parce que je crois dans la grande culture et je connais la culture de l'honorable ministre, Mookhesswur Choonee.

(Interruptions)

Il chante bien sa culture.

(Interruptions)

La culture Islamique - il faut connaître, par exemple, l'Alhambra en Espagne ; Aurangzeb en Inde, la dynastie Abbasside, les Omeyyades ... La culture doit générer la culture. La culture doit être aussi interculturelle. Il faut qu'il y ait des passerelles entre un Centre Culturel Islamique, un Centre Culturel Marathi et un Centre Culturel Tamoul.

(Interruptions)

Hier, l'honorable Paul Bérenger parlait d'enfantillage ; il a raison, car cela vient de là-bas.

(Interruptions)

Pour parler de la fonction publique, il y a ...

(Interruptions)

Zot pe envi mo arreter bé mo arreter.

The Deputy Speaker: Please, address the Chair and continue.

Mr Issack: M. le Président, en ce qui concerne la fonction publique il ne faut pas blâmer les fonctionnaires en général. Dans beaucoup de secteurs les fonctionnaires font un excellent travail et on les admire. Ils travaillent et donnent satisfaction. Mais, il y a quand même quelques brebis galleuses. Il y a quand même un certain nombre de gens véreux, et nous devons faire bien attention parce qu'il y va de l'argent public. Quand on ouvre le rapport de l'*Audit*, c'est toute une série de scandales qu'on trouve à chaque page, des manquements. Mais, dans le rapport de l'*Audit*, il y a une suggestion ...

(Interruptions)

La plus belle de toutes les démocraties mauriciennes est ici.

(Interruptions)

Dans le rapport de l'*Audit* il y a une suggestion qu'on devrait, nous, parlementaires, retenir. Je cite, M. le président –

“Elsewhere in many jurisdictions Public Accounts Committees hold public hearings. It is believed that this increases the effectiveness of the work of the PAC. It is suggested that consideration be given to the opening up of the PAC proceedings to members of the public on application to PAC (...)”

Nous sommes là grâce au public. Nous sommes payés avec les deniers publics. L’argent de l’Ile Maurice est l’argent du public, alors pourquoi est-ce que le public ne doit pas être au courant de ce qu’on fait de son argent? On aurait vivement souhaité - mais cela dépend des autorités - que tout se tienne en public.

Year in year out, there are scandals but they are forgotten the day after. No action, no step and no sanction taken. We have to name and shame now. Consideration should be given to have every year one or two sessions of the National Assembly devoted to debate on the report of the PAC.

Nous avons un rapport et il y a des *members of the Public Accounts Committee* des deux côtés de la Chambre. L’unanimité s’est faite autour de cela, nous sommes tous d’accord. Il faut qu’il y ait des débats, autrement qu’est-ce qui va se passer? Chaque année on dénonce des maldonnes, des malversations, des incuries et tout reste impuni. N’est-il pas temps maintenant de prendre en considération ce que le Directeur de l’*Audit* lui-même propose? Ce sera aussi une question de bonne gouvernance et de transparence. Il ne faut pas créer cette perception que le public ne doit rien savoir de certaines choses parce que nous n’avons rien à cacher.

(Interruptions)

Je vais citer quelques exemple, M. le président. Dans le dernier rapport de l’*Audit*, par exemple,

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order ! Order, please!

Mr Issack: M. le president, dans le dernier rapport de l’*Audit* par exemple je relève ceci : “*Lateness in delivery of pre-press materials and textbooks*”. Nos élèves attendent des livres depuis le début de l’année. On passe une commande, on paye et on débourse gros et les livres

viennent bien après! Comment nos enfants vont apprendre? Qu'est-ce qu'ils vont apprendre? Et quand ils vont recevoir les livres, ce sera trop tard. Ils paniquent car ils doivent rattraper le tout. On travaille avec des photocopies alors qu'on a payé pour avoir des originaux!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Issack: *For academic years 2010 and 2011: "No deadline for delivery of pre-press materials by the National Centre for Curriculum Research and Development was set (...)"* Par exemple, il fallait livrer des livres le 29 novembre, les livres ont été livrés le 31 mai l'année suivante! Voilà la fonction publique qu'il va falloir améliorer ! Mais la peur change des hommes et des femmes. Quand on n'a pas peur on s'en fout!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask hon. Members not to disturb the Member while he has the floor. Let him make his point in silence, please!

Mr Issack: Je révèle un autre point....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea! I think you missed what I have just said.

Mr Issack: Plaine Verte *Medi Clinic* dont la construction a coûté plus de 53 millions de roupies

(Interruptions)

C'était en 2009..

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Issack, you made reference to the report but if you could just please move on.

Mr Issack: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I just quote this part on the clinic? Il y a eu un délai de neuf mois ; outre ce délai il a été constaté par l'*Audit* que –

“The general quality of workmanship was poor. Material used was not standard. There were cracks in the ceiling. There was water at several places on the roof (...)”.

C'est l'argent du public et on dépense gros. Jusqu'à maintenant la clinique n'est pas opérationnelle.

(Interruptions)

Alors, il serait souhaitable qu'on jette un regard plus critique, plus sévère sur le rapport de l'audit. Ce sera une manière ou une façon d'inspirer confiance à la population.

Il y a une mesure qui fait beaucoup de plaisir, mais, en même temps, qui contient une dose de tristesse, c'est la NHDC. On apprécie beaucoup l'effort du gouvernement et du ministre des finances pour recréer le syndic au niveau de la NHDC. Il n'y a pas longtemps, une ou deux semaines de cela, j'étais ahuri par ce que j'ai vu, par exemple, à Camp Le Vieux, les appartements sont dans un état négligé et abandonné. Les habitants attendent de l'Etat, mais il n'y a pas d'ordre, pas de discipline et il n'y a pas de syndic. Le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances l'a bien dit : *it's a no man's land*. Il y a des gens qui ont beaucoup de difficultés, mais on n'a pas assez écouté ces gens là.

Hier, si je ne me trompe pas, j'ai entendu le *Leader* de l'opposition parler de *riots*. Espérons qu'il n'y aura pas tout cela parce que le gouvernement est en train de *take care of*. Mais, je dois dire en passant qu'il y a beaucoup de problèmes, mais je dois remercier le ministre Anil Bachoo pour les efforts qu'il fait pour que l'on puisse se mettre à la tâche et faire ce qu'il faut faire au maximum. Et le ministre Bachoo et le ministre Deva Virahsawmy et le ministre Hervé Aimée, tout le monde met la main à la pâte pour donner un coup de main à travers l'île. Mais, ce qui m'a le plus choqué et qui va vous choquer probablement - et là je vous demanderai d'écouter bien parce que justement cela montre notre système défaillant. Parfois nous nommons des gens à des places *they don't perform*. *Even if they don't perform, we don't mind, but, at least, they should respond positively to the cries of the people*.

Vous savez, hier, j'ai été prendre une photo, M. le président. C'est une histoire qui m'a attristé et je vais terminer là-dessus. C'est un habitant de la NHDC. Il n'a pas de jambes et il n'a pas de pieds. Ce garçon s'appelle Emmanuel. Il habite au dernier étage de la NHDC. Il est pauvre. Sa mère est malade. Depuis longtemps sa sœur a écrit une lettre à la direction de la

NHDC. On n'a même pas daigné lui répondre. Il a demandé à ce qu'il puisse être logé au rez-de-chaussée. S'il n'y a pas d'appartement au rez-de-chaussée, cela ne fait rien, mais au moins dites-lui qu'il n'y a pas de place. Il faut regarder comment il descend, il marche avec ses mains. Il descend les escaliers en s'accrochant à la balustrade. Quand il pleut, il ne peut pas descendre les escaliers. Je demanderai au ministre responsable, si possible aujourd'hui, si possible demain, trouvons un appartement pour cette famille. Laissez-moi vous dire une chose également. Ce garçon, *he is taking SC exams this year, this morning he was supposed to go for oral examination, but he had no transport*. Il doit aller prendre part aux examens. *He is a student at St Andrews School and he is very brilliant*. Est-ce que nous allons laisser mourir la compétence ? *So, I am tabling this, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir*, pour que l'on puisse au moins prendre une action.

Et voilà le budget de l'honorable Xavier Duval. *We are going to care for such people*. Nous allons nous occuper de ces gens là, et ce budget de l'honorable Xavier Duval que 'l'Express' a appelé Navin-Duval est un budget humain. C'est un budget sensé à aider tout le monde, tous les Mauriciens se trouvent dans ce budget. Les critiques peuvent pleuvoir, mais il faut voir l'essentiel, la quintessence, l'âme de ce budget, c'est une âme humaine.

Merci, M. le président.

(3.56 p.m.)

Mr M. Seeruttun (Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle): M. le président, après avoir écouté un discours très poétique et à l'écouter cela se voit qu'il ne va plus par le bus maintenant. Retournons à nos réalités M. le président.

La présentation du budget national est un moment fort d'un pays et vendredi dernier, on a eu droit à un discours de deux heures du ministre des finances. En présentant le budget 2012, un budget sensé d'avenir, il a préféré regarder le passé, en se référant aux années 2000-2005. On peut comprendre l'honorable ministre et son gouvernement, surtout quand il y a absence de vision pour le pays et pour les Mauriciens. En cette période de crise internationale, l'attente de la population était grande, surtout pour les gens au plus bas de l'échelle, sans oublier ceux de la classe moyenne et de nos aînés, pour qu'il y ait un rétablissement de leur pouvoir d'achat.

M. le président, ce fut deux longues heures d'attente et après ces deux heures, quelle grosse déception! La majorité des Mauriciens ne se sont pas sentis concernés par ce budget and *what about 'Putting People First' ?* C'est vrai aussi de dire que ce fut une agréable surprise pour le secteur privé, qui a vu toutes ces demandes acceptées par le ministre et aussi comme dirait l'autre pour les *fat cats*. Ils ont vu, M. le président, l'abolition nette de la *Solidarity Tax* introduite l'an dernier. Une taxe qui en cette période de crise aurait pu rapporter des fonds à être utilisés pour subvenir aux besoins des personnes vulnérables. Le budget fut dans sa forme comme dans son contenu, un *galimatias*, pour utiliser un terme très local.

Des incohérences par ci, des disparités par là. Des phrases utilisées qui ne collent pas avec l'acte de contexte, de jolis mots pour épater la galerie, mais au final du *cut and paste* des anciennes mesures, du *rebranding*.

Ce qui me choque, M. le président, c'est qu'en écoutant les réactions des membres de la majorité sur ce budget, je suis convaincu qu'ils n'ont rien compris aux implications. Ces mêmes personnes, un an de cela, avaient applaudi la mise en place de certaines mesures, aujourd'hui ils applaudissent quant à leur abolition. Est-ce qu'ils n'avaient rien compris l'an dernier ou c'est cette année qu'ils ne comprennent rien ? A moins, bien sûr, qu'ils aient eu les directives pour applaudir et sans savoir pourquoi !

M. le président, heureusement que le ridicule n'a jamais tué ! Ce qui me rend perplexe c'est qu'on se permette de faire du cinéma en occultant les enjeux de ce débat. Mais cela ne nous étonne guère. Le Premier ministre, lui-même, reconnaît que ceux qui ont des compétences ne sont plus avec eux. Nous savons, bien sûr, que les compétences sont, M. le président, de ce côté de la chambre. Le ministre des finances a avoué à une radio privée, pas plus tard que lundi dernier, qu'il ne trouve rien d'anormal d'appliquer une politique ultralibérale comme ce fut le cas entre 2006 et 2010. A cette période, il y avait quelques membres de la majorité qui avait dénoncé cette politique et il y avait même un membre de cette même majorité qui avait exprimé son désarroi dans les colonnes de journaux locaux. Et je parle ici de l'article de presse 'TINA WALLAS' dont beaucoup se souviendront.

L'ironie c'est que le retour de cette politique ultralibérale est, aujourd'hui, applaudi par ces mêmes personnes. M. le président, comment peut-on changer de conviction en si peu de

temps ? C'est une honte ! Doit-on gouverner avec rancœur et haine ? Doit on faire passer nos ambitions personnelles avant le pays et le bien-être des mauriciens ? Le budget de 2011 présenté l'année dernière par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth voulait rééquilibrer la croissance, tout en consolidant la justice sociale. C'était un budget visionnaire et ambitieux. Un budget d'avenir qui aurait pu mettre notre île sur les rails pour atteindre en l'an 2020 un GDP de un trillion de roupies et un *per capita income* de 20, 000 USD, une île Maurice moderne, propre et où il fait bon vivre, où la richesse du pays aurait pu être équitablement redistribuée aux mauriciens. Ce sont ces mesures qui auraient créé la richesse, M. le président.

If it was not audacity, I don't know what is? Le budget 2011 de l'hon. Pravind Jugnauth avait mis fin à 5 années de politique ultralibérale prônée par le gouvernement de l'Alliance sociale et la population dans son ensemble s'est sentie soulager l'année dernière. Tout en soutenant le secteur productif, il avait fait la part belle à tous les groupes vulnérables. Par exemple, M. le président, les petits planteurs de canne à sucre avaient toute la considération voulue et dix mesures avaient été annoncées pour les encourager à continuer à cultiver la canne à sucre et ces mesures avaient contribué à augmenter leurs revenus par plus de R 2,900 par tonne de sucre, et si la réforme des SPI était déjà en place, ils auraient eu encore R 600 additionnelles dans leur poche. Comme l'a si bien dit hier, le *Leader* de L'opposition, s'il n'y a pas la masse critique pour la production de la canne, c'est toute l'industrie cannière qui est menacée.

Parlons de logements sociaux où cinq *schemes* avaient été préconisés pour les plus vulnérables, mais aussi pour ceux de la classe moyenne. Tout le monde pouvait avoir leur part du gâteau national. Les PME's, les pensionnés, les étudiants, les personnes avec des handicaps, les personnes les plus touchées par la pauvreté, la classe moyenne, et j'en passe. Ils allaient tous partager le gâteau de ce deuxième miracle économique.

Hélas ! M. le président, on n'avait pas compté sur certains de ce gouvernement qui ont tout fait pour freiner le train du développement et ce au détriment de la population. M. le président voilà ce que le FMI avait rapporté après son passage à Maurice en janvier et février 2011 –

Je cite quelques extraits –

« With the 2011 budget, the government intends to set Mauritius on a strong growth trajectory”.

“A well designed and predictable tax policy should support the Government’s medium-term fiscal consolidation and growth agenda.”

“Taking account of the expected upturn in the world economy and the continuing effects of the fiscal stimulus, economic growth is projected to increase to somewhat more than 4 percent in 2011.

“Mauritius is a pioneer in the development of green taxes, but more can be done, not least, regarding increasing road congestion. Here, tax policy has a critical role to play, including the fine-tuning of vehicle taxation to increase incentives to reduce emissions and congestion. An explicit carbon tax could replace a similarly structured tax to improve climate policy.”

“The mission welcomes the structural reforms in recent years, which have contributed to raising Mauritius competitiveness”. Maintaining reform momentum to reduce critical structural bottlenecks in infrastructure and the parastatal sector, as well as supporting export-oriented SMEs launching new products and services, will further strengthen Mauritius’ ability to compete in the world economy, including as an international financial center and the IMF stands ready to assist the authorities in the implementation of their economic program, including through the provision of technical assistance, and looks forward to continued fruitful policy dialogue in the period ahead”.

Le *Country Report* du FMI lui a donné raison et a vu le sérieux avec lequel l’ancien ministre des finances voulait faire bouger les choses et c’est pour cela que *Africa Regional Technical Assistance Centres* (AFRITACs) allaient être implantés à Maurice afin d’assister, entre autres, dans le *Capacity Building*.

A ceux qui disent que le pays a perdu une année avec l’ancien ministre des finances, M. le président, je réponds que c’est de la mauvaise foi car les experts pensent autrement.

Revenons, M. le président, au budget 2012, où le ministre des finances met l'accent sur quatre axes dont -

- La croissance;
- Faire face à la crise internationale;
- La réforme fiscale;
- Et finalement, le social;

Au départ même, le ministre démontre que les mesures annoncées ne vont pas donner des résultats satisfaisants.

Une croissance de 4.2% est prévue pour 2011 tandis qu'il prévoit une baisse de la croissance à 4% en 2012. Du côté de la Chambre de Commerce Internationale de Maurice elle prévoit une croissance de 3.8% seulement pour 2012. Déjà un aveu d'échec.

Comble du ridicule, les membres de la majorité applaudissent à cette annonce! A la page 3 de son discours le ministre parle de, je cite -

« It is only when it is dark that you can see the stars. »

C'est vrai, M. le président, 'n'importe qui trouve des étoiles avec ce budget là'.

M. le président, la confiance reste le facteur principal pour la croissance et peu importe quelles sont les mesures incitatives qu'on peut donner.

En ce moment la situation dans le pays est précaire que ce soit au niveau de *law and order* avec des crimes de plus en plus atroces. La corruption qui fait rage - la saga de la STC - hedging/Betamax ne sont que des exemples.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Seeruttun: Ce matin on a su à qui le crime profite!

Le gaspillage des fonds publics, pour ne pas dire des 'pillages', et ce qui se passe à la Mauritius Duty Free Paradise en est un exemple flagrant!

Le favoritisme...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, Hon. Varma! You will have the opportunity to reply! Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, please! Keep cool!

Mr Seeruttun: Le favoritisme, M. le président, - politique de petits copains et de « *mone garde bane postes dans mo poche* », que connaît bien notre ami. Le fléau de la drogue reste entier. La gestion de nos ressources en eau et en énergie par des nominés politiques laisse à désirer, M. le président. Sans oublier que nous avons ici un gouvernement fragile qui a dû attirer deux transfuges pour s'accrocher au pouvoir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Silence, please! Hon. Soodhun, if you have something to talk in private, you go outside!

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, ce ne sont pas ces excès ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Varma, you will have the opportunity to reply! Hon. Soodhun, I am calling you to order, once again! Also, hon. Varma! You will have the opportunity to reply!

Mr Seeruttun: M. le président, ce ne sont pas ces excès ou cette insécurité ou encore ce pillage des fonds publics qui vont attirer les investisseurs. Surtout que ce budget n'a rien prévu pour mettre fin à ces fléaux. Et, M. le président, c'est vraiment, vraiment dommage.

M. le président, parlons maintenant de certaines mesures fiscales que le ministre des finances vient d'abolir à la demande du secteur privé. Sa justification étant que ces mesures freinaient la croissance. Quand au ministre de l'éducation, lors de son intervention hier disait que le FDI était en baisse dans le premier trimestre de 2011 à cause des mesures préconisées dans le budget 2011. *What were those fiscal measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?*

- Imposing a Solidarity fee of 10% on High Income Earners on their dividends or interests income;
- Imposing a Capital Gains Tax on immovable property for gains in excess of Rs2 m.;

Who were those targeted by those taxes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? You will concur that it is the Corporate Sector.

At a time when the crisis is hitting hard, most advanced economies are taking bold measures by asking the *haves* to make sacrifices so as to protect the *haves not*. Warren Buffett, a mega rich investor, who needs no introduction, is supporting a pledge in the US to tax more the rich so as to provide social protection to the less fortunate. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is what Mr Buffett has to say, I quote -

“People who make money with money are getting taxed at a far lower rate than people who make money by their own labour”.

He even publicly scorns a system that allows him to enjoy an effective tax rate that is less than his secretary’s. And Warren Buffett isn’t the only rich guy who wants higher taxes on the rich.

The Obama Government is coming with fiscal reforms based on the “Buffett rule”. A growing number of the rich appear to agree. Wealthy Germans and French have signed petitions in favour of higher taxes.

The Chairman of the Italian sports-car company Ferraris stated that it was ‘right’ for the rich to pay more. The broader public agrees. Even in tax-hating America, some two-thirds of voters support deficit-reduction plans that include higher tax rates for top earners. Not to mention that increases in the top tax rate under President Bill Clinton were followed by robust economic expansion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if an individualistic society as the US has recognised that taxing more the rich is no more an evil thing to do, we, who claim to care for our social fabric are doing the exact contrary.

By abolishing the solidarity tax on dividends and interest for high income earners and at the same time increasing by 50% the tax on car benefit of an ordinary salesman, it shows that this Government is out to eliminate the middle class citizens. *Plus capitaliste que ça tu meurs.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, no need to say it is a middle class citizen who goes out for dinner, who does house extension or renovation works, who affords to enjoy a weekend in a resort hotel, who does shopping of semi luxury goods. By reducing their purchasing power, this Budget is slowly killing the economy.

Today it has become a sin to tax dividend claiming its double taxation implication, this was, but a solidarity tax of 10% and high income earners, these people would not have been deprived of their basic needs or even a good *bouillabaisse*, Mr Speaker, Sir. And yet the Minister of Finance felt sorry for the high income earners. *Peut être il a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît pas.*

Le retrait du *Capital Gains tax* est aussi sur les lèvres de tous les membres de la majorité, ceux la même qui étaient pour l'application de cette taxe l'année dernière. Cette taxe aurait touché un seul secteur qui est le *Real Estate* et les plus concernés auraient été ceux qui dépassent R 2 million et plus.

Cette taxe aurait permis de soulager les moins fortunés comme les pensionnés qui vont recevoir en 2012 une compensation misérable de R 204. Alors, le ministre a préféré soulager 'les gros paletots' comme on dit et priver une augmentation décente aux pensionnés. Ce budget donne aux riches au détriment des pauvres.

Mais, allons pousser le débat plus loin M. le président. Si on voulait promouvoir notre île avec un régime fiscal léger afin d'attirer l'investissement, pourquoi imposer donc, une taxe de 10% sur les *Offshore Management Companies*? Une incohérence totale du ministre des finances. Surtout à un moment où il y a une pression de l'Inde à revoir le *Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement Treaty*. Cela représente un réel danger, et qui nous attend avec le risque que plusieurs de ces *Offshore Management Companies* plient bagage.

M. le président, nous avons le potentiel de faire mieux en termes de FDI et de croissance et ce n'est pas une taxe sur les dividendes ou le *capital gains tax* qui sont la source du problème.

En 2011, il y a des projets d'investissement d'une valeur de presque R 80 milliards. R 80 milliards qui sont restés bloqués dans différents départements et notamment au *Prime Minister's Office*. La lenteur chronique de ce gouvernement reste un handicap majeur au développement de notre pays.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another issue that should raise concern of this House is the setting up of a mechanism by the Ministry of Finance to set a target rate inflation. This will definitely be in contravention to the Bank of Mauritius Act and superseding the role of the Monetary Policy Committee. *L'indépendance même de la banque centrale est menacée.*

We have witnessed in the recent years the ego of the Governor of the Bank of Mauritius and that of the former Minister of Finance and these ego issues have had a bad signal given to the economy and has taken the economy on hostage. Is that the sort of situation that we want to relive, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I don't think so.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Seeruttun, will you be finishing in five minutes?

Mr Seeruttun : No, 10 minutes. Please, bear with me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Okay, continue! Order please!

Mr Seeruttun: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, some time back I put a question to the hon. Prime Minister about the role and the responsibility of the Commission for the Democratisation of the Economy and I also asked about the outcome so far of that Commission. The reply was not convincing, the hon. Prime Minister is not prepared to table the reports of the Commission, if report there was.

Nothing tangible has come out from that Commission, it looks like money has gone down the drain for the past six years. But, it appears that the Minister of Finance has realised that and is putting the Commission to task. Hopefully, we will be able to assess the *raison d'être* of that Commission.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like also to talk about an issue which could be very detrimental to our financial system if we don't do anything about it very quickly. *Cela concerne le surendettement de la population.* We agree that access to finance firms and households is important. However, we must learn from what happened in the past and which is still happening

in the US and Europe. In times of low interest rates, there is a borrowing frenzy, access to finance is cheap and financial institutions are more than generous in their lending practice. In Mauritius we must now use this increasing indebtedness of the population with concern. If left unchecked, the aggressive marketing of banks for their loan products and credit cards are contributing to worsen this tendency of spending beyond our means. This is paving the way for default by many, should the world economic situation worsen. This risk of default on a massive scale in the event interest rate rises would endanger our financial system. Confidence in the financial system is vital. It is this loss of confidence in the financial system that led to the global economic recession.

Gouverner c'est prévoir, M. le président. Qu'est ce qui est fait pour éviter une catastrophe financière locale ?

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Aimée.

Mr Seeruttun: The breakthrough, as claimed by the Minister of Finance, with regard to the SME's access to finance through commercial banks is but a non-starter. The hon. Minister is boasting that SMEs will be granted loan at 3% above repo rate, that is, at 8.5%, but let me remind the House that the DBM is already granting loan at a lower rate of 5.5% and the hon. Minister wishes that the DBM aligned its lending rate to that of the commercial banks.

What a contrary to what we are aiming at, that is, getting people to start small businesses. Not to mention that banks would be allowed to deduct straightaway, for tax purposes, any bad debts provision that may arise, and the security given by the government. Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, *pile je gagne, face tu perds*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance said that henceforth all small planters and all small breeders will obtain VAT refund on agricultural machinery, equipment and tools that they purchase in 2012. This will benefit some 23,000 sugarcane planters, some 6,000 horticultural producers and some 5,000 animal breeders, including cattle and pig breeders.

But, let's face facts, Mr Deputy Speaker Sir. This measure will not make any difference to the plight of the small producers, especially the small cane planters. These small planters, unlike the big producers or the corporate sector, where they have all the necessary set-up to be

able to take advantage of such a measure, won't take any benefit of that rebate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Minister of Finance has missed the opportunity to bring a real difference to the plight of the small producers, in particular to the small sugarcane planters, and to keep them in business.

What would have been appropriate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a scheme with more economic sense, to bring new support measures on the cost of inputs, and this basically relates to the reduction of price of inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, to mention just a few. Waiving or refund of the VAT on these inputs would have made more economic sense.

The high cost of input remains the main constraints for the small planters to stay in business. Most of the small planters have small parcels of land, and it is a farfetched idea to think that these planters will be able to mechanise their operations. Therefore, refund of VAT does not make much of an economic sense, and the cumbersome exercise a small planter cum breeder will have to go through to get that refund will be another *paire de manches*.

It appears to me that the Minister of Finance has looked for easy ways to collect taxes, like the 20% tax imposed on SMS. But, when it comes to tax rebate, he makes it so complex that no one will take the trouble to ask for that rebate.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let's now talk about the service providing institutions, the reform of the sugar industry. The government had finalised reform process in the sugar industry as per the MAAS in mid 2006, and it was only in December 2007 that it concluded what in its jargon is considered as a historic deal. One of the main components of the MAAS was to ensure that the sugar sector remains viable and would be the reform of the cess funded institutions - the service providing institutions.

Today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are in November 2011; more than four years have elapsed, and not much headway has been made. But, worst of all, reform of these institutions has been retained as a condition for the disbursement of funds from the EU, as per the accompanying measures. Furthermore, we all know that one of the major facets of the reform would be the loss of jobs. I am deeply worried, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for I receive representations from the employees of this sector almost every day. I am anxious, as there is a

time constraint to complete the reform. I understand that the deadline is 31 March 2012, and time is running out. This will be what we call a *drame humain*. We hear the distress of the employees of these SPIs almost every day in the media. I was myself an ex-staff of one of these institutions, and I can understand the plight of these employees fully well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the House will note that, in the Budget Speech of 2011, the Minister of Finance had indicated that the actuarial review of the Sugar Insurance Fund has started, and the recommendations purporting to enhance the viability of sugar produces will be implemented amongst others through amendments to the Sugar Insurance Fund Act.

The present Minister has indicated that the SIFB will grant a 70% discount on premiums due for 2011. This should reduce cost of small planters by around Rs3000 per *arpent*. I suppose that the producers are themselves providing for the grant.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once again I must say that I have a lot of apprehension. The mathematic is simple; we do not need to be an actuary to understand. If we pay low premium, obviously the compensation will similarly be lowered. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the insurance system has played a pivotal role in stabilising the revenue of producers in difficult times, heavy cyclones, severe droughts. I would have thought that the Minister would have come with more innovative measures to reduce cost of operation of the Fund and increase its revenue through more innovative investment portfolio.

Avant de conclure, M. le président, le précédent orateur a parlé de l'Afrique. Dans le budget, le ministre des finances fait mention de l'Afrique. C'est maintenant qu'on a découvert le potentiel de l'Afrique. Et pour conquérir l'Afrique, on parle de deux *roving Ambassadors*. Si c'est pour caser les petits copains, je souhaite bonne chance à mon ami Arvin. D'un côté on félicite le *Board of Investment* pour le bon travail et, en même temps, on ne lui fait pas confiance, parce que c'est leur rôle d'aller chercher les investissements étrangers. Donc, je ne vois pas l'intérêt de ces deux *roving Ambassadors* ; caser encore d'autres petits copains.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say that this Budget 2012 has been a non-event for the majority of the population. The timetable for the implementation of the measures is perceived as a joke, and no one believes that they are achievable. However, I do admit that the Minister of Finance has been cunning enough by taking the precaution to officially defining who should take responsibility of these budgetary measures, as very often, in the past,

the Minister of Finance had to take the blame when things did not work out in other ministries. I just hope that Ministers know that they are being taken to task now. I concur, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there has been some innovation though. I would like here to emphasise that the Budget Speech contains a glossy photograph of the Minister and that it has been delivered in a gift bag – *un cadeau empoisonné pour la population*.

Merci, M. le président.

At 4.40 p.m., the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.13 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

The Attorney General (Mr Y. Varma): Mr Speaker, Sir, let me at the outset congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his innovative and groundbreaking Budget.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the process that has culminated in the preparation of the Budget itself defers both in style and in substance.

I still recall, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget of last year where there were no consultations held with colleague Ministers and most colleague Ministers came to know what is really in the Budget when the Budget Speech was being presented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the former Minister of Finance led us to believe that he had a credible economic alternative and, as we worked together in Government, we came to realise that he had no such alternative. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, his party's exit from Government was a blessing in disguise. In fact, I believe it has even been a *manna* from Heaven.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have now been able to get our policies back on track and establish the necessary equilibrium between economic and social measures. Mr Speaker, Sir, as the practice goes I have to rebut certain points raised by the hon. Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle who intervened just before the break.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. gentleman made mention of the critics that our friend, hon. Reza Issack, made during his speech. Mr Speaker, Sir, there were no critics. This is the culture of the Government.

Labour/PMSD Government, we were in power from 2005 to 2010 and I was a Government backbencher. This is the way we operate and they have their own way of operating, Mr Speaker, Sir, which differs sharply from the way that we operate. He has made constructive proposals which cut across party lines. Mr Speaker, Sir, I didn't expect that from the Second Member for Vieux Grand Port and Rose Belle. Three months back, he was in Government together with us and for more than half of the year his Leader was the Minister of Finance. He could have said things differently, Mr Speaker, Sir. He could have come in the House, intervened in the Budget, but said that we formed part of government since a few months back, these are the measures which have been taken by Government; that we wish the Government luck and let's see when we come back next year whether these measures have been implemented or not. But, this has not been the case.

Mr Speaker, Sir, reference was made to the Government giving favours to the private sector, to the 'fat cats' as the honourable gentleman mentioned. Mr Speaker, Sir, has the honourable gentleman been able to show to the House, to show through the House to the public in what ways we have favoured the 'fat cats' as he is saying, Mr Speaker, Sir, this should not be a vague slogan. He has spoken about the economic policy from 2005 to 2010.

Mr Speaker, Sir, didn't they contract an alliance with us for the last general elections? Were they not together? This economic policy was there from 2005 to 2010. But why did they contract an alliance with us? Mr Speaker, Sir, he has attacked the Budget with much vehemence, stating that it is a '*budget galimatias*', '*une grosse déception*'. But the hon. Leader of the Opposition, Mr Speaker, Sir, when he intervened yesterday, found many things positive about the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is the National Resilience Fund of more than seven billion rupees to stimulate business, protect jobs, create employment, train the youth.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the abolition of the solidarity tax on dividends and interests, and tax on capital gains - I still recall when the MSM was in the Opposition, when the former Minister of Finance, at that time, put that tax on interest. Didn't they criticise, Mr Speaker, Sir? They criticised it in the House and outside the House and pledged, Mr Speaker, Sir, to abolish it once in Government, but, fortunately, it was a half measure that the then Minister of Finance took last year.

And we have done exactly what should have been done, Mr Speaker, Sir. The tenant's tax has been abolished. This tax has been considered to be an unfair tax where the tenants are being taxed. We know the situation, Mr Speaker, Sir, that tenants very often cannot pay that tax and we have abolished the tax.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the importance that we put on economic diplomacy. We are now providing in this Budget to appoint two roving ambassadors. Mr Speaker, Sir, the importance of economic diplomacy was, in fact, highlighted by the hon. Member when he intervened on the Budget last year. I quote –

“In this Budget, strong emphasis is being laid on the concept of economic diplomacy.

This is not a vain word for this Government as echoed lately by the *prophet de malheur*.”

This is what the hon. gentleman said last year. The appointment of two roving ambassadors for Africa, Mr Speaker, Sir, exactly meets the requirement to have economic diplomacy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, the number of measures which have been taken for the SME sector. The rate of interest being reduced to 8.5%, the removal of registration duties and fees payable on loans of up to Rs1 m., Rs20,000 being paid to new entrepreneurs; 175 units being constructed, Mr Speaker, Sir, even the measures which were mentioned, which were, in fact, agreed upon by the hon. Leader of the Opposition like the Rs500,000 for people who can't be operated in Mauritius, the *syndic* that should be put in order in all the NHDC complexes, even that was not acclaimed by the hon. Member, who, a few months back, formed part and parcel of this Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, again, he mentioned about the carbon tax. How many people in this House know really what is the carbon tax, how many people, Mr Speaker, Sir, know really how it will be implemented? The hon. gentleman congratulated the former Minister of Finance as

regards the carbon tax. Do we know, Mr Speaker, Sir, in Australia, there was a big debate on the carbon tax? The Government there could even have lost its majority on the carbon tax; such an importance was given to the carbon tax. The hon. gentleman just comes to this House, mentions carbon tax out of the blue and congratulates the former Minister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I should set the record straight. The hon. gentleman made mention about *corruption qui fait rage*, he spoke about Betamax, he spoke about the STC, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, he did not deem it fit to speak about *le scandale du siècle*, the MedPoint scandal. He belongs to a party, Mr Speaker, Sir, where two of the front benchers have been arrested in connection with corruption related offences and are actually on bail. Mr Speaker, Sir, he has spoken about *deux transfuges* who are actually supporting the Government. Mr Speaker, Sir, how many of them, on the other side of the House, when there were problems between Government and them, how many of them contacted us to change sides? They know very well, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I know very well the people who have contacted Government, but I would not divulge their names. So, stop talking about *deux transfuges*!

(Interruptions)

Don't speak about *transfuges*! Even the hon. gentleman - he does not know maybe - his relatives came to meet us so that he remains with the Labour party.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, now I have set the record straight, I will speak about the legal sector.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order, now!

Mr Varma: Mr Speaker, Sir, by including a chapter under the heading "Bolstering the Justice System", this Government has again shown its commitment to reform and modernise the legal system.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I said order and no cross-talking, please!

Mr Varma: I quote from the Budget Speech –

“(…) our justice system is a pillar of our development and it is at the base of our country’s success. It is one of the strengths that set Mauritius apart from many other countries. It is a strength that we must never lose. (…) Today we are putting a special focus on enhancing its efficiency, accessibility and ability to deliver justice in a cost-effective manner.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we speak about reforms in the legal sector, reference should undoubtedly be made to the Mackay Report which was prepared in 1997, during the first mandate of Dr. the hon. Prime Minister. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the only report of its type and has, in fact, been acclaimed by all parties concerned. It has crossed across party political lines and even in the 2010 Electoral Manifesto of the MMM, they mentioned that the Mackay reforms would be implemented.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the work was started in 1997, it continued in 2005 to date. Last year when I intervened on the Budget, I did announce a number of reforms that would be undertaken during the course of 2011 and for the sake of completion and for the record I will briefly elaborate on the reforms brought in the legal sector.

1. The Code Civil was amended to reduce the delay to declare a person absent.
2. The Divorce and Judicial Separation (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was passed to, *inter alia*, introduce divorce by mutual consent and review our law on divorce.
3. The Asset Recovery Act will now enable the State to recover the proceeds or instrumentalities of crime.
4. The Revision of Laws (Amendment) Act aims at keeping our laws officially updated.
5. The Courts (Amendment) Act was amended to deal with vexatious litigants.
6. The Court Ushers (Amendment) Act which has now been proclaimed has liberalised the profession of Usher.
7. The Preliminary Inquiry (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act was passed to reform preliminary enquiries which date back to 1852.

8. The Civil Status Act, Mr Speaker, Sir, was amended to reduce the delay for an interested party to lodge on objection from four months to 28 days.
9. Last year, it was announced in the Budget that an Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies would be set up. As the House is aware, the law has been proclaimed and the Board of the Institute has already been constituted. The Institute has primary objectives to dispense judicial training, to organise continuous professional development programmes for all law practitioners and courses for persons who have been qualified as barristers outside Mauritius.
10. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Law Practitioners (Amendment) Bill was passed in the National Assembly a few weeks back and it aims, *inter alia* –
 - (i) to allow a person who has been qualified as a barrister in Canada, New Zealand, Australia or France to be able also to apply to be admitted to the Bar in Mauritius;
 - (ii) to make judicial training compulsory for all those who wish to be appointed to judicial office;
 - (iii) to render continuous professional development compulsory for all law practitioners, and
 - (iv) to reform the courses being run in Mauritius to qualify as law practitioner by making them more practice-based and by providing the adequate infrastructure.

The International Criminal Court Act was also passed to give effect to the Rome Statute.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has proved its commitment to reform our legal system and does not intend, *M. le président, de s'arrêter en si bon chemin, et d'autant plus qu'il y a un long chemin à parcourir.*

The Budget has announced a number of measures, namely, in the reform of our legal aid system, the setting up of a Court of Appeal and a High Court Section of the Supreme Court, the amendments to the Bail Act and the consolidation of our tribunals.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been hearing our reforms in legal aid for quite a while. In fact, the Mackay report has got a whole chapter dedicated to its reform. Following the report, Mr

Speaker, Sir, there was the green paper on reform of legal aid which was prepared by Professor Torul. Last year, Government took the decision to circulate the report for public consultation and this was done. We received representations from all the major stakeholders, including the Judiciary, the Law Reform Commission, the Bar Council, the Chamber of Notaries, the Law Society, the National Economic and Social Council and the Association of Court Ushers.

Following the representations made, Mr Speaker, Sir, Government took the decision to amend the Legal Aid Act. I would here congratulate and thank the hon. Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance for the special effort which has been made by increasing the budget for legal aid from Rs2.5 m. to Rs10 m., that is, a four-fold increase which is unprecedented. The current position is only people who earn less than Rs5,000 or have property worth not more than Rs75,000 are eligible to legal aid. This being the case, Mr Speaker, Sir, many people fall outside the bracket and therefore do not obtain that aid to be able to defend themselves before our courts of law.

Let me again, Mr Speaker, Sir, quote from the Budget Speech –

“The poor should never be denied access to justice because they do not have the means to meet the lawyer’s fees.”

Taking that into account, the income threshold qualified for legal aid will be increased from Rs5,000 to Rs10,000. The value of the applicant’s property will be consequently increased.

Furthermore, I am pleased to inform the House that the first draft of the Legal Aid (Amendment) Bill is ready and consideration is being given –

- (a) to make legal aid available on a means and merits test and not on a means test only as is now the case,
- (b) to make legal aid available at police enquiry stage,
- (c) to make provision for legal advice to be dispensed at Citizens Advice Bureau.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the current year, my office has made available the Revised Laws of Mauritius free on line. This is in line with the principle of making our laws more accessible. As the saying goes, *Ignorantia Juris Non Excusat*, that is, ignorance of law is no excuse. In that respect, knowledge of the laws of the land is of utmost importance.

We have also printed the code of ethics for Barristers in a new format and those for Attorneys and Notaries will be done shortly.

I am pleased also to inform the House that with the consent and support of the hon. Chief Justice –

- (a) the Call ceremonies for Barristers, Attorneys and Notaries have been revisited. My office now also presents to the new Callees a copy of the code of ethics so that they are reminded about its importance and requested to have a good knowledge of it;
- (b) the bust of late Prosper d'Epinau which was removed a few years back has been reinstated just outside Court No. 2 of the Supreme Court, and
- (c) the *ministère public*, Mr Speaker, Sir, has again taken its former place in court nearer the bench following the logic that they are there to assist the court.

It is worth mentioning, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the PF 100A issued to Police witnesses used to mention Regina v... meaning The Queen v... This has been corrected again at the initiative of my office with the assistance of the Commissioner of Police and now the form reads The State v...

Mr Speaker, Sir, my office has also had consultations with the former Master and Registrar with a view to updating the list of jurors as the current list contains the names of many people who have either passed away or are over the age limit.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a leaflet highlighting the role of the Attorney General's office has also been published and distributed. In 2011 to date, some 10,000 copies of the Constitution have been distributed mostly to students of secondary and tertiary levels and non-Governmental organisations across the country.

As you are aware, Mr Speaker, Sir, my office has also published and launched the "Guidelines to Legislative Drafting" to harmonise the way in which our laws are drafted and this was preceded by a workshop attended also by officers from various Ministries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the need has been felt for a number of years to have an official updated version of our subsidiary legislation as it is sometimes very difficult to get hold of all the regulations. The last version, according to my information, was compiled some 70 years back. Provision has been made in this Budget to have an updated official version of the subsidiary legislation of Mauritius. This is all the most crucial for the legal sector and also to the public in general as very often things that matter most to citizens are contained in regulations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it has been announced in the Budget Speech that the Bail Act will be amended to allow for the use of electronic bracelets. Such a measure will put us at par with other

jurisdictions where such equipments are already being used. The United Kingdom and Netherlands were the first countries to use the electronic bracelets. They have been tested and have proved to be very efficient. The bracelets are now being used in other countries like the United States of America and France. This is yet another step towards modernisation of our justice system. The Court will be empowered to impose such a condition which will undoubtedly help to reduce the number of detainees on remand and also ensure the proper monitoring of certain persons who are on bail. Consultations have already been held with the Judiciary, with the DPP's office, the Police and the Bar Council. Work is in progress on the Bail (Amendment) Bill which will be introduced in the National Assembly once Cabinet approval is obtained.

Mr Speaker, Sir, all the good work that is undertaken by my office would not be achieved without the collaboration of competent and dedicated officers. I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation for the work done by officers of my office who sometimes have to work in the difficult circumstances, but are prepared to beat the clock to meet deadlines.

The hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Minister of Finance have been sympathetic to our representations. I am glad to note that provision has been made for additional staff in the Budget.

- (a) The number of Assistant Solicitor-General will be increased from 4 to 6
- (b) State Counsel from 20 to 28
- (c) State Attorney from 10 to 16
- (d) Senior Legal Assistant from 4 to 5
- (e) Legal Assistant from 2 to 5
- (f) Legal Research Assistant from 1 to 3
- (g) Procurement and Supply Officer 0 to 2.

This will, undoubtedly, help us to continue providing quality service to Ministries and other related Bodies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Law Reform Commission plays an instrumental role in our democracy. It is an independent Statutory Body set up in 2005 to review in a systematic way the law of Mauritius, to make proposals for its reform and development and to ensure that the law is understandable and accessible.

The Commission has been doing an excellent job with limited resources. Many of its proposals have been translated into legislation like divorce by mutual consent, vexatious litigation, law firms to name a few.

It has also given its views on the Court Ushers (Amendment) Act, the Law Practitioners (Amendment) Bill, the Institute for Judicial and Legal Studies Act and it is now working on the reforms to be brought to the *Code Civil*, *Code de Commerce* and *Code de Procedure Civil*. In that context, the renowned Professor Garron was in Mauritius earlier this year and is again here to assist the Commission with the reforms.

Last year, I highlighted the limited means with which the Law Reform Commission is working and representations were made to the Ministry of Finance and I am glad to note that the Budget for the Law Reform Commission has been increased by approximately Rs3 m. to enable it to recruit additional staff and be better equipped to dispense its statutory duties.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has allocated funds for the creation of a Court of Appeal and a High Court Section of the Supreme Court. Mr Speaker Sir, section 80 (3) of our Constitution states, and I quote –

“The Judges of the Court of Civil Appeal and the Court of Criminal Appeal shall be the Judges for the time being of the Supreme Court.”

Our founding fathers, therefore, knew by mentioning ‘for the time being’ that amendments would have to be brought to the Constitution so that Judges of the Supreme Court are no longer Judges of the Court of Civil Appeal and the Court of Criminal Appeal. The problem being that Judges are expected to hear appeals from judgments of their brother/sister judges of the Supreme Court. It has long been felt that there should be a separate Court of Appeal. The Mackay Report so recommended in 1997 when the Labour Party was in government and the Sachs Report which was commissioned in 2002 also came to the same conclusion and so when the MMM/MSM were in government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it means that the issue transcends party political considerations and there is unanimity that the anomaly should be corrected. This Government has taken a firm commitment to set up the Court of Appeal section and a High Court section of the Supreme Court. This is a matter that should be above party politics. In that respect, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill and the Judicial and Legal Provisions Bill were circulated with Cabinet approval last year.

The draft Bills, Mr Speaker, Sir, were communicated to the hon. Leader of the Opposition, the Judiciary, the Law Reform Commission, the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Bar Council, the Law Society and the Chamber of Notaries. Representations were received from stakeholders. A special meeting of the Bar Council was even held in December 2010 on the two bills which were then widely debated and subsequently endorsed by the legal profession as a whole as the Law Society and the Chamber of Notaries also attended and participated in the meeting. The hon. Chief Justice has also given his approval to the proposed amendments. I hope that the hon. gentleman Alan Ganoo will not mind me saying it but I had a meeting even with him and I thank him for the support he has extended as regards the two bills.

Following the representations received, amendments were brought to the draft Bills and were again circulated among stakeholders. Some further representations have been made. These will be as far as possible, taking into account the recommendations of the Mackay and Sachs Reports, be considered in the finalisation of the Bills to set up as indicated in the Budget Estimates 2012 at page 10, I quote -

“The Judiciary will create a Court of Appeal to hear appeals from every level of Court in Mauritius, and a High Court as a Court of first instance.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the setting up of the Court of Appeal and High Court section of the Supreme Court will entail amendments to the Constitution. It will also be proposed to alter the composition of the Judicial and Legal Services Commission as recommended by Constitutional experts in 1997 and 2002. As I stated earlier, these are matters that should be above party politics and I do hope that the Opposition will support the suggested changes.

In the Budget Estimates, provision has already been made for Justices of Appeal and the President of the High Court. We have never come so close to these changes and future generations will judge us on the decisions we take. The benefit of our country and our justice system should prevail over party politics.

Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraph 326 of the Budget Speech mentions and I quote –

“Justice delayed is justice denied. To speed up decisions on appeal cases, Government is consolidating twelve Appeal Tribunals, namely an Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal, a Revenue and Valuation Appeal Tribunal and a Regulatory Authority Appeal Tribunal.”

This latter Tribunal, Mr Speaker, Sir, was set up by the Regulatory Authority Appeal Tribunal Act way back in 2005 when hon. Alan Ganoo was the Minister concerned but, unfortunately, it was not proclaimed. I am sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, that all Members of the House, especially those belonging to the legal profession, will agree that this decision was long overdue. We have got too many tribunals which sit part time and so appeals get disposed of relatively slowly. Government has therefore taken the bold decision to have three full-time tribunals to ensure that there is an adequate use of man power and cases are disposed of rapidly. Consideration is therefore being given to consolidate the Assessment Review Committee, the Board of Assessment and the Valuation Tribunal into a Revenue and Valuation Appeal Tribunal. It is also being envisaged to merge the Environment Appeal Tribunal and the Town and Country Planning Board into an Environment and Land Use Appeal Tribunal. Work is underway to find ways and means to consolidate the Fair Rent Tribunal, the Cooperative Tribunal, the ICT Appeal Tribunal, the Tourism Appeals, the Medical Disciplinary Tribunal, the Medical Tribunal and the National Pensions Appeal Tribunal under the Regulatory Authority Tribunal.

Mr Speaker, Sir, another commendable initiative of this Budget is the timetable for implementation. As regards the projects in the legal sector, the time frame is -

- (a) widening entitlement to legal aid: January 2012.
- (b) to amend Bail Act for use of electronic bracelets: January 2012.
- (c) the setting up of a Court of Appeal and a High Court Section: June 2012.
- (d) consolidating of 12 Appeal Tribunals into 3: June 2012.
- (e) recruiting of law officers: September 2012.

Therefore, with the decisions already implemented and those forthcoming, the legal landscape will change drastically by this time next year.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has also approved a number of amendments to be brought to the Certificate of Morality Act. It is being envisaged, *inter alia*, to change the appellation to Certificate of Character, to set a time frame for the issue of such certificates and to introduce the concept of spent convictions. It is also being envisaged to replace the Judges Rules by a comprehensive Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which is in its final stages of preparation. I have also requested my officers to start work on the remaining reforms as per the Mackay Report

which will be contained most probably in an Administration of Justice (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill. After Cabinet approval, Mr Speaker, Sir, a Legal Process Outsourcing Bill is being prepared so as to promote and facilitate Legal Process Outsourcing commonly known as LPO in Mauritius. A Family Court Bill has already been prepared and been communicated to the Judiciary but will be circulated among stakeholders once the Court of Appeal and the High Court have been set up. Work is also underway by my office to review our juvenile justice system.

It is clear that my office will be piloting a number of Bills next year and this in addition to service to Ministries, in terms of drafting, giving legal advice and representation before Courts.

Mr Speaker Sir, as we can see, we have come a long way, but we have a long way to go. As the saying goes “*Rome was not built in a day*”.

I will end my intervention by again congratulating the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this bold and innovative Budget and heartily thank him and the hon. Prime Minister for the special consideration given to the legal sector.

I thank you all for your kind attention.

(5.50 p.m.)

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Speaker, Sir, we are today Wednesday and in a few days, it will be one week, since the Budget has been presented to the nation. Each of us, we have been able to listen and discuss to the population on their feelings about the Budget.

As far as I am concerned, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been around in my Constituency and in other places around the country, I have been meeting people, I have been reading the press, listening to the different comments on the radio and I can say that this first Budget of the present Minister of Finance - which is the fifth Minister of Finance of the present Prime Minister - as rightly said by the hon. Leader of the Opposition, hasn't had a *déclis* in the population.

If you ask the common people, living in the deprived regions, the workers of the country, what has this Budget given to them? No reply, Mr Speaker, Sir! There won't be any solution to their nightmare; increase in prices, security problems, environmental problems in their regions, problems at schools and elsewhere. This Budget does not give answers to their daily problems.

So, the workers in general, beside the comments of trade unions - representing the workers of this country - have unanimously condemned this Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the exemption of duties on shampoos, *deodorants*, *démaquillants*, *teinture à ongles*, won't change the life of the people. Shampoo: there is not even water! So, let us not discuss on that.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the working class is very deceived. The planters, be it the small planters, the vegetables planters, the small sugarcane planters, the pig breeders; day by day since 2005, their life have been going worse. Those who have pig breeders in their Constituency know about it - like myself - in St Martin and in Belle Vue. The small vegetable planters of La Chaumière, which is the *grenier de l'île Maurice*; even today, have been complaining about water problems and other sorts of increase in their costs. Life is really a hell. I will advise the hon. Minister of Agriculture - who has been to La Chaumière - to have a careful look at their problems. Even the vegetable planters – not only here even in La Marie, even in the North and in Belle Mare - are facing difficult days and this Budget does not reply to their daily problems.

I'll come to the small sugarcane planters. Apart from my own Constituency; Petite Rivière and Albion, where there are a lot of small planters and around in Mauritius, we have seen, over the years, with the reform in the sugar industry, the other problems they are facing. I'll just quote, Mr Sunghoon, of the Small Planters Association –

“Les petits planteurs sont restés sur leur faim”.

(Interruptions)

I have been very silent, you know me, listen,

Mr Speaker: Don't make comment! Let the hon. Member speak.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: Don't make me angry. You will pay a big price for that.

Mr Speaker: No, carry on. Please address the Chair.

Mr Bhagwan: Yes, I know. I am in a different mood today, so don't try to have problems.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, you are in a good mood today, thanks.

Mr Bhagwan: Not only, Mr Sunghoon. There are hon. Members on the Government side, who know what are the problems of the small planters. They know that they will be paying a heavy price for not attending to the daily pains of the small planters; *trop, c'est trop*. Apart from the usual problems of water and others in their daily lives, the reform of the sugar industry, what has been promised to them, has never been fulfilled. You can say that such and such incentives have been given, but in real terms, ceux qui côtoient ces planteurs, savent quels sont les problèmes de ces gens qui ont contribué au développement de l'île Maurice. Maintenant, au lieu de trouver une solution à leur problème, ce budget n'arrange rien et ne donne pas une perspective meilleure dans leur vie de tous les jours.

I won't come to the pig breeders issue. There are other colleagues of mine, who would be coming to this issue as well as the fishermen and all these sectors. Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget does not give any answer to their problems et *c'est une déception totale*.

M. le président, de l'autre coté de la Chambre, le ministre des finances et d'autres membres ont parlé de compassion dans leur discours. Ce mot de compassion est sur toutes lèvres, encore plus à la fin du discours du ministre des finances.

(Interruptions)

Mo pas expert dans micro.

(Interruptions)

Other people hold microphones for me. Mr Speaker, Sir, here again, ce sont des belles paroles prononcées dans le discours et ailleurs, paroles, paroles et finalement dans les faits, M. le président. Quelle preuve que ce qui est dit n'est pas transmis dans les faits. La première expression de compassion ne peut se manifester qu'envers nos aînés. Ceux qui ont contribué beaucoup plus à l'amélioration de notre développement personnel. Les gens de troisième âge, en général, M. le président.

Malheureusement, le ministre des finances n'a montré aucune preuve de compassion pour ces gens qui doivent faire face à des difficultés réelles. Ceux qui sont dans leur circonscription et ceux qui côtoient beaucoup ces vieux qui habitent dans les quartiers pauvres et qui vivent de leur pension de vieillesse, savent que *life is really a nightmare*. *It is like this* dans la vie de tous les

jours. Soyez honnête, il y a des gens de cette catégorie dans l'île Maurice. M. le président, en ce début de novembre, particulièrement à la fin de la semaine dernière, combien de ces aînés, avec leur pension comme moyen de survie, ont connu une très amère expérience.

La semaine dernière, devant les banques, il y avait les gens du troisième âge venus prendre leur pension ; vendredi. Il y a 153,950 bénéficiaires qui se sont présentés aux guichets des banques pour toucher leur pension et qui se sont vu entendre dire que '*pension pa enkor versé*'.

I was surprised myself, Mr Speaker, Sir. C'est un véritable drame, et je vais dire pourquoi. Car, arrivé à cette période de fin de mois, ces gens dépendent de ce '*ti kass*' comme on dit. Peut-être pas tous, mais il y a des gens, à qui ce mot '*compassion*' s'applique. Véritable désillusion, M. le président. Et cela dépend du ministère des Finances, et peut-être aussi celui de la Sécurité sociale. Il est vrai qu'il y a eu deux jours fériés ; je suis d'accord. M. le président, pourtant, le versement des salaires des fonctionnaires s'est fait. Gouverner c'est prévoir. Ceux qui sont à la tête du ministère des Finances et au ministère de la Sécurité sociale auraient dû planifier. Les jours fériés sont publiés bien en avance. Comment, le mois dernier, on a effectué les salaires des fonctionnaires bien en avance ? C'est correct. Mais pourquoi n'a-t-on pas prévu pour nos aînées ? En même temps, dans le budget on parle de compassion et on parle *de putting the interest of the people*.

M. le président, je ne fais pas de démagogie. Combien de ces personnes, - peut-être pas tous - ont dû aller frapper aux portes des boutiques, voir leurs députés, prendre crédit *par ici par là* en attendant de toucher leur pension.

M. le président, alors que beaucoup de membres de l'autre côté de la chambre frappaient sur la table en guise d'applaudissements à la générosité du ministre envers les possédants, moi, d'ici, je pensais à ces malheureuses personnes du troisième âge, les pensionnés qui se sont dérangés - heureusement qu'ils ne payent pas le transport - pour aller devant les banques et les bureaux de poste pour avoir leur pension. Je demanderai aux gens du gouvernement d'aller voir dans leurs circonscriptions.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, c'est cela que ce gouvernement appelle la compassion. Même si certains trouvent que nous avons un ministre des finances, nous avons un libéral du cœur, M. le président,

le cœur est le monopole du MMM et restera le monopole du MMM. Personne ne pourra usurper le cœur du MMM. Certains ont essayés en 1993 ; *dan carro kanne*. Le ministre des finances que nous avons n'a pas de cœur, et je ne crois pas en ce terme de libéral du cœur que certains veulent lui donner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are being called this year to vote a budget of Rs101.6 billion. This is public money, and all of us will be asked to vote this money. It is our duty and responsibility to see to it how this money is being spent, how it has been spent during the previous year when the revised estimate is now Rs93.4 billion. I think we have a duty to the nation, to the people of this country to, at least, before voting this budget, ask questions. This is the practice, and it is our duty to take the opportunity of Budget time to debate on each ministry, on each cent which is being spent by the government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have been in this Parliament for years; I have been here for years. I was listening very carefully to the comments of my good friend, Mr Reza Issack, as a Member of the PAC, with experience, talking of his frustration after the observations of the Director of Audit. So, year after year, through PQs, we have witnessed how there has been wastage; the value of public resources lost each year in Mauritius because of fraud, mismanagement, abuse, defies precise quantification, but almost certainly runs to billions of rupees every year - staggering billions of government misspending. All this is taxpayers' money. And who are the culprits behind this growing mountain of waste?

Ten million of rupees, from what I saw, are being wasted a day, if it is not an understatement. Public sector corruption in Mauritius is a key factor driving poverty, and the country is losing two percentage points in economic growth a year from resources lost due to wastage and corruption, and also mismanagement. Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, as a whole, has to bear this responsibility for having mismanaged the public funds for the past 5/6 years, where there have been severe losses in government investments, repeated delays or irregularities involving major government projects, and this has become a regular feature. We ask questions, Ministers make statements, the Director of Audit issues its report, but nothing is done. I think, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is a cause for concern. There are innumerable examples of black holes in the State's spending.

We are asked to vote. Millions are spent in rent of private buildings. Is there proper planning? I have been asking questions myself when I was a Minister in government. Has there been proper planning? Government side can say 'you were a Minister in government'. Yes, I have been a Minister in government. The present government was also in power from 1995 to 2000. So, I think it is a cause for concern.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you will be surprised, but there are promoters who, avec la complicité de certains, font des milliards dans ce business de location de bâtiments pour le gouvernement. C'est un fait, et je suis sûr que vous êtes au courant ; vous qui avez été ministre, et aussi en tant que politicien et observateur. A Ebène, à Port Louis ! Et on se pose des questions pourquoi il n'y a jamais eu un proper planning. Nous allons at Committee Stage poser des questions encore.

What about State investment, Sir? The situation is worse. Just to mention a few, we have invested millions of rupees in infrastructure in the Jin Fei Project. Questions have been asked; we were being taxed of doing demagogy, to be against the people of China. Water, sewerage, roads! Is there any building? *Ene block ine poser dans Jin Fei? Rs800 m.!* And they are putting tax on SMS.

I come to the Belle Mare tourist village. I have been there the other day; I was around for a funeral, and so I was moving around.

I asked myself what is that building. The Board is still there, project, SPDC, etc. Belle Mare Tourist Village: Rs200 m. or something like this. Now, we are being told it would be privatised. There was initially in the Budget Speech at least two or three like this - white elephant, big elephant. Fortunately, only one has been built. So, how do we explain it? Is there any planning? Has there been a continuous planning? Who is that 'mad person' who has advised Government to invest public money in this white elephant, the Belle Mare Tourist Village? And now, we are going to privatise it. How much money has been spent in Land-Based Oceanic Industry? How much money? We have to know. There have been preliminary expenditure as far as the Land-Based Oceanic Industry is concerned, which is a good project and, even though in the Opposition then, we were commending Government. We could have had problems. Even the Deputy Prime Minister has replied many Parliamentary Questions in the past, prior 2010. Good project! We were in the Opposition. We had some queries, land or whatever. But where is it? Was there a 'mad man' there, somebody with a type of idea, which was a good idea then?

We must know how much has been spent and whether this project ultimately will go through. What if this Government does not go through and, let's say, we spent Rs100 m.? I know there have been some sharks - I won't say people around here, but outside - who have been lobbying, have been sponsoring missions for certain people outside, and canvassing for this project. Mr Speaker, Sir, I call it phantom projects, costing huge amounts of money.

I am asking myself whether the Director of Audit has had the opportunity of having a look at these projects, if not, let's hope that one of these days he has a look at them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, over the years has copied a lot of foreign political ideas and practices from America, Britain and France, but we have always failed to make them work efficiently. I think it is time for Government, in the interest of the people of Mauritius, that we put in place all the means and ways to stop our 'morally and ethically bankrupt Government officials' - certain Government officials - from exploiting their official position to rip off Government coffers with impunity and without any possible negative consequences that their actions may have on the nation.

It is true, Mr Speaker, Sir, very often, we, politicians, Ministers, are blamed, but there are sharks, big sharks, Government officials who are paid in foreign currency, in dollars. There are big sharks. I am repeating myself: Government officials paid in foreign currency where their aim is to make money on the back of the population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now that it is Budget time, I think it is our duty and responsibility towards the nation to *dénoncer ces gens machiavéliques, ces criminels*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as I said, waste has become the number one killer of the wealth of our nation. In order to curb this extreme wastefulness - if the Government means business, and we have a Minister of Finance who is an ex-Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee for four years, and I have been through his reports - I suggest that we put power abuse in the criminal law to make it applicable to heads of State-owned enterprises and also, the sharks that I mentioned, so that they can be accountable.

I also suggest, Mr Speaker, Sir, that an article prohibiting the waste of public funds be written in our criminal law. There should be detailed regulations proscribing the abuse of power and the wastage of public funds.

I am also of the opinion, Mr Speaker, Sir, that an accountability system should be established for one and all, be it Ministers, PPS, Government officials, officers of the parastatal bodies and Government-owned companies. Information concerning the expenditures of public bodies, including State-owned enterprises, should be made available to citizens through a Right of Information Act, as it is in India these days. There is a case; we all know about this 2G scam of the ex-Minister Raja. The Supreme Court has ordered under the Right of Information Act that one, Mr Soobramanien who is suing the Ministry of Finance to have access to all the files with the relevant provisions of the Right to Information Act.

I think modern Mauritius, if we believe in democracy and if we believe in transparency, we have to go through this Right of Information Act. Only the institution of legal procedures to ensure transparency and accountability can put a stop to this pilferage of public money.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I think the population very often takes us to task. Unfortunately, the means that we have, at least, to prove that the culprits are elsewhere does not exist in our books, in our legislation. I think it is time for us, modern Mauritius, to protect ourselves - today we are here, I am sure we will be in Government in a few months, at least, to protect ourselves.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I just mentioned about the Report of the Public Accounts Committee chaired by hon. Xavier-Luc Duval. I will read an extract of the First Report of the Chairperson of the PAC which dates back to 12 April 2001, which can be found in the Library of the National Assembly.

This is what he had to say, I quote -

“There is presently an interesting and wide international debate on the desirability of extending and reinforcing parliamentary control on government funds expended through companies set up under the Companies Act which would otherwise escape scrutiny by Parliament.”

And he continues, on page 6 -

“Your Committee views with concern the fact that public funds expended through companies set up by government ministries and other public bodies, are totally outside the control of Parliament.”

Hon. X.L. Duval is now the Minister of Finance; he was the then Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee and he produced that Report. Now he is in Government, this has not been done in the past, so come with legislation. A backbencher of Government has just supported that proposal. The more so, Mr Speaker, Sir, as hon. Issack talked about the public to be invited in the PAC; hon. Ganoo is the Chairperson of the PAC now.

Again, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is more important, it is said in that report -

“Your Committee strongly recommends that appropriate amendments be brought to the Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) Act so that the Director of Audit be appointed auditor for companies where a Ministry or other public body has a majority shareholding or is able to control the composition of the majority of the Board of Directors.

Your Committee further recommends that its powers be extended to include the examination of the audited accounts of these companies together with the report of the Director of Audit thereon, with terms of reference as specified in Standing Order 69(2) of the Standing Orders of the National Assembly 1995.”

This can be amended by us if the hon. Prime Minister comes with a motion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know what has been happening in these Government-owned companies. I prepared a list of all these big parastatal bodies like the CEB, CWA - I regret, Mr Speaker Sir, I was an employee of the CEB for 17 years, I can say those were the days - Wastewater Management Authority, Marketing Board, Tobacco Board - all these issues have been to ICAC- Meat Authority, Sugar Investment Trust, BPML, RDA, Tourism Authority and STC. We have been asking questions and we have had replies. I won't go into the hedging, the import of *gros pois* and the import of gold, diamond and coffers. It was the responsibility of the STC to import *coffre-fort*. I don't know for what and for keeping whose money. Mr Speaker, Sir, these are the big parastatal bodies and, very often, they are appointing independent auditors.

I am not criticising the independent auditors, but they are not accountable. The report was in the Library. It was supposed to be laid here and we didn't have any debate, unless we can ask a parliamentary question and, very often, we are not given replies.

Mr Speaker, Sir, SIC- *la mine d'or pour certains* - we all know the SIC has many subsidiaries. People in the SIC are all like *maharajas*. I am not saying the Chairperson or the Managing Director. I am not pinpointing anybody. Do you know how much the General Manager, the CEO of the Mauritius Telecom earns? Have you ever asked yourself? I prefer to take my retirement and go and sit and sleep there. Millions of rupees! Everybody would have been there and that arrogant person – the hon. Minister of Information Technology knows him very well - the king of the Mauritius Telecom. He is a king.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as AML is concerned, what has been happening over the years? I am saying this with experience as a previous Minister, as a Member of Parliament who has been here for 27 years. I have been watching these people under cover at Air Mauritius and Mauritius Telecom; they are not accountable to Parliament.

(Interruptions)

I won't comment on the top civil servants sitting on these Boards, *les potentats!* These people refuse to approve the overtime of a civil servant, of a care taker or of a messenger. Go and see the salaries and fringe benefits of these very big sharks, *les potentats* sitting in all these companies representing the Prime Minister's Office, Ministry of Finance and so on. Your salary is peanut, Mr Speaker, Sir, and mine more. We are being given, as Opposition Whip, a poor BMW. There, Mr Speaker, Sir, not 7, 9 series, overseas travel every month, their pocket money and fringe benefits, watchmen, *per diem, etc.* Do you know that the SIC invests in hotels, the *maja karo* which is happening there every weekend at the big 5-star hotels?

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the situation today. I have never heard and I hope I hear – I can see my good friend hon. Ms Deerpalsing in one of her *champs de tir* these days saying some truth about these people, about what is happening in these Government companies and parastatal bodies. I think it is in the interest of one and all. We are here as Members of Parliament. We have been asked to vote; Parliament is supreme. How can we not talk and I would say – *déshabille ça bann la* - if I can be permitted to say such a word.

Last, but not least, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that you are not to be blamed. The guy there is not responsible. He won't hear my voice and he won't see me on TV. I am deadly sure, these days more so.

I'll talk on the MBC Hungama. Government spent money. Government has guaranteed loan on MBC/TV. Don't tell me I can't talk on MBC. I have been through the record and I see we have guaranteed money. That person there, Sir! I pray and I am asking Government, in the name of transparency and justice, and the hon. Prime Minister to please release the report of Magistrate Vellien on the case of Mrs Rehana Ameer. I think justice must be done. There has been injustice.

(Interruptions)

Il y a eu persécution - everybody knows - persecution against a woman *syndicaliste*. How many questions have I not asked on the MBC/TV? Mr Speaker, Sir, even a Minister can't challenge that guy. I can say even the hon. Deputy Prime Minister cannot challenge that guy. He is more powerful than the hon. Prime Minister. I know the hon. Prime Minister is listening. That guy is a *camaleon*. I hope that the hon. Prime Minister will go and enquire who caught him sleeping the other day, under whose instructions, Sir. I am not a new player. I know all these *camaleons*. I know how they change coat everyday depending on the master of the day and the masters to come. So, the MBC/TV has been a hell and we have been paying Rs100. Millions of rupees of public money are being cashed every month by the MBC/TV. I am saying it as a Member of Parliament. I don't need any publicity, Mr Speaker, Sir. I do my job. I am a Member of Parliament. With the grace of God and the people of my Constituency,

I have been elected seven times. I am not arrogant. I don't say I will be here forever, but at least he has given instructions not to have my voice or even to see me on TV because I am against him. *Mo manz so la vie*. I will be continuing to do so for the coming months and years, just to alert the public opinion against that person and, I hope, the hon. Prime Minister in his own interest. He never listened when we had been asking questions on this Hungama and finally the hon. Prime Minister had to act. I won't attack the then Director-General, he has become a *sadhu*; he is writing against the MMM in certain newspapers. Every day, you see Mr B. M. Mr B. M. should look at what was happening at the MBC when he was Director-General instead of just giving us lessons. So, we don't have to take any lesson from that person.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we must see what is happening daily, hourly and also about misappropriation of funds and the day would come when there would be a full commission of enquiry. There must be a commission of enquiry by a retired Judge of the Supreme Court on the administration of the MBC/TV, especially financial administration of the MBC/TV under the management of the present Director-General. I think I am entitled as a Member of the Parliament and as somebody who pay his Rs100 every month. This is automatic by the bank through my CEB bill, I can't escape. This guy does not care about Ministers, Deputy Prime Minister or the vice-Prime Minister. He is the king and the day he will be dethroned from there, is not very far.

Sir, these were my initial comments on the state of affairs in certain parastatal bodies, in the public finance. Sir, I think, it is the interest of Government, the Minister of Finance to take the necessary action - and the Prime Minister if he is listening to me - about the MBC/TV. I am sure by now he must have caught the 'culprit' who projected him sleeping in the House. Sir, as Whip of the Opposition, I trust you to, at least, put some order with the MBC/TV, because we are not satisfied. I'm just saying it we are not satisfied the way that the MBC/TV is doing its job. I should have told you so in your Office, but I am saying it here publicly, we are not satisfied as the Opposition.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the day the Leader of the Opposition made his speech we made the first comment there. It was a crime. But they intervened. The Leader of the Opposition intervening, replying to the Minister of Finance, how many minutes/hours, 6hrs, 7hrs, 9hrs.

(Interruptions)

It is your government, you are doing it! In a democracy, at least ample time should be given to the Leader of the Opposition to reply, at least half the time of the Minister of Finance. But, you will have to pay for that, Sir.

Now, Sir, let me come to a subject that has been of particular interest since more than a decade - I see my good friend, hon. Minister Deva Virahsawmy looking at me. It has to do with the protection of the environment and the implementation of sustainable development strategies.

(Interruptions)

He has been my friend. I made public meetings for him in 1995, for your Prime Minister to become Prime Minister first time. You were not even born!

(Interruptions)

You were not even Labour by then. He still remembers Gandhi Square.

(Interruptions)

Sir, it is no joke. I am his MP. He resides in my constituency like you. Despite the fact that you voted against me, I am here.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we all know, environment protection and conservation is no more an option. It is an imperative and an urgent one. No single State, no single individual can afford to put aside the crucial issues pertaining to environment protection and conservation. The challenges are on all fronts: climate change triggering the dramatic melting of ice caps and sea level rise. I have not heard a word on climate change by the Minister, and I hope, the country hopes that this time the Minister of Environment attends the conference of parties meetings in South Africa. I hope, because last year he was prohibited - his file was not approved....

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Keep, quiet!

Mr Bhagwan: I pleaded for him, Sir. Depletion of the ozone layer, biodiversity loss! Sir, this is the only visible part of the iceberg and there is so much that we don't know yet.

Mr Speaker, Sir, for the human race this simply means more droughts and extreme weather conditions. We are facing droughts in Mauritius due to climate change. More food scarcity! We were talking about food security here. More famine in several areas of the planet and more hardships for human beings! This is what is happening in the world, Sir.

On 31 October last, the global population reached seven billion people. According to experts from the World Watch Institute in Washington :

“Addressing the challenges associated with still growing world population will require a two-pronged response. The combined measures of empowering women to make their own decisions about childbearing and significantly reducing global consumption of energy and natural resources would move humanity toward rather than further away from environmentally sustainable societies that meet human needs.”

This is a report, Sir.

“ (...) Roughly 4.5 billion people have been added to the world’s population in just the last 60 years according to United Nations estimates (...)”.

And one billion in the last twelve years! You will ask me why I am saying all this. It concerns us also, Sir. We live in a global world, a planet. The rapid increase in the world population is putting considerable pressure on the world ecosystems. This is why the World Watch Institute has issued a lot of guidelines and made reports on all these issues with regard to species, carbon, nitrogen, water, and other resources. I think Mauritius also has to be aware of what is happening outside and we, as a small island, we have to look into our own problems while also taking care of what is happening outside Sir.

To some extent, these outcomes are now unavoidable. We are also facing many of these problems and we will have to adapt to them. Adaptation is one of the important measures, Sir. In order to improve the likelihood that they will not be catastrophic, we need to simultaneously work to influence the future path of population and address the environmental and social impacts that continued population growth will have.

The World Watch Institute recommends two main approaches to mitigate the impact of a soaring global population: Empower women to take their own decision about childbearing and, secondly, to consume fewer resources and waste less food. There have been lots of recommendations made, Sir. Our Republic Mauritius, Sir, has fortunately, not faced such dramatic situations as elsewhere in many countries of Africa. In other continents there are problems.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs must be aware that many countries, even rich countries are facing problems and we small Mauritius we must be aware and we must cater for the future,

Sir. This *'tout Korek'* attitude is not correct and we are facing the drought problem, water shortage which is affecting our population. As a State, we cannot ignore the challenges that the planet is facing. We have to act responsibly and do our share as citizens of the world.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as a nation, we need to change our mindset and our operating modes. We have to adapt to the 'no waste culture' for all our resources and efficiently implement sustainable development strategies. We have been talking about *développement durable*, which is one of the main issues. I won't go again to the wastage issue, I already talked a lot about it, Sir.

However, I am tempted to say while on the one hand talking about *développement durable*, on the other hand I can't stop myself from saying that Government has adopted a 'full wastage culture'. And there is no sign, Sir, unless I am proved the contrary, unless there are actions, results that there would be any change.

Sir, a good governance ensures the proper and judicious use of all available resources. This is good governance: transparency, accountability, and meritocracy. These are the prerequisites for good governance and all these prerequisites, as we all can see every day do not form part of this Government action culture. Unfortunately, there are so many things happening, but not only in Ministries. There are reports of the Director of Audit and what we are being told for PQ's. There are many things happening in parastatal bodies as well as in the private sector. I am not against the private sector, for some of the guys of the private sector prepare a code of conduct for us. They have to look about their own things, their own code of conduct. They can't give MPs lessons. It is good to be a patriot, but you have also to see what's happening in your own house. This is meritocracy, Sir. We have been talking about equal opportunities. In Government I can say there are no equal opportunities, there have not been. I am not going into a debate; it's not a debate, I am reserving myself. You are talking about equal opportunities, I am no longer Minister. There is no development, no employment, nothing in my Constituency. This is not, I would say, equal opportunity.

Sir, I think Mauritius as a country can solve many of these problems and increase our competitiveness by simply ensuring that these prerequisites form part of our national culture. We have to inculcate this concept in our national culture, Sir.

Now coming to this Maurice Ile Durable project, Sir, we have said it on many occasions. It is true that there have been some initiatives and workshops. We are for this project. I know Professor de Rosnay. I know many of these people having had contact with them. I am a former Minister, I am interested. We are talking about reports; only once I have obtained a report I have asked for. As Members of Parliament, we are not being given many of the reports. I don't see what is confidential. Sometimes we are invited, sometimes not and sometimes the wrong people are invited. I am responsible for the file as a former Minister. I am happy somebody else is invited. I don't know if they are afraid of me. Last year, in his speech, hon. Ganoo said that this Maurice Ile Durable project is not a political issue; it is the survival of Mauritius. We are altogether; we can give our ideas but, at least, do communicate. Sir, we have said and we still say it is a *coquille vide*, just a slogan, a rhetoric. It's not just increasing the Budget, Sir, sustainable development by Rs51.5 m. and Rs380 m. by my initiative which represents peanuts, Sir, in a total Budget - 0.00004%. Referring to the pay packages of his advisers, do you know what the Prime Minister said last time in Parliament? He said: 'if we pay peanuts, we get monkeys.' but what if we invest peanuts? If we invest peanuts, what will we obtain then? Dinosaurs?

Sir, I am not the only one who said so, the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said it also. I go through all reports, I read papers. I am following this matter personally. Eminent persons like Professor Elahee who is not somebody political; he is from the University of Mauritius; he criticizes us very often although I know him, but he has given his opinion on the Maurice Ile Durable. He has used a term which is common these days: *l'année de lumière*; about the whole concept of Maurice Ile Durable, the energy problem, the water problem, the wastewater problem, the whole conservation problem and the town planning problem. I was reading the comments of Mr Juggoo who is not active these days. He was in the MMM before; he went to the *Banque Africaine du Développement*. I even met him for years and years. From what I read, he was a bit disturbed and I would even say deceived. I pray, since we have mentioned his name as a former Municipal MMM Councillor - because many good friends come from the MMM - that his head is not chopped as a Chairperson of the MID Fund.

Sir, I won't mention about investment in wastewater. These are also projects financed separately by the Government and by the different organisations. Sir, we would be fooling everybody if we just add up all investments in the social and infrastructural sectors that are being

undertaken prior to the MID setting up to give the impression that there is an effective leapfrogging on the sustainable development front.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as we all know, sustainable development rests on three pillars: economic, social and environmental. The present Government economic policy cannot be regarded as sustainable development. Why, Sir? Income inequalities are increasing while poverty is on the rise. It is the exact opposite of sustainable economic policies. Government can choose to make as much wishes about poverty alleviation or economic democratisation, but the facts prove the contrary. What this Government has put in this Budget? We will see in months, but there are real problems of poverty in this country which have not been addressed.

Sir, on the social front, poverty, unemployment, drug addiction, alcoholism – we all know *le fracas que cela est en train de causer* - domestic violence, cases of battered and abused children, all these are on the rise. These are figures that we have been given in Parliament. There is a problem in the country.

As regards the consumption of alcohol and beer, don't tell me that this increase on beer will prevent our good friend in Grand Sable or Quatre Soeurs in drinking less. No. Today there are more problems of alcoholism in the rural areas than in the urban areas. In the Beau-Bassin area, there are less problems than in the rural areas of Petite Rivière, Canot, Gros Cailloux. Those MPs who are really in contact with their constituents know that all these problems in the rural areas are increasing. So, there is cause for concern, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I won't go into education, my good friend, hon. Obeegadoo, will more expertly do so. Hon. Labelle has also given some views.

Sir, how can we talk of sustainable policies? This is the situation today. This is what I see. This is what I gather unless I am proved the contrary. These are figures. You can say you are doing this, you are doing that. If you come in six months to say you have decreased such and such - like the fatal accidents on the road, Sir. This is also a problem of sustainable development. Yesterday, Sir, there was a lorry with a flat tyre; he is not responsible directly, but I drew the attention of the Minister on the way big concrete is put on the main road and we will have problems on the motor way. Fatal accidents are on the increase. This is also sustainable development Sir.

Sir, I won't be long, let me now come to the environment issue itself. I read on page 382 that the first major achievement of the Ministry of Environment for 2011 is the implementation of waste segregation projects in all primary and secondary schools to encourage recycling activities and promote sustainable development. I ask myself: is it really so? Sir, I have queried, I have asked, I have been following; I have asked a few headteachers – rightly, I won't give their names, although I trust my good friend, hon. Dr. Bunwaree, he is of a different calibre, he won't go and chase these people. These people have been abandoned and there was no follow-up, Sir, just *annoncer* MBC, Minister, PPS coming! Can the hon. Minister inform us what is the status, the main achievement of the Ministry?

Sir, solid waste and management: this has been a real issue over the years, there have been many reports since I was mayor in the 80s. In 1984, I was mayor first. In 1982, I was following this problem of solid waste. Solid waste and management, Sir, is indeed of a paramount importance. One has just to see the amount of litter and the Minister of Finance confirms that, that the Mauritian people are doing too much litter. This is what I discovered myself. This is why I asked the then Prime Minister to approve the creation of the *Police de l'environnement*, you must sensitise people, but in Mauritius you must use *bâton* also. You know *politique du bâton*, we created *Police de l'environnement*. We launched the '*ou jeter ou payer*' campaign, Sir. People were taken to task, my friends of the press, people throwing *mégots de cigarettes*. How many thousands of contraventions were taken? There was no interference, Sir. The *Police de l'environnement* was given a status, an allowance from the inspector to sergeant and so on not to take bribe; they were given good and clean vehicles. Even one ex-Chairperson of the Public Service Commission had tree lopped in his yard and put it outside, he went to court and what he did not try to do to influence me as if to intervene then. I never intervened, Sir. In Mauritius, we had results and then after my departure, somebody started: 'to zété to tassé' I think it was from the Ministry of Tourism. Mauritius has become a *dépotoir*. I ask the Minister of Environment - every morning we leave Rose Hill near Ebène – the Deputy Prime Minister as well if he is listening to me – there is the *rond-point* of Ebène going to Nexteracom building, there is a roundabout. See how many plastic bottles there are.

(Interruptions)

I am just leaving Rose Hill on the *trajet* of the Minister of Environment himself: ‘Look through your windows, you will see’. I won’t say near College Royal, on both sides of the roads, you will see plastic bottles. The Minister responsible for RDA must talk to these contractors on the type of waste on the motorway. There are tourists going to Grand’Baie, to all the main hotels. The Minister of Tourism has rightly stated in a way – for me it is a blame. Had I been Minister of Environment in a Cabinet, I would have even resigned if somebody had taken my responsibility! I would have resigned, Sir, I would have stood up and said: ‘Why give that money to the Tourism Authority for *maja karo?*’ We have seen what the Tourism Authority has done. They might have done a few good jobs. Right! This is the responsibility of the Minister of Environment, of the Local Authorities. Should the Ministry of Tourism go and clean? Go and market Mauritius. This is your responsibility, putting millions, I do not know how much - Rs50 m. - to do a political job. The Minister of Tourism will come and clean *Cité Barkly*? They will use it for cleaning their own constituency, trying to do politics, *enn coup dan caro canne* in Curepipe with my friend. Mark my word, you will see. We all remember, Sir, how these people were recruited; they were criticised by hon. Ms Deerpalsing at times. They had been recruited politically and then after the general election they had to go on hunger strike. Fortunately, there have been some solutions, Sir.

I come back to the *Police de l’environnement*. Sir, for me, as a Member of Parliament, as a citizen of this country, it is a shame when you see all these vehicles. I am hurt because I created that unit. Look at all these vehicles of the *Police de l’environnement*, it is a shame, Sir, for Mauritius. I don’t know whether the Minister had been refused funds. The more so, I have been informed – and I hope that the hon. Prime Minister is listening – that he said he is a champion of environment. The allowance given to Police officers has been removed. No incentives, Sir! The Commissioner of Police - if it is for him - would have disbanded that unit. Do you think that you can prevent littering in Mauritius, *‘ou jeter ou pas payer sann lala’*. *Pa ou jeter ou payer, ou jeter ou pa paye di tou’*. This is Mauritius today, Sir. What a wastage! Ok, they can attend to some faults: noise pollution. I don’t say that they do not do their job properly; what are the means they are given, the way they are treated. I can say in this National Assembly, Sir, I can mention his name, I pay homage to one ex-inspector Dowlut who has passed away. He was the one at the head of the *Police de l’environnement* for five years, chosen by the then Deputy Commissioner of Police, Mr Bruneau and he did his job as a professional. He had his Diploma

from the University of Mauritius. He passed away unfortunately, and I pay him respect and his family for the good job he has done, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is the problem of rats. Do we have to talk about the problem of rats? When you have waste, today these days, Sir, in my own town, in our own town, unless we are *malhonnête*, go and see Members of Parliament on the Government side. The way the local authorities have been reduced without vehicles, without manpower, waste is not being collected for months. Yesterday, I had to beg the Mayor to collect waste in a wedding in Beau Bassin.

How can this be, Sir? We are talking of modern Mauritius! Then you have waste, all the rats go there and then you have malaria, you have all these, Sir. Sir, the challenges are enormous, limited waste disposal facilities, and also, Sir, growing number of waste. In summer you have more waste. This is the Mauritius tradition, summer is coming, people like to clean their houses at the end of the year and there is more waste. Unfortunately, it is not raining and we are praying to have rain. So, this is creating a lot of environmental problems, Sir. The municipalities are underequipped, lack of vehicles, lack of lorries and so on, Sir. There is also a low rate of recycling and the absence of an integrated policy. There is need for integrated policy, Sir. It falls under the Minister of Local Government. The Minister of Environment is responsible for the policy. The Minister of Local Government is responsible for the day to day, but there is urgent need, at least, for an integrated strategy of waste disposal and just informing the public also. We need waste segregation, Sir. When we talk of the waste disposal, there is also need, Sir, these days, for a national policy on waste sorting at national level and there is need for the introduction of the waste management legislation with obligation for waste reduction, sorting, reuse, recycling and the setting up of recovery amenities at transfer station to optimise collection of bulky and recyclable waste. The Ministry puts the cart before the ox and implements waste segregation in schools. *C'est aberrant!* Let us also not forget that climate has changed, and there is lot of movement of people from one region to another, new areas, creating a population problem.

When I was Minister, I started the project of compost in 1995 and 1996 and then again in 2000. There was a study conducted by the World Bank concerning waste recycling and reduction of waste. We have gone through the pet bottles; all the pet bottles and cans are collected. There is a strategy for plastic with which I am not satisfied. We all go to the market; now *ena sac*

plastique sans la manche. It is not an easy job. There have been taxes on plastic, but everybody knows it is difficult. We have to change our Mauritian habits; it is not easy, but we have to progress. There was a project for compost in La Chaumière and St Martin following a World Bank report. This is a very reliable project. I see hon. Dr. Jeetah approving. I had not been able at that time to visit. I initiated that project. These are the organisations which should be given the MID approval, MID blessing. Mr Speaker, Sir, there is need for government to give more incentives to that initiative; more waste, more compost, which will help the country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if we don't act, we will have diseases like Chikungunya and Malaria. December is coming, and we need to act fast. We pray that we don't have a cyclone, because already there are mountains of waste in the towns and other areas. I am not making politics; I invite the hon. Minister of Environment to make a full enquiry. He has the responsibility, and I ask him to carry out an audit of the situation around Mauritius on waste collection.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now I will come on coastal protection. There, again, there are problems. There are works which have been carried out. There has been an ongoing report, where preliminary studies have been done on critical sites. These days, I have been to Grand' Baie. Grand' Baie is *la capitale touristique de l'île*. There are problems with the public beach of Grand' Baie. There are works over there, and I don't know who is responsible to follow these works. I won't talk about Balaclava. Beach rocks have been removed mechanically. I hope the Minister is following that. I read it in the papers. There has been no problem in Balaclava. Works are going on now, and in a few years you will see government will need to invest money to do mitigation work for somebody who has committed a crime. I think it is time to act and not wait, and then appoint consultants and contractors.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the lagoons, at paragraph 132 of the Budget Speech, the Minister announces the commitment of Rs10 m. to replenish lagoons by releasing 300,000 fingerlings and thousands of sea cucumbers. But who gave the extraction permits all over the island and in Rodrigues? In spite of protests from environmentalists and press articles to warn government, nobody listened. Mr Speaker, Sir, every time we have to try and undo bad decisions that were taken. When shall we start to progress?

To conclude on the environmental front, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say that time is of the essence. We cannot afford to beat around the bush, postpone crucial decisions, and keep on with

bad environmental practices. The environmental balance sheet will be very negative in the near future if we don't act now. We have to act now. Let us forget about cosmetics and the Eco Village concept, which are in fact Deco Village. For example, at Pte aux Piments, it is proposed to have dozens of costly treated wooden benches on the beach, but no wastewater disposal system, thus exposing the lagoon to severe land-based pollution. I think there is also need for a survey, in line with the development of our tourism sector, on the quality of water in all our lagoons where we have all the 5-star beaches, and also in line to influence decisions at the Wastewater Authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, these were my comments on the environmental front. To conclude, Sir, this is the first Budget of the Minister of Finance. From what I see, I don't notice any big bang coming. We will wait; we will be here around. Unfortunately, for you, Sir, if we have to work till very late, but we will query each and every single item. This is a warning to my good friends, the Ministers. I hope the backbenchers of government will join us, of course.

(Interruptions)

We will be here around till late! Sir, it is not peanuts! We are being asked to vote Rs101 billion. So, we won't let you just say 'yes/no' like this. You will have to account on past expenditures, on programmes, give reasons and also convince us. From what I see, Sir, they are so numerous; they have a very big majority. This is why some are very frustrated for not having taken the plane for missions. There won't be any pairing. Let me give an advance notice. No pairing at all! Don't come and see me, as Opposition Whip for pairing! There will be no pairing at all, my good friends! We won't spare you!

(Interruptions)

You know what is happening inside, Sir. Things are boiling. There is a government which has a very, very weak majority.

(Interruptions)

We all know what is happening. We are not new comers, *nous pas pou lire dans boule cristal*. But we know that the expectation of the people is high, and this government is condemned to deliver, *et nous pas pou donne zotte chance*.

Merci, M. le président.

(7.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development (Mr D. Virahsawmy):

Mr Speaker, Sir, like every year, in this National Assembly, we have to listen to the Opposition which have a right to speak and we have listened to hon. Bhagwan, to others before him, to the hon. Leader of the Opposition and unfortunately, what we hear is criticism, criticism, criticism. And this is the role of the Opposition: to criticise, but no constructive proposal. Nothing! Only criticism, taking an item out of its context, talking a lot on it, getting the coverage from the press and the radio; this is the role of the Opposition. That is why they will always stay in the Opposition and we, on this side, in Government, are going to manage and we are going to manage properly.

We are not worried at all for Committee Stage. We are not going to ask for any pairing, all our Ministers are ready. We know our files and we are prepared to give all explanations which are required.

Mr Speaker, Sir, were we to listen to the Opposition, we would have to close all institutions, all state-owned companies, everything. Then they will come forward and say that everything is closed, nothing works out.

Mr Speaker, Sir, every year the Director of Audit makes his comments. There is the Public Accounts Committee and all these are functioning in a democratic State and it will continue to function in the same way. Unfortunately, we have to listen to the Opposition because this is a democratic State as it should be. But, unfortunately, like I said, Mr Speaker, Sir, nothing positive comes out of it.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to congratulate the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for shaping and crafting the Budget to build a better and more resilient Mauritius. While the Budget is being qualified as brave and bold, the Leader of the Opposition talks of the worst financial crisis in 2012.

As a responsible Government we are aware that 2012 can be a year of crisis and this Budget especially prepares the country to face difficult situations, not only locally but internationally. We have to act as we did to face the critical situation which prevailed in 2008-

2009 due to reduction in the price of sugar by 36%, end of the Multi-Fibre Agreement, increase in price of petroleum products and soaring prices of food. We have survived due to the vision of the Prime Minister and his strong team who have spared no efforts in 2008-2009 to bring reforms to mitigate the negative impacts. Mauritius is one of the few countries in the continent that have managed that crisis very well.

Again for 2012, the Prime Minister and his team come forward with innovative measures to prepare the country to face the future crisis and to achieve sustainable growth. We cannot rely on the Opposition to come with constructive proposals as they do not have any. The heritage of the Opposition is mainly the skeletons of 2005 - we should not forget. The growth on declining trend, unemployment rising, low job creation, FDI falling, investments on standstill and high deficit. We cannot also forget the famous Illovo deal. Gifts were being given to IPP's such as one CTDS with energy charge and capacity charge. Only for one producer, Mr Speaker, Sir, with the generous conditions given in 2003, CEB and the people of Mauritius will have to pay about Rs230 m. every year for 20 years, that is, Rs4.6 billion. This is what the population remembers of this Opposition, as well as *le scandale du siècle*, the MedPoint scandal! Let them stay in Opposition and we will continue to manage in Government as the population knows they can trust this Prime Minister and his team. This is a Budget for sustainability, a Budget for building the future of the present and coming generations. In fact, the theme for the Budget "Growth For The Greater Good" translates perfectly this Government's intention to pave the way for sustainable development. At a time when so many countries are facing unprecedented financial and economic difficulties, we have been able to overcome all obstacles and manage the economy to promote both development and social upliftment. The evidences of success stories are here and this Budget bears testimony of our good governance under the strong leadership of our Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

However, we have no other choice than to be constantly vigilant, Mr Speaker, Sir. This 2012 Budget makes room for us to act with great vigour and demonstrate extreme caution and *clairvoyance*. It also provides the means to ensure that: we can build on the achievement made so far in social, economic and environmental developments; macroeconomic stability is maintained with necessary incentives and support for productive sectors; investment on housing, rural development, better community services and social assistance to the vulnerable groups is

upscaled; resources are dedicated to upgrade investment in both infrastructure and human capital to expand the business sector; our small and medium enterprises grow and flourish in a sustainable manner. There is easier access to financial assistance for both education and a range of initiatives aiming at expanding job opportunities.

This Budget, therefore, consolidates the foundation to achieve all these within a sound financial framework.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Government has made significant progress in developing and implementing policies, strategies and action plans for the sound management of our environment and the promotion of sustainable development. Today, Mauritius is among the few countries which enjoy a high environmental quality. It is through our relentless efforts that Mauritius ranked sixth in the world on its environmental performance and second best for its air quality. The challenge now is to persevere and keep on improving this remarkable environmental performance.

We all know that the world is facing severe environmental threats such as extreme weather events, rapid deforestation, irreversible desertification, unprecedented rate of loss of biodiversity, risky contaminations from chemicals and wastes among others. Everybody should be extremely moved by the findings of Rajendra Kumar Pachauri, Director General of the TERI University and Albert Arnold 'AL' Gore, former Vice President of the USA when they declared that the world has only 100 months left unless major efforts were undertaken globally towards the preservation of the environment. These two men were part of a team given the Nobel Prize for highlighting this impending catastrophe. Mauritius is no exception. Such threats impact adversely on our environment and result in: damaging environmentally sensitive areas; exacerbating land use conflict, accelerating coastal erosion degradation; affecting both our inland and lagoon water quality, accelerating loss of biodiversity and degradation of habitats, and increasing pollution and proliferation of eyesores. This is why it is critical to safeguard our environmental assets such as clean air, safe water, fertile soil, natural beauty and scenic landscape, sandy beaches, lagoons, coral reef ecosystem, mountains and islets. This Budget provides considerable resources and a host of measures for the maintenance and an enhancement of our natural resources so that they can continuously deliver the ecosystem services sustainably.

It also provides for massive and green investment in a wide range of sectors such as the wastewater sector, solid waste management, better land use planning, coastal zone management, energy and upgrading of physical environment. In fact, it seeks both to strengthen the resilience of Mauritius to stay a unique tourism destination, one of the main pillars of our economy and to enhance the quality of our citizens.

Let me now enumerate on some concrete initiatives undertaken by my Ministry to promote sustainable development. -

1. Development control

As a densely populated small island, we have to face enormous pressure for land use. We need to strike the right balance between development and protection of our environmental assets. In this context, my Ministry has started implementing the recommendations made under the frameworks for -

- (i) Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM), and
- (ii) Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA).

We also have a series of other development control mechanisms such as the EIA & PER Licensing mechanism, Post EIA monitoring, and enforcement of environmental laws to ensure that development is being carried out in harmony with environmental and social considerations.

All these mechanisms are being reinforced through the review of the Environment Protection Act, with a view to making it more responsive to the emerging challenges of our new economic paradigm.

2. Pollution Control

(i) Enforcement

A robust legislative framework and its strict enforcement are major enabler in the pursuit of sustainable development. My Ministry works in close collaboration with all enforcing agencies, to ensure that environmental pollution pertaining to wastewater, odour, noise and solid wastes are promptly addressed.

We have adopted a proactive approach with regard to pollution as compared to the traditional end-of-pipe approach. We have recently embarked on an Industrial Waste Audit Programme,

which allows a sound understanding of all sources of solid, liquid and gaseous waste streams in industries. We have also undertaken more than 100 post EIA monitoring and firm actions have been taken for non-compliance.

(ii) Quality of air and water

The National Environmental Laboratory is now able to meet international standards requirements in monitoring the quality of our air and lagoon water. We have already developed our lagoonal water quality index and monitoring is ongoing. We are also working towards the development of an air quality index. My Ministry has acquired additional Ambient Air Quality Monitoring equipment to ensure that the air we breathe is of good quality. Eleven smoke meters have been acquired to control vehicular emissions and the Road Traffic Act will be enforced strictly.

We are aware of the nuisance caused by excessive noise from vehicles especially motorcycles where silencers have been modified. To abate this nuisance, eleven sound level meters have been procured to enforce provisions of the Road Traffic Act and take firm action against defaulters.

3. Environmental Educational and Sensitisation

Environmental education and sensitisation remain the cornerstone of our environmental actions. It is well-known that the success of any environmental and sustainable programme depends largely on public participation and ownership. To rapidly promote environmental stewardship, my Ministry has embarked on aggressive sensitisation and educational programmes targeting all sections of society, with a particular focus on youth and women to bring the necessary change in attitude and behaviour at household level.

Let me highlight some of the projects under way -

- Training of Trainers Programme;
- Empowering the student community;
- Promoting sustainable living, and
- Awareness Raising Campaigns.

4. Coastal Rehabilitation Works

Coastal protection works are being undertaken to rehabilitate degraded sites around the island. For the year 2010 and 2011, coastal protection works have been undertaken to the tune of Rs36 m. at Pointe aux Sables, Grand' Baie, Mon Choisy and Flic en Flac. I am pleased to announce that presently a survey team of experts from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency is in Mauritius to prepare a comprehensive coastal conversion plan, to mitigate impacts of coastal erosion around the island. This is a three-year programme amounting to Rs116 m. and will include implementation of demonstration projects on priority sites using innovative and long term resilient coastal protection measures. For the year 2012, coastal protection works will be carried out at Quatre Soeurs, Bain Boeuf, Poudre D'Or, Cap Malheureux and Baie Du Cap.

5. Sustainable Consumption & Production

We are well underway with the implementation of our National Programme on Sustainable Consumption and Production. Some 22 out of 44 projects are already being implemented.

6. Climate Change.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards climate change, this threat is real and is happening. No nation, however large or small, wealthy or poor, can escape its impacts. According to the famous Economist, Sir Nicholas Stern, countries are left -

“With a very narrow window of opportunity to act, and the costs of doing nothing far outweigh the costs of building a low carbon economy”.

The need for actions both global and at national level is imperative.

At the international level, we have jointly with other Small Island Developing States and African countries, as well as in numerous international fora, echoed our voices on the urgency for developed countries to take more ambitious actions aimed at reducing greenhouse gases in accordance with science, equity and historical responsibility.

As a developing country, Mauritius has no obligation to reduce emission of Green House Gases. However, as all countries in the world are being called upon to collaborate in this initiative, it is our duty to participate in this global effort. As climate change will threaten our hard won development gains, we have put mitigation and adaptation to climate change high on our agenda. Here, allow me to inform the House that while attending the Socialist International

Commission for a Sustainable World Society in Johannesburg in advance of the holding of the COP 17 Meeting, I made a plea to consider the special case of SIDS with regard to Climate Change. To this effect I made the following plea -

“That COP 17 address with vigour the case of most vulnerable States, those with least resources, the most exposed such as Small Island Developing States at risk of disappearing as nations and those with the lowest human development indices. In the case of SIDS, it amounts to the respect for the human rights of the citizens of those countries and an issue to which the international community must give its utmost priority”.

At COP 17, Mauritius together with members of the AOSIS, will press for a decision. So, I hope this replies to hon. Bhagwan to inform him that Mauritius will be present at COP 17.

In addition to the implementation of the Prime Minister’s initiative on *Maurice Ile Durable* and a series of measures in connection with promotion of renewable energies, water resources and food security, Government is mainstreaming climate change adaptation in key sectors of our economy; namely, environment, agriculture, water, tourism, fisheries, infrastructure, health and education through the implementation of the Africa Adaptation Programme (AAP) with financial assistance from the Japanese Government.

By the end of 2012, Mauritius is aiming at having a national framework for climate change adaptation. Key components of the national climate change adaptation framework targeted would include –

- an inundation, flooding and landslide national risk profile, with maps;
- a strategic framework and action plan for the integration of disaster risk management into urban planning and development, and
- climate resilient policies, legislations, strategies and action plans for environment, agriculture, fisheries, tourism, infrastructure and Rodrigues.

Furthermore, a Technology Needs Assessment on climate change mitigation and adaptation is under preparation with the technical support of the United Nations Environment Programme.

This Government is exploring all available opportunities to mobilise funds for adaptation to climate change in Mauritius. I am pleased to inform the House that my Ministry with the assistance of national stakeholders and UNDP, has secured a grant funding of US\$9.1 m. that is,

about Rs265 m. from the Adaptation Fund Board for the implementation of the 'Climate Change Adaptation Programme in the Coastal Zone of Mauritius'. The main objective of the programme is to address current climate change risks at three vulnerable coastal sites namely, Mon Choisy, Rivière des Galets, Quatre Soeurs and Deux Frères areas. The programme will be for a duration of five years, starting in January 2012.

The depletion of the ozone layer is a matter of great concern to us. This is why the Conference of Parties to the Montreal Protocol on substances that deplete the ozone layer, took the decision in 1987 to phase out the use of Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by 2010 and, in 2007, to phase out the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) by 2040. We have successfully phased out the use of CFCs five years ahead of the schedule.

This Government has already decided to phase out the use of HCFCs by 2030 ten years ahead of the schedule date through the implementation of a Management Plan and using a policy mix.

Sustainable development proposes a new paradigm of decision making for all sectors of society. It entails a new perspective on present-day issues and challenge and requires a better appreciation of the complex interconnections between the economic, social and environmental aspects instead of the blind pursuit of sectoral goals.

Having a proper and pragmatic framework for sustainable development is critical, the more so when achievements on sustainable development will be assessed next year in the context of the global conference on sustainable development (Rio+20). Allow me to remind the House that SIDS are a special case for sustainable development in view of their inherent vulnerabilities.

At our level, we are well on our way to have a proper framework in place to translate our MID vision into concrete policies, strategies and actions. Following a wide national consultative process, a Green Paper was finalised in April 2011 and has been subject to further debate and consultation through the holding of various workshops.

The output of these workshops ...

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister, I am going to request the Deputy Speaker to take the chair.

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the chair.

In 2008, Maurice Ile Durable Initiative was announced by the hon. Prime Minister as the new long term vision for achieving sustainable development and its main thrust was to make the Republic of Mauritius a world model of sustainable development. The Maurice Ile Durable Fund was also set up as a specialised fund to finance sustainable development projects. So far, a sum of Rs500 m. has been spent on major projects which include -

1. Solar water heater scheme
2. Subsidy for the sale of 1 million compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) for government buildings
3. Replacement of traffic lights by 1450 LED aspects
4. Installation of 2 wind turbines at Grenade, Rodrigues
5. Feasibility study for setting up of a wind farm at Curepipe Point
6. Distribution of Renewable Energy kits to 40 schools
7. Junior science adventure 2010 by Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre
8. Study on Maitrise de la Demande Energétique
9. Funding for social housing development
10. Carbon footprint mitigation project by MEXA
11. Installation of solar water heaters in 4 hospitals
12. Installation of Solar PV in 10 Schools
13. Replacement of 50,000 conventional street lighting in urban and rural roads
14. Transaction Advisory Service for a 25-40 MW Wind Park at Bigara
15. Incentive on Feed-in Tariff for Small Power Producers payable to CEB – 66 applications already approved
16. Landfill gas to energy project at Mare Chicose for 2 mega watt - grant to CEB to meet cost of differential between average cost and proposed tariff
17. Part funding of Midlands Dam Hydro Power Project
18. Feasibility Study on Geothermal Energy
19. Setting up of 9 eco-villages, 8 in Mauritius and 1 in Rodrigues

While the initial thrust of MID was to minimise our dependency on fossil fuels through increased utilisation of renewable energy and a more efficient use of energy in general, the concept has been enlarged to focus on the three pillars of sustainable development, namely economic, environmental and social. The MID Fund Committee will also focus on relevant

projects in other sectors of the economy, namely in transport, waste management, agriculture, tourism, biodiversity. At international level, much attention is being focused on the MID initiative thus showcasing Mauritius as a model, especially among SIDS and developing countries. At international level, the MID initiative demonstrates the strong political commitment of the Mauritian Government to make Mauritius a world model of sustainable development.

As a prime tourist destination and with a view to creating aesthetic values associated with convenience, leisure and promotion of health in both urban and rural areas, some 75 sites have been uplifted and embellished to upgrade their physical environment in this current year. These include green spaces, children gardens, family corners, upgrading of public places, etc. While my Ministry will continue to cater for the upgrading of the physical environment, it is worthy to note that the Budget provides Rs25 m. to the Tourism Authority to resume its comprehensive cleaning and embellishment programme. To give a further boost to this, my Ministry will come again with a '*Fleurir Maurice*' initiative in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Hon. Members will remember how Marcel Lagesse, a prominent architect, artist, painter and philanthropist launched the project '*Fleurir Maurice*' in 1968 and it was a success. We are now proposing the project to make Mauritius greener and more attractive. In this project the participation of various stakeholders including every household, public and private will be called for.

To promote cleanliness and discourage littering, my Ministry in collaboration with the local authorities, village councils and *Forces Vives*, has carried out clean up campaigns in many localities, during which more than 15,000 bins have been distributed in this year.

The three main pillars: economic growth, environmental protection and social justice cannot be dissociated when we speak of sustainable development. Addressing the 5 priority sectors, that is, Energy, Environment, Education, Employment and Equity will go a long way towards ensuring success. The 5 Es pervade throughout this Budget. Let me now elaborate further on this issue.

Environment

Solid waste generation and disposal is one of the major environmental problems in Mauritius. The lifespan of our landfill is very limited and the generation of solid waste is increasing at a fast pace yearly. We have several options to reverse this trend. One of the most

environmental friendly and feasible options is to encourage composting at both industrial and household level. This Budget encourages the composting of solid waste by increasing the composting from 90,000 to 190,000 tonnes a year. You will appreciate,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that this measure will go a long way towards greening of Mauritius and reducing our dependency on inorganic fertilizers which may contaminate our soil, aquifers and eventually affect our health.

Other environmental measures includes -

- Improving of living environment within housing estates
- Creation of Environment and Land Use Tribunal
- Sound management of our limited water resources
- Rehabilitation of our coastal zones
- Conservation of our biodiversity through action to enhance our marine ecology

As rightly pointed out by the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, many SMEs located within residential areas constitute an environmental nuisance. These activities within residential areas are the main cause of stress, health hazard and above all an eyesore. Relocating these activities in specially designed sites will not only solve a critical environmental problem, but will also encourage SMEs to work into a more conducive environment and eventually comply to environmental norms. This will also boost the emergence of new SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the wake of the decline of the sugar industry, this Budget provides a boost to the cane industry by making optimal use of its by-products to produce biofuels and ethanol to reduce our dependency on fossil fuels. This measure also brings a series of other benefits, namely -

- Enhancing our energy security
- Face the international energy turmoil including unexpected sudden rise in fossil fuel prices
- A major and bold step towards attaining the government vision of 35% of renewable energy by 2025
- A right signal to small planters who have abandoned their fields to go for more profitable business

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is estimated that about 17,000 acres of sugar cane land of small planters have been abandoned due to the reduction in the price of sugar. It is possible today to

plant a power grass or special cane to produce feedstocks which can be use for the production of biodiesel. Catalyst technology is available to transform biomass feedstock into any kind of biofuel, eliminating sulphur contents that are present in current fuels. It also removes the carbon monoxide and reduces emission of carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide during the process. The final product is a low polluting green fuel of high quality.

It also removes the carbon monoxide and reduces the emission of carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxide during the process. The final product is a low polluting green fuel of high quality.

The Budget also provides sufficient funds for renewable energy and energy efficiency to happen. Our Solar Water Heater Scheme will be sustained through the implementation of a second phase to the tune of Rs250 m.

Moreover, new impetus is provided for Small Independent Power Producers (IPPs). By extending the purchase of electricity from 2 megawatts to 3 megawatts for small IPPs, this Scheme will provide economies of scale and will encourage small IPPs to enter this Scheme to provide clean and renewable energy.

This Budget has provided a host of measures to reinvigorate the SME and other productive sectors likely to generate employment. There will be easy access to finance, incentives for capacity building and upgrading of skills to enhance employability. Abolition of taxes is a further motivation to increase investment and promote job creation.

It is a fact that education is the best means to take a society towards progress and achievement. To give a further boost in the education sector considerable provisions have been made for children with special needs. The Summer School Programme for unsuccessful children in CPE is an innovative way of addressing such an issue. For the first time every government school will have an allocation of Rs500,000 for renovation and upgrading to improve school environment. Crèche and kindergardens will have access to CSR funds to improve their facilities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we all know that equity is the basis for sustainable development. In trying to alleviate poverty and to reduce inequality, this Budget provides substantial opportunities for the -

- empowerment of the most vulnerable groups of our society;
- Empowerment for women for more fruitful employment;
- Provision of decent houses and better environment for low income groups;
- Support to low income workers;
- Provision of safety nets for the poor and the needy;

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today it is clear that the pursuit of sustainable development requires a better appreciation of the complex interconnections between the economic, social and environmental aspects of current challenges instead of blind pursuit of sectoral goals.

This Government is leaving no stone unturned to integrate all sectors and involve all stakeholders to ensure that we are moving in the right direction. The 2012 Budget provides the right impetus to enhance actions at all levels and by all stakeholders to lead us towards the vision of a '*Maurice Ile Durable*'.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quote Mahatma Gandhi -

“A true soldier does not argue as he marches, how success is going to be ultimately achieved. But he is confident that if he only plays his humble part well, somehow or other the battle will be won. It is in that spirit that every one of us should act. It is not given to us to know the future. But it is given to us know how to do our part well.”

In fact, this is the only way that we can forge ahead as a nation to make Mauritius a model of sustainable development.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.43 p.m.)

Mr T. Henry (Third Member for Mahebourg & Plaine Magnien): M. le président, j'aimerais féliciter d'emblée le vice Premier ministre et le ministre des finances, pour le Budget responsable qu'il a présenté vendredi dernier à l'Assemblée Nationale.

Un budget, M. le président, qui ne contient aucun effet d'annonce et qui évite le piège de la démagogie car il contient un nombre extrêmement élevé de mesures réalistes et réalisables, 178 au total.

C'est un budget qui satisfait toutes les couches de la population, toutes les catégories socio-professionnelles, tous les secteurs économiques et surtout, M. le président, c'est un budget qui touche les gens dans leur vie de tous les jours.

Dans un contexte extrêmement difficile, le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances a fait preuve d'une grande cohérence en misant sur la croissance pour redynamiser l'économie et lui permettant de faire face aux défis qui l'attendent au tournant de 2012.

Ce budget d'intérêt national a été très bien accueilli par la population.

Avant de continuer, j'aimerais attirer l'attention de la Chambre parce qu'il y avait quelques membres de l'opposition qui critiquaient un peu la photo qu'il y avait sur le *Budget Speech*. Mais j'aimerais rappeler à nos honorables copains de l'opposition, qu'à l'époque, l'actuel président du Conseil des finances du MMM avait présenté ...

(Interruptions)

Oui, le gourou...

Il avait présenté un budget en 1985 et voilà ce qu'il y avait...

(Interruptions)

Et encore mieux, M. le président, en 1991 sur le même *Budget Speech* -Monsieur et Madame gourou!

(Interruptions)

Donc, de venir critiquer et dire que c'est du jamais vu, c'est du déjà vu!

(Interruptions)

Malgré les commentaires de certains membres de l'opposition concernant l'introduction des taxes indirectes,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Henry: ...j'aimerais rappeler à la Chambre que la mise en application de la *sales tax* et de l'augmentation de la TVA qui est passé à 15%, s'est fait lorsque le MMM était au gouvernement. Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que...

(Interruptions)

« *Mone écoute toi causer, laisse moi causer! Mo pane dire toi narien!* »

The Deputy Speaker: Don't interrupt the hon. Member!

Mr Henry: Il ne faut pas oublier non plus que le précédent budget présenté par l'ancien ministre des finances a contribué au ralentissement des investissements dans le pays avec l'introduction de la *Capital Gains Tax*, ce qui a provoqué une baisse de 69.6% pour le premier trimestre 2011 comparé au premier trimestre 2010.

Le pays allait vers une faillite et le Budget 2012 est venu renverser la vapeur. Tous les analystes financiers ont d'ailleurs acclamé ce budget.

Price Waterhouse, DCDM, l'Association des comptables ont parlé de « Budget brave et audacieux », de « Plan Marshall » pour les PME...

Le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances a pris des décisions courageuses qui vont relancer la croissance, qui vont redonner confiance aux investisseurs, créer plus de richesses et permettre une redistribution équitable du gâteau national.

Mais surtout, le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances a agit en véritable social-démocrate puisqu'il a injecté dans le budget une forte dose de justice sociale en faisant appel à la solidarité et la compassion envers les plus faibles. Et je pense, M. le président, que nous devons tous suivre cette voie, sans hésitation.

C'est en tout cas ce qui me touche le plus et j'aimerais m'étendre un peu plus sur les mesures sociales que je qualifierais de novatrices mais qui sont complètement pratiques et surtout applicables dans la vie de tous les jours des Mauriciens.

Et justement, M. le président, pour qu'une personne puisse avoir droit à un nouveau départ dans la vie elle doit pouvoir jouir, en premier lieu, d'un logement décent.

Le vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances l'a très bien compris et c'est pourquoi le Budget 2012 contient des mesures importantes pour les habitants des résidences NHDC and ex-CHA.

Car les résidences NHDC et ce que nous appelons les 'cités', en général, sont trop souvent synonymes d'anarchie et de dégradation.

J'en sais quelque chose car dans ma circonscription il y a beaucoup de familles qui vivent dans des conditions difficiles et qui bénéficieront directement de ces mesures.

Avec la création de syndicats c'est toute l'organisation des résidences NHDC qui va changer. Ainsi le gouvernement accordera R 200 par famille habitant les résidences NHDC pour financer les syndicats. Cela va aider les gens à vivre dans un meilleur environnement, à leur redonner une dignité et leur donner du courage.

Un autre mesure qui va changer la vie des plus vulnérables de la société, M. le président, c'est celle qui va toucher environ 2000 familles des résidences ex-CHA.

Ces familles pourront prendre un nouveau départ, en devenant propriétaires de leur terrain, et fortes de cet avantage, elles pourront même démarrer une entreprise, si besoin est.

Et d'ailleurs dans un esprit de redonner leur dignité aux gens les plus vulnérables que ce budget a été fait, M. le président, redonner leur dignité pour se tenir debout et assurer leur avenir.

Dans cet ordre d'idée, il convient d'applaudir les mesures du budget concernant le *scheme* pour les employés de maison, jardiniers, laboureurs, etc.

Leur contribution NPF sera désormais payée par l'État afin que cette catégorie de travailleurs ne tombe pas dans l'oubli mais afin qu'ils puissent jouir d'une retraite décente.

Lors de mes nombreuses descentes sur le terrain, M. le président, j'ai pu également constater la détresse des enfants lorsqu'ils sont laissés à eux-mêmes, ce qui les rend vulnérables aux fléaux sociaux. Ces enfants souffrent et ils méritent toute notre attention.

C'est pour cela que j'applaudis les mesures prises dans ce Budget pour venir leur apporter leur soutien voulu. Je pense surtout à la création de crèches pour 2000 enfants.

C'est une mesure qui est typique d'un *caring Government*, d'un gouvernement qui prend en considération ses enfants.

De plus, le *Summer School Programme*, les cours pendant les vacances, vont permettre aux moins performants de nos enfants de rattraper leur retard. Car, le combat contre la pauvreté commence par la racine, par les plus jeunes.

Mais ce gouvernement ne mène pas seulement un combat contre la pauvreté mais il a aussi développé une stratégie pour rendre les gens plus autonomes. Et notamment rendre les femmes plus autonomes, M. le président.

L'une des façons d'y arriver, c'est à travers la création des crèches, permettant aux mamans de se libérer pour travailler ou, pourquoi pas, fonder sa propre petite entreprise.

Autre mesure qui va dans le même sens, c'est la mesure de détaxe des motocyclettes de moins de 125cc qui va aussi rendre plus autonomes ceux qui sauront en bénéficier.

Cette mesure va toucher toutes les catégories, les jeunes, les planteurs, les policiers et tous ceux qui n'ont pas des moyens de transport et ont des horaires de travail étendus.

C'est toute la force, la cohérence et la vision de ce Budget, M. le président : les mesures sociales se marient harmonieusement avec les décisions économiques. La relance de l'économie doit profiter avant tout à la population, à ces milliers de mauriciens qui se battent chaque jour pour gagner leur pain et se faire une place au soleil.

En permettant aux PME de s'épanouir, le budget 2012 va transformer le tissu socio-économique de Maurice car les mauriciens sont un peuple d'entrepreneurs, ingénieux, courageux, qui n'a pas peur de l'effort, à condition de lui donner les motivations nécessaires.

Ce gouvernement sait reconnaître et encourager cela, M. le président. Il est conscient que pour une véritable démocratisation de l'économie, il faut qu'il y ait de plus en plus d'acteurs qui participent au développement et à la croissance.

Avec l'accès plus ouvert aux finances, les PME pourront avoir un nouveau départ grâce au nouveau taux négocié par le gouvernement qui va permettre à ces PME d'emprunter un taux préférentiel de 8.5%, soit 3% en plus du *repo rate*.

De plus, il y a aussi cette mesure de Rs20,000 par mois, pendant six mois, qui permettra à ces PME de subvenir à leurs besoins durant la période de démarrage.

Cette mesure est là pour encourager les nouveaux opérateurs à se lancer dans l'entrepreneuriat. Enfin, 175 unités seront réservées pour permettre à des PME d'avoir un emplacement adéquat. Nous savons tous combien il est difficile pour un PME d'avoir un emplacement, M. le président. Il y a des problèmes de voisinage, de permis, de sanitation etc. Et cette mesure innovatrice viendra enlever un poids sur les épaules de nombreuses PME, tout comme les mesures pour faciliter le *business* et qui vont simplifier les démarches administratives.

M. le président, j'aimerais maintenant dire quelques mots sur les mesures du budget qui visent à valoriser le sport et les sportifs. Nous savons, M. le président, que le sport est un facteur de développement humain permettant nos jeunes d'être reconnus au sein de la société. C'est aussi un tremplin vers l'amélioration de leurs conditions de vie. Plusieurs de nos sportifs sont devenus des *role models* et ouvrent la voie pour les plus jeunes. Ce gouvernement a démontré tout son intérêt pour les sportifs et plus particulièrement pour le sport de haut niveau.

A travers ce budget 2012, le gouvernement a désormais ouvert l'entraînement de haut niveau à tous ceux qui ont le talent nécessaire pour briller.

Le budget prévoit six bourses d'études pour les athlètes. Cette nouvelle mesure va permettre aux sportifs de haut niveau de continuer leurs études sans délaisser le sport.

De plus, les jeunes sportifs travaillant dans une entreprise bénéficieront du soutien du CSR qui va permettre aux employeurs de les libérer pour les entraînements.

Cette mesure est révolutionnaire, M. le président ! Il est important de souligner que le budget du *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports* a triplé, ce qui démontre bien l'intérêt que le gouvernement porte aux jeunes.

M. le président, je voudrais dire quelques mots sur Rodrigues. C'est la première fois dans l'histoire qu'un gouvernement a un regard spécial sur Rodrigues.

Dans le précédent budget, il n'y a pas eu suffisamment d'attention qui a été accordé à Rodrigues.

(Interruptions)

Reste tranquille, après ou kozé, ou pou gagne l'occasion kozé !

The Deputy Speaker : Address the Chair, please ! Hon. Obeegadoo, please don't interrupt !

Mr Henry : Or, ce budget veut jeter un autre regard sur nos frères Rodriguais en leur accordant l'égalité de chances qu'ils méritent pour réussir leur développement au même rythme que les mauriciens.

M. le président, l'installation d'un câble optique qui reliera Rodrigues au reste du monde, au coût de R 600 millions, c'est encore une fois du jamais vu.

Les Rodriguais se trouvent sur le même pied d'égalité que les mauriciens, citoyens d'une même République, jouissant des mêmes opportunités.

Rodrigues pourra avoir la même chance que Maurice pour développer le secteur de BPO, les call-centres et peut-être plus, qui sait? Car nous connaissons tous le potentiel des jeunes Rodriguais.

Ce budget a aussi faire preuve de compassion avec les Rodriguais les plus vulnérables, avec la mesure qui vise à accorder un logement aux familles qui n'ont pas les moyens, lorsqu'elles accompagnent un parent malade en traitement à Maurice.

Cette mesure, M. le président, a été accueillie par tous les bords et même acclamée par l'opposition Rodriguaise. M. le président, j'ai entendu les critiques à l'encontre du Budget, concernant ce que certains dans l'opposition ont appelé une manque de vision.

Bien au contraire, ce Budget est doté d'une grande vision pour le peuple mauricien, une forte dose de compassion pour les plus vulnérables, surtout un regard pragmatique et d'un réalisme qui fait de nombreux jaloux.

Ce budget pose surtout des bases d'une nouvelle société mauricienne, plus juste et plus équitable.

Je tiens, donc, à réitérer mes félicitations au vice Premier ministre et ministre des finances, mais aussi au Premier ministre dont le sens du leadership, l'attachement à la justice sociale, les attentions particulières aux catégories les moins favorisées, ont guidé ce budget, M. le président.

En conclusion, cette équipe gouvernementale a été reconduite au pouvoir grâce au résultat qu'elle a amené depuis 2005. Et le budget 2012 va non seulement continuer sur cette lancée mais aussi passer à la vitesse supérieure pour amener encore plus de résultats pour améliorer davantage la vie de tous les mauriciens.

Merci.

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: Mr Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Dr. Jeetah rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Thursday 10 November 2011 at 11.30 a.m.

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

MATTER RAISED

(8.00 p.m.)

OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MAURITIUS - CUREPIPE

Mr S. Obeegadoo (Third Member for Curepipe & Midlands): M. le président, je vais être bref. Je voudrais soulever une question qui préoccupe les curepipiens et les trois députés élus de la circonscription. Je me réfère au bâtiment qu'abritait jusqu'à tout récemment la MBC. Je ne sais pas si cela relève du ministre des infrastructures publiques ou du ministre du logement ou du Premier ministre. Mais je confierai la tâche au ministre des infrastructures publiques, le seul du *front bench*, de transmettre à qui de droit mes propos.

Il nous a été rapporté dans la presse que ce bâtiment serait éventuellement transféré au ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur pour abriter l'*Open University of Mauritius*. Il n'y a eu aucune confirmation officielle ; c'est ce que rapporte la presse.

Avant qu'il ne soit trop tard, avant qu'une décision ne soit finalisée, au nom des mes collègues, le député Satish Boolell, le député Eric Guimbeau, et mon nom propre, nous voudrions dire au gouvernement : non ! Nous ne sommes pas d'accord, sur la base des représentations reçues de la part de nos mandants, à partir de nos observations propres, de notre travail de députés, et je vais expliquer pourquoi. Dans le pourvoi des services sociaux à Curepipe, les habitants de cette ville font face à de nombreuses difficultés, comme les fonctionnaires des départements concernés. La Sécurité sociale, par exemple. Madam Dookun-Luchoomun, au temps où elle était ministre, a dû intervenir, à ma requête, à plusieurs reprises, puisque les locaux sont tellement exigus, les fonctionnaires ne peuvent pas travailler convenablement, et le public se tient à l'extérieur, sous la pluie, dans le froid, pour faire la queue pour avoir accès aux services de ce ministère.

Le ministère du Travail, c'est la même chose. Je crois qu'il y a un nouvel immeuble - le ministre n'est pas là - qui aurait été construit, mais tout à fait excentré, pas vraiment accessible, et le public s'en plaint.

Au niveau de la police, M. le président, malgré le nouvel immeuble qui a été construit, il y a quelques années, au CID par exemple, encore une fois, les policiers sont à l'étroit. Donc, par rapport au service spécialisé de la police, il y a un manque d'espace.

Pour ce qui est de la Santé, nous avons toujours vis-à-vis de la demeure de l'honorable Baloomoody, ce que nous appelons le dispensaire de Curepipe, où les services essentiels sont offerts, mais rien de plus. Aujourd'hui il nous manque à Curepipe un lieu pour offrir des services spécialisés, qu'il s'agisse, par exemple, du dépistage des maladies non transmissibles. Il y a une question de place, de locaux qui se posent.

Je pourrais vous parler des femmes battues, des enfants. Aujourd'hui, qu'il s'agisse de la CDU ou du DVU, il faut se référer à Phoenix ou à Vacoas.

Nous n'avons pas un centre pour les Arts et la Culture.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has made his point.

Mr Obeegadoo: Un dernier point. Par exemple, une piscine municipale, que nous appelons de tous nos vœux, de longue date. Alors, cet immeuble, qui est bâti sur un terrain de dimension très, très conséquente, pourrait servir à tout cela. Un *One Stop Shop* pour les services publics, pour répondre aux aspirations des habitants de la ville. Vous savez, par définition, une *open university* c'est l'éducation à distance. L'*Open University of Mauritius* peut être situé à Grand Sable, au Morne Brabant, à Belle Mare, à Grand Baie, cela ne changerait rien. C'est de l'éducation à distance. Il n'y a aucun lieu d'utiliser un bâtiment se trouvant dans un lieu stratégique au cœur d'une ville où il manque d'espace pour les services publics et l'offrir à l'*Open University*. Une fois que l'*Open University* sera installé, ce sera impossible de le faire partir.

Donc, j'adresse un appel qui se veut à la fois pressant et solennel au gouvernement, de reconsidérer cette décision, si la décision a été prise, sinon d'écouter, de consulter les habitants de Curepipe. Au moins, attendez les élections municipales, et vous pourrez dès lors discuter avec les représentants élus des citoyens de Curepipe au niveau de la mairie de Curepipe.

Donc, voilà l'appel que je voudrais lancer au gouvernement au nom de mes deux collègues députés. Qui sait, peut être que le ministre Sik Yuen, lui aussi curepipien, partage cet avis.

Merci, M. le président.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall reply. First of all, I must say I am shocked to hear a former Minister of Education going against building universities in his constituency.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Just reply.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to bring some light to my learned friend.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Hon. Assirvaden, please! Let the Minister answer.

Dr. Jeetah: This building has been vested into my Ministry for the simple reason that, because of the government policy where we would like to see one graduate per family, it is

becoming more and more difficult to cope with the number of students who wish to study. At the moment already, we need to have offsite campuses for the University of Technology. As from next year, we are going to start courses for the University of Technology in Curepipe. Together with my colleague, the Attorney general, we are going to visit on Monday to see how it can accommodate space for the Council of Legal Education and a specialised centre. My good friend and colleague who is in charge of Labour would also like to have a regional centre for ILO matters.

So, this is where matters stand. I would like to assure the House that this government firmly believes in the process of creating space for education, especially for people in that region and from the south. We are going ahead, and students will be in this building as from next January.

At 8.08 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Thursday 10 November 2011 at 11.30 a.m.