

No. 23 of 2011



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

FIRST SESSION

THURSDAY 10 NOVEMBER 2011

CONTENTS

QUESTION (ORAL)

MOTION

BILL (*Public*)

ADJOURNMENT

Members

Members

THE CABINET**(Formed by Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam)**

Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP	Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
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Dr. the Hon. Abu Twalib Kasenally, FRCS	Minister of Housing and Lands
Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
Dr. the Hon. Vasant Kumar Bunwaree	Minister of Education and Human Resources
Hon. Satya Veyash Faugoo	Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security
Hon. Devanand Virahsawmy, GOSK	Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development
Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology

Hon. Tassarajen Pillay Chedumbrum	Minister of Information and Communication Technology
Hon. Louis Joseph Von-Mally, GOSK	Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues
Hon. Satyaprakash Ritoo	Minister of Youth and Sports
Hon. Louis Hervé Aimée	Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands
Hon. Mookhesswur Choonee	Minister of Arts and Culture
Hon. Shakeel Ahmed Yousuf Abdul Razack Mohamed	Minister of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment
Hon. Yatindra Nath Varma	Attorney General
Hon. John Michaël Tzoun Sao Yeung Sik Yuen	Minister of Tourism and Leisure
Hon. Lormus Bundhoo	Minister of Health and Quality of Life
Hon. Sayyad Abd-Al-Cader Sayed-Hossen	Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection
Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Janghahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare

Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia

Minister of Civil Service and
Administrative Reforms

Members

Members

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 23 of 2011

Sitting of Thursday 10 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 QUESTION

RODRIGUES - PORT MATHURIN TOWN COUNCIL - PPS, ETC.

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications whether, in regard to Rodrigues, he will state if he has been informed by the Commissioner of Police of dissatisfaction and tensions thereat as a result of the -

- (a) Rodrigues Regional Assembly not having been consulted for the proposed setting up of a Port Mathurin Town Council and of Village Committees thereat;
- (b) appointment of a Parliamentary Private Secretary therefor, and
- (c) decision to introduce the Creole language in the education sector thereat, as from January 2012.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that on 29 October 2011 the *OPR* organised a peaceful march which was attended by about 250 persons in protest against -

- (i) the introduction of Mauritian Creole in the Rodrigues education system as Mauritian Creole goes against the specificity of the Rodriguan culture, and
- (ii) the provisions of the new Local Government Bill which relate to the powers of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

I am also informed that on Saturday 05 November a public meeting was held on the same issue at Roche Bon Dieu by the *FPR* which was attended by about 50 persons.

It is clear, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, that there is no widespread dissatisfaction and tensions in Rodrigues on this issue although there are some protests.

In regard to part (a) of the question, I have to state that it is not correct to say that there has not been any consultation with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in regard to the setting up of a Port Mathurin Town Council and of Village Committees as provided for in the Local Government Bill. As a matter of fact, my colleague, the Minister of

Local Government, who then also held the portfolio of Rodrigues and Outer Islands, visited Rodrigues and had a first consultative meeting from 06 to 09 March 2010 to examine the advisability of introducing local government in Rodrigues for the first time. The Minister and his delegation had wide-ranging consultations with stakeholders, including -

- Mr Christian Lopold
- Mr Nicolas Von Mally
- Mr Robert Spéville
- Mr Alex Nancy
- Mr Serge Clair
- Mr Johnson Roussety
- Mr Gaëtan Jhabeemisar
- Mr Franceau Grandcourt
- Mr Wilmode Edouard
- Mr Alain Tolbize

The latter two are Union Representatives of the Rodrigues Council of Social Service. So, there were widespread consultations.

Further, on 23 June 2011, the Minister of Local Government had a meeting in the morning in Mauritius with the actual Chief Commissioner, the Commissioner for Health, Social Security, Cooperatives, Fire Services, Prisons and Reforms Institutions of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to discuss the creation of the Rodrigues Town Council of Port Mathurin. On the same day, a letter was addressed to the Island Chief Executive to confirm the gist of the discussions that had taken place on that day bearing on a policy orientation aimed at the creation of the Rodrigues Town Council of Port Mathurin. In a letter dated 01 July 2011 addressed to the Ministry of Fisheries and Rodrigues, the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues has stated that the Executive Council has decided, and I quote -

“the decision for setting up any status for Port Mathurin and other villages in Rodrigues will be taken up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in due course”.

- which indicates that there have been proper consultations all the time.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Local Government Bill was introduced in the House on 18 October 2011 for First Reading, the objective being to provide an opportunity to all stakeholders, including Members of this Assembly as well as of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to take cognizance of its contents and subsequently provide their contribution to the debates at Second Reading stage. Hon. Members will note that three weeks have elapsed since the First Reading of the Bill. In the meantime, we have received several representations.

Now that the objections of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly to the proposed clauses of the Bill in relation to the RRA have become clear, we propose to make amendments to the Bill at Committee Stage to remove the said provisions. In fact, the hon. Minister of Local Government has already made a statement to the Press to that effect last month.

In regard to part (b) of the question, I am not aware of any dissatisfaction resulting from the appointment of a Parliamentary Private Secretary. The appointment of hon. Joseph Christian Leopold as Parliamentary Private Secretary has been made by the President of the Republic on my advice in conformity with sections 74 and 112 of the Constitution. The legal basis for the appointment of hon. Leopold is no different from that of the nine other Parliamentary Private Secretaries in respect of whose appointments there are yearly budgetary provisions. I should, however mention that hon. Leopold is required to report to the hon. Minister for Rodrigues and Fisheries and not to the Prime Minister as in other cases. I should like to stress the fact that the appointment of hon. Leopold as Parliamentary Private Secretary in no way infringes the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Act.

Furthermore, the hon. Leader of the Opposition will no doubt be aware that the budget of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly is approved by Cabinet and that there is a Minister for Rodrigues in Cabinet.

Hon. Leopold, by virtue of his functions as Parliamentary Private Secretary reporting to that Minister, will no doubt be in a position to provide valuable inputs concerning how Government and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly policies are being perceived amongst the public in Rodrigues and indeed in Mauritius, especially in the area of fisheries.

This inevitably assists the hon. Minister in better contributing to Cabinet consideration of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly Budget, as well as in the formulation of policies, be it in the fisheries sector and other sectors relevant to Rodrigues. Perhaps, I should remind the House that hon. Leopold has been a Member of this House for eleven years.

As regards part (c) of the question, in the context of the decision to introduce Creole language in Standard I in all schools as an optional language as from January 2012, consultations were held with stakeholders since August 2010. Rodrigues was represented by Officials of the Rodrigues Education Commission at the National Forum held on 30 August 2010.

It should be pointed out that the *Akademi Kreol Morisien* which was set up to look into all aspects related to the introduction of *Kreol Morisien* in schools comprises a representative of the Rodrigues Education Commission. The latter attended meetings held on 27 October 2010, 10 November 2010, 16 December 2010 and 19 October 2011.

A survey to determine the number of pupils opting for *Kreol Morisien* in Standard I, as an optional subject, in January 2012 (on the same lines as in Mauritius) was carried out in Rodrigues and 384 parents representing 51% of children to be admitted to Standard I opted for *Kreol Morisien*. A special training is being carried out at the MIE for 83 Educators of *Kreol Morisien* out of which 13 Educators are from Rodrigues.

The basic steps for the introduction of *Kreol Morisien* have been to -

- finalise a standard writing system
- finalise the grammar
- develop the curriculum

- prepare workbooks for Standard I pupils and teachers guide
- train Teachers

All these have now been completed. It should be pointed out that the most important aspect is for the Standard I, the child has to start familiarising himself with the written and spoken aspects of the language.

During elaboration of the curriculum, the phonetic and lexical variants specific to Rodrigues which had been identified so far have been taken on board. However, there have been additional requests for further consultations with Rodriguan stakeholders and these consultations will take place next week.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it should be pointed out that the curriculum is a dynamic exercise and subject to review periodically. The current educational material will be further examined at a consultative meeting in the course of this month. Representatives of the Rodrigues Education Commission have been invited to participate. Furthermore, all other interested parties in Rodrigues have been invited to submit their proposals. After completion of this exercise, the Mauritius Institute of Education will finalise the materials and workbooks for Standard I which would take into account the specificity of Rodrigues. Thereafter, a delegation comprising representatives of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, the *Akademi Kreol Morisien* and the MIE will then proceed to Rodrigues for a consultative workshop by the first week of December.

A communiqué to that effect has already been issued requesting interested parties in Rodrigues to register themselves for submission of their contribution to the curriculum.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to seize this opportunity to dispel any doubt that a few may have or may be trying to instill in the minds of our fellow citizens in Rodrigues to the effect that this Government is trying to undermine the autonomy of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly.

On the contrary, my Government is doing everything to ensure the modernisation of Rodrigues and ensure its sustainable development for the well-being of all its inhabitants while respecting the specificities of the island. I wish to reassure the House

that Government will continue to take all necessary steps to ensure the full integration of Rodrigues within the Republic of Mauritius.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Prime Minister has said that according to the information he has, there is no widespread tensions or unrest in Rodrigues. But, does he not think that it is a very delicate situation in Rodrigues, since it is for the first time that the three political parties in Rodrigues plus the Rodrigues Regional Assembly; therefore, there is unanimity against this? What is proposed in the Local Government Bill of this year? Does he not consider that this is a serious situation?

The Prime Minister: My information is that not everybody is opposed to everything. There are differences in the Opposition to what is being suggested. But furthermore, as I indicated, there were widespread consultations. I understand that nobody said anything on these issues at the time. There are differences in the Opposition to what is being suggested. But, furthermore, as I indicated, we have taken on board - there were widespread consultations, nobody said anything on these issues at that time I understand. Now, that they have said what they want to say, we have taken this on board, that is why the hon. Minister for Local Government has made a statement and if that is not what you wish, we will remove it and leave for you to decide. In fact, there has been a communiqué also which he has issued. Therefore, we are taking into consideration what people in Rodrigues are saying.

Mr Bérenger: When we voted the law which granted full autonomy to Rodrigues in 2002, we took great care to entrench the autonomy of Rodrigues in the Constitution itself, that is, the supreme law of the land. I am sure that the hon. Prime Minister is aware that section 75(e) of the Constitution - alteration of certain written rules provides that nothing pertaining to Rodriguan affairs will be done, no law will be brought before Parliament and so on without the concurrence of the Regional Assembly. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether - as requested in the Constitution - the concurrence of the Regional Assembly was obtained? Because if it was not obtained, there was violation, not only of the spirit, but of the letter of the Constitution.

The Prime Minister: As I explained, Mr Speaker, Sir, after all these consultations were made in July of this year, a letter was addressed to the Ministry of

Fisheries and Rodrigues, the Chief Commissioner of Rodrigues - because they were made aware - we must have these consultations with them as the hon. Leader of the Opposition is saying and they have replied that is proof that, in fact, we have consulted them and they have replied that based on that decision that they will be taken up by the Rodrigues Regional Assembly in due course and that the whole process is going on through that. In the meantime, the hon. Minister has introduced the Bill precisely - people have to say what has to be said, but the Rodrigues Regional Assembly has been consulted to say whether they agree or don't agree. If they don't agree, we leave it as it is.

Mr Bérenger: In my point, I am not challenging the Prime Minister's statement that there were consultations, but the Constitution does not talk about consultations. It says that the concurrence must be obtained. Therefore, the Constitution, the supreme law of the country had it that before the Local Government Bill was introduced in Parliament, concurrence of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly should have been obtained. Can we have an explanation how that clause of the Constitution has not been respected?

The Prime Minister: No, it has been respected in the sense that we have asked them for the concurrence, they have said that they will inform us in due course. In the meantime, we all know that the dates for the elections are coming up so the hon. Minister thought that he would put it in the Bill and if they don't concur, they will remove it.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister will agree that the point is that the concurrence should have been obtained before the Bill was introduced before the General Assembly. It is so straightforward, Mr Speaker, Sir. Now, we are told that amendments will be brought. The statement made by the hon. Minister for Local Government on 03 November in *L'Express de Rodrigues*, was categorical that all reference to Rodrigues in the Local Government Bill 2011 will be deleted. Is that official Government policy? Can I request that the amendments be circulated as early as possible so that our friends from Rodrigues and ourselves will have ample opportunity to study the amendments?

The Prime Minister: In fact, as I said, the hon. Minister of Local Government has made a statement to the press and we are standing by that statement, that is, in other words, if it is the wish of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly not to have these sections,

we will amend and delete them. The hon. Minister will circulate the amendments, I am sure.

Mr Bérenger: On the PPS issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I know whether there has been any exchange of correspondence between the Ministry of Local Government or Government and the Rodrigues Regional Assembly on the appointment of the PPS for Rodrigues? If there is no correspondence, is there some kind of document that tells us what will be the duties of the PPS for Rodrigues?

The Prime Minister: There have been no consultations between the Government and them because it is my priority to advise the President who has acted on my advice in conformity with Sections 74 and 112 of the Constitution. But, as I said, hon. Leopold doesn't do the same work as the other Parliamentary Private Secretaries, that is, he does not report to the Prime Minister, but to the Minister for Rodrigues and Fisheries, so he can be more aware of what is happening in Rodrigues and he is concerned about Rodrigues and the Fisheries section.

Mr Bérenger: Let me not be misunderstood, hon. Leopold will do a fine job wherever he is placed. There is nothing personal in that. But, I want to see clearly how this is going to work. Here, in mainland Mauritius, the PPS implements policy decided by the central Government, helps in the implementation of policy decided. In Rodrigues, we have full autonomy with the Rodrigues Regional Assembly doing what the central Government does here. Now, how will this work with the PPS who will not neither report to the Rodrigues Regional Assembly nor the Prime Minister, but the Minister for Rodrigues? Doesn't the hon. Prime Minister agree that we should rethink the whole thing? I am not trying to get hon. Leopold out of the job. Not at all. But, doesn't the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that we should rethink the whole thing? We have central Government, we have the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, and we have the Minister for Rodrigues, now we have the PPS for Rodrigues who reports to the Minister. Will he agree with me that there is need for a rethink?

The Prime Minister: He is giving valuable information to the Minister. I give you one example. He has been instrumental to prevent fishermen from fishing on the banks. He is the one who initiated that thing. In other words, had he not been there,

maybe we would not have been aware of what is happening until quite late. So, I think he is giving input to the hon. Minister and then the hon. Minister can act.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, my last question would relate to the introduction of kreol language. I heard the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources give us details a few days back on consultations that have taken place. Today, we are told that consultations are still ongoing, that training is still ongoing. Doesn't the hon. Prime Minister think that it will be better to postpone the introduction of kreol in Rodrigues which is scheduled to be introduced in January?

The Prime Minister: In fact, the hon. Minister of Education has indicated and he has also indicated to me personally that he is open to all suggestions and he will take into consideration all new proposals. At the same time, we do not want to have Rodrigues left behind. We are talking of introducing kreol in Parliament. We don't want Mauritians to be able to have the introduction of kreol in Mauritius, but not in Rodrigues, if possible, and if it is not possible there are going to be new consultations. He has already issued a communiqué so that people who think we have not taken certain aspects into consideration, will be able to submit their proposals. They will look at it and the team that I have mentioned will go to Rodrigues to look into that, if by then it is not possible, it is not possible. But, perhaps for the House, I should add that when say January 2012, in fact, they do not start teaching in January 2012. They call it bridging the gap. That is an adaptation period for these young children to adapt. Teaching does not start until March 2012, but they will take all this into consideration. If that is not possible and we need to do more work, we will certainly do that.

Mr Bérenger: Can I have the date on which that last communiqué that the hon. Prime Minister has referred to was issued and if we can have a copy thereof?

The Prime Minister: Yes, you can have a copy of that. In fact, all these issues have been raised recently. Even yesterday, we discussed some issues with the hon. Minister of Education. He issued the communiqué, in fact, today, if I am not mistaken.

Mr François: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a few supplementary questions, if you would allow me. First, with regard to the PPS...

(Interruptions)

What has been said by the Prime Minister seems to be in contradiction with what is happening and what has been said by the PPS. If you will allow me just to quote one line from an interview by the PPS himself in the local newspaper.

Mr Speaker: Yes. Be short.

Mr François: It says...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let him do his work!

(Interruptions)

Mr François: *'Toutes les doleances seront canalisées vers le Premier ministre.'*

This is the first contradiction. Secondly, it says -

'Je ferai le pont entre l'Assemblée régionale et l'Assemblée nationale.'

Thirdly, it is said -

'Je souhaite aussi réhabiliter le camp de vacances de Baladirou.'

I will stop here, Mr Speaker, Sir. I would like to ask the hon. Prime Minister whether there has been any institutional amendment with regard to the functionality of the PPS towards Rodrigues? Because there is a lot of contradictions.

Mr Speaker: You are making an argument. Put the question.

The Prime Minister: In fact, he will be a link in a way when he speaks to hon. Minister Von-Mally and even to me if he wants to. But he reports to Minister Von-Mally, and obviously hon. Von-Mally will take this up with me. So, in a way, it is a link. But there has been no change in institutions, except that he will try to be, as we say in Mauritius, *sur le terrain* and bring to the attention of the hon. Minister what he thinks might not be done properly.

Mr Bhagwan: Sir, in view of all these changes which are coming and which have also occurred, can the hon. Prime Minister inform the House and our friends in Rodrigues when he is contemplating to have a next visit to Rodrigues, since his last visit dates back to 2005? I think it will be in the interest of all the people of Rodrigues to listen to the views of the hon. Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister: If I am not myself in Rodrigues, many of my Ministers go to Rodrigues and also the President. The President has just been there.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bodha: May I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether the PPS for Rodrigues has a special budget for a certain number of works to be carried out in Rodrigues, as is the case for the other PPSs in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: No, I just explained that it is different. It's not a special budget.

Mr François: My second question is with regard to the Local Government Bill. If I heard well, the hon. Prime Minister said that there has been a lot of consultations and agreement. Is the hon. Prime Minister aware that, in Rodrigues, all the major stakeholders, including political parties, the civil society, namely the Rodrigues Council of Social Services, which is an NGO, the *Front pour l'Avancement de l'Autonomie de Rodrigues*, the "*platform Sov Nou Sosyété*", which consists of various unions, and political parties like OPR and the Minority Leader himself...

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr François: ...are all against the introduction of this Local Government Bill, where Rodrigues is being included? Will the...

Mr Speaker: I will have to intervene. The Prime Minister has said that the Minister of Local Government has issued a communiqué that all references to Rodrigues in the Bill would be deleted.

(Interruptions)

Mr François: Now, I will come to the question about Creole language. The hon. Prime Minister says that there have been consultations. I made a request the other day to the hon. Minister of Education, and again...

Mr Speaker: Don't make a statement. Put your question.

Mr François: Yes. My question is whether in January, despite the communiqué being issued today in the public, the *Kreol Morisien* will be introduced in schools.

Mr Speaker: The Prime Minister has just answered that further consultations will be held and, if necessary, the implementation will be postponed. He just answered the question.

Mr Ganoo: The hon. Leader of the Opposition made reference just now to section 75 of the Constitution, which requires the concurrence of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly. But the hon. Prime Minister should know also that this specific provision makes reference also to the fact that any law purporting to alter any matter incidental to the Regional Assembly should also be voted by no less than two-thirds of the votes in this House. So, does not the hon. Prime Minister think that the Leader of the Opposition should have also been consulted before introducing this law, since Government does not command a two-thirds majority of the House?

The Prime Minister: Perhaps the hon. Member has a point.

Mr Bérenger: The Rodrigues Regional Assembly was governed by OPR, which had won elections. Then, MR took over as a result of some OPR Members changing side. Then, MR split. It is, therefore, a very confused political situation, and elections, as per law, must be held before the end of this year. Therefore, will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that no big decision should be taken between now and the elections? A new Rodrigues Regional Assembly is going to be elected and, therefore, there should be consultations on all matters with that new Rodrigues Regional Assembly after elections. Between now and elections, everything should cool down to allow as much *sérénité* as possible for the elections in Rodrigues.

The Prime Minister: I must say that consultations were held on the different subjects I have mentioned since 2010. Consultations are ongoing. It takes the time that it

takes, and now we are reaching this Local Government Bill we wanted to introduce. Since the hon. Minister for Local Government has already said that we will be bringing amendments to that, I suppose that will satisfy. As for the Creole language, everything is going to be taken into account. If it can't be done, it won't be done.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O 10(2)

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

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.

(12.08 p.m.)

The Minister of Information and Communication Technology (Mr T. Pillay Chedumbrum): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de féliciter le vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances qui nous a présenté un budget où l'audace, le bon sens et le social font la part belle. L'exploit est encore plus grand quand nous prenons en ligne de compte le contexte international relativement difficile.

La population et le monde des affaires, je suis certain, sauront profiter et tirer un maximum de bénéfices des différentes mesures qui ont été énoncées et, en même temps, ils doivent se préparer à affronter l'avenir et les défis qui nous guettent avec sérénité.

Un commentaire de nature général à ce stade serait cette attention particulière qui a été accordée à l'aspect social, tout en plaçant les citoyens au centre de tout développement qui est envisagé.

M. le président, ce budget tire sa source d'inspiration dans la philosophie de l'action gouvernementale et celle du Premier ministre en particulier, c'est-à-dire, *to put people first*. Des conditions ont été proposées dans ce budget pour que le citoyen puisse améliorer son sort, et aussi faire face aux défis économiques susceptibles d'avoir une incidence sur la qualité de sa vie.

Il m'est agréable de constater que le budget de 2012 comporte des mesures importantes pour soutenir et accélérer le développement des différents secteurs de l'économie mauricienne, et aussi bien que pour le secteur des technologies, de l'information et de la communication.

M. le président, le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances nous a gratifié au ministère de TIC cette année une augmentation substantielle à notre dotation budgétaire sortant de R 673 millions l'année dernière pour atteindre plus d'un milliard de roupies cette année, une augmentation de plus de 60%. Cette dotation importante du budget est en ligne avec ce qui a été énoncé dans le Programme Gouvernemental 2010-2015 et nous nous sommes résolument engagés à faire du secteur des TICs un pilier solide et résilient de notre économie. Pendant la période de la campagne électorale en mai 2010, on disait qu'on allait faire du secteur des TICs un pilier de notre économie. On devait pendant 2010 à 2015 travailler en ce sens.

M. le président, dans moins de quinze mois au lieu d'être le cinquième pilier de l'économie après le textile, le sucre, le tourisme et le service financier, nous sommes passés au troisième pilier de l'économie. Je dois dire que ce secteur est en pleine croissance. Actuellement on contribue à la hauteur de 6.4% au PIB et on emploie plus de quinze milles personnes avec un chiffre d'affaires de plus de trente milliards de roupies dans l'économie mauricienne. Maintenant avec cette dotation budgétaire nous avons cette ferme ambition d'être le pilier principal de notre économie. Nous sommes sûrs et certains que dans les années à venir, d'ici 2013 ou 2014, ce sera chose faite.

A Maurice, il est bon de souligner que le taux de pénétration d'Internet se situe actuellement à 29%, comparé à 4% en 2005. Ce taux fort honorable de 29% atteint par notre pays est au-dessus de la moyenne africaine. Selon les projections basées sur les actions menées jusqu'ici, nous sommes confiants qu'une projection de 60% en 2014 est probable. En appliquant la formule de la Banque Mondiale, on peut facilement prévoir une croissance du PIB que le pays pourrait enregistrer dans les prochaines années. Nous avons l'intime conviction que la contribution des TICs au PIB dans notre économie nationale, dans un avenir proche, augmentera tout comme ses effets multiplicateurs correspondant aux entreprises et la société. Au juste, nous pensons que, d'ici 2014, notre contribution au PIB doit être un *double digit figure*.

M. le président, quand on regarde le budget mention est faite que nos projections doivent être *Citizen Sentry*. Il me semble approprié d'informer la Chambre que déjà

quelques projets ont été initiés pour l'opérationnalisation de la stratégie nationale de la bande passante. Je me réfère, entre autres, à l'initiative de *Fibre To The Home* qui permettrait à chaque foyer de bénéficier d'une connectivité à l'Internet à très haut débit et à des prix abordables.

M. le président, le gouvernement a l'intention de révolutionner le TIC à Maurice. C'est ce que nous sommes en train de faire. Prochainement les travaux vont commencer et, d'ici août de l'année prochaine, ce projet de *Optic Fibre To The Home* va être complété à Maurice. Actuellement nous avons l'ADSL qui est à 256 kilobytes par seconde, MyT qui fait environ une à deux. Avec cette technologie, M. le président, on va commencer à partir de dix megabytes par seconde. C'est pour ça que l'on dit que l'autoroute de la communication passera devant votre porte à partir de l'année prochaine. Il est intéressant de souligner que grâce à cette technologie l'île Maurice sera sur le même pied d'égalité avec ce qui est normalement obtenu dans les pays développés. Même en Angleterre, M. le président, nous serons en avance sur eux parce que pour eux d'enlever les câbles cuivres cela va leur coûter une fortune et nous, à Maurice, d'ici l'année prochaine au plus tard, comme on l'a dit en août ou septembre, nous serons en mesure de couvrir toute l'île Maurice avec la fibre optique.

Afin d'assurer une connexion à haut débit dans l'île, il est impératif que la connectivité internationale doive être améliorée davantage. A cet égard et comme si bien mentionné dans le budget, un deuxième câble optique sous-marin Lion 2 sera opérationnel d'ici mi-2012. Ce développement majeur augmentera notre capacité à la bande passante à l'international, améliorera notre résilience et consolidera notre position en tant que destination de choix pour les TICs. L'île Maurice a toujours été connu comme une destination touristique. Maintenant on veut faire de l'île Maurice un *safe* ICT destination. Nous avons seulement le câble SAFE (South African Far East) et avec le câble Lion 2, nous aurons suffisamment de bande passante pour apporter encore plus de progrès dans ce secteur.

M. le président, pour s'assurer que cette vision du gouvernement pour le développement des TICs soit traduit dans la réalité, il me paraît impératif qu'un cadre

réglementaire et institutionnelle adéquate soit mis en place. Je suis ravi de constater qu'un signal fort a été donné dans le discours du budget 2012 qui préconise des amendements à l'*ICT Act* afin de rendre le secteur des télécommunications plus compétitif. Avec la législation actuelle, pour qu'on puisse avoir une baisse dans les tarifs d'internet, il faut que l'opérateur fasse une demande auprès de l'ITA. Ce n'est qu'à ce moment que l'ITA pourra considérer s'il y a lieu d'accorder une baisse des tarifs. Ce sont eux qui vont voir après que la demande soit faite par l'opérateur. C'est toujours difficile et ce n'est pas facile d'attendre, par exemple, pendant tout le long de l'année il n'y a pas eu de baisse dans les tarifs d'internet mais avec cette mesure révolutionnaire, avec la législation actuelle ce n'était pas possible, là le régulateur pourra de son propre chef - à chaque fois que le besoin se fait sentir - venir de l'avant et imposer une baisse et après qu'il ait vu la force du marché. Cette mesure audacieuse permettra au régulateur des TICs d'intervenir de son propre chef, comme je l'ai dit, afin de déterminer les structures tarifaires des services des télécommunications.

M. le président, le pays peut attendre que, d'ici la fin de l'année, avec cette mesure, nous aurons une baisse conséquente sur les tarifs d'internet.

(Interruptions)

Un peu de patience ! Le temps est un grand maître, il règle bien des choses, je peux vous le dire.

Mr Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum: M. le président, c'est un fait que les services publics peuvent être considérablement améliorés pour l'utilisation des TICs et à tendance générale et que les services en ligne sont de plus en plus populaires parmi les citoyens.

On a fait mention des *SMS* et il est important de faire remarquer que déjà on est en train d'offrir des services *Citizen Sentry*. Par exemple, autrefois, pour que quelqu'un puisse avoir son rendez-vous pour la vérification de sa voiture auprès de la NTA, il faut qu'il téléphone pour avoir un rendez-vous. Maintenant ce n'est plus nécessaire de le

faire ; il suffit d'envoyer un SMS en mentionnant NTA espace le code, et au bout de quelques secondes, vous aurez la date du rendez-vous. Si cette date ne vous plaît pas, ou si vous êtes pris, vous pouvez suggérer votre date et toujours en quelques secondes vous aurez la date du rendez-vous ; c'est un service 24/7.

C'est la même chose pour le ministère de l'éducation. Si un étudiant veut savoir quelles sont les bourses qui sont disponibles, il peut toujours le faire en envoyant un SMS au ministère de l'éducation ; il saura quelles sont les bourses qui sont disponibles et il peut l'avoir immédiatement. Ce service s'applique aussi pour le *Local Government*. Si quelqu'un veut savoir quels sont les *jobs available* au *District Council* comme à la municipalité, il fait la même chose ; il peut savoir quelles sont les postes disponibles. S'il veut savoir seulement pour une région, là aussi il met la région. Par exemple, Port Louis, il l'aura pour cette région. C'est pour vous dire qu'on travaille dans ce sens et à la *Mauritius Revenue Authority* pour le dépôt électronique des déclarations de revenus cela a été fait et vous avez pu voir avec quelle facilité la MRA a pu faire son travail. Mon ministère travaille actuellement pour déployer un plus grand nombre de service en ligne adaptée aux besoins immédiats de la population. De toutes les façons, le budget nous donne les marges de manœuvre, la possibilité pour le faire. D'ailleurs, il y a beaucoup de services qu'on a mentionnés.

Les dotations budgétaires pour l'informatisation des différents secteurs des services publics est une indication claire de l'engagement du gouvernement à exploiter à fond l'outil informatique afin d'offrir un service de qualité et personnalisé à la population. Là, il est important de faire remarquer qu'au début de l'année on a eu un *award*, le *TIGA Award* que les Nations Unies nous ont accordé pour les services, parce que nous avons pu exploiter à fond l'outil informatique pour offrir un service de qualité et personnalisé à la population.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a clear indication of Government commitment to work in that direction is the provision that has been made in the 2012 Budget for some major e-Government projects such as e-Health, e-Judiciary, e-Parliament, e-Procurement, e-Payment, e-Education, revamping of the Government Portal, development of SMS-based

services and sky.gov.net for improved connectivity among ministries and departments. These projects, Mr Speaker, Sir, aim primarily at creating a facilitation platform for the citizen to interact more easily through electronic means with the different Government service providers with the major advantage that service can be accessed round the clock.

For record, I would wish to point out that under this year's budget, an important level of funding has been appropriated by the revamping of the Data Centre of Government, that is, the Government Online Centre. This, in turn, will lead to the overhauling of the existing Government Portal and I will ensure that the new portal will be an interactive e-Citizen focus portal with a more secure and resilient network. This is in line with the Citizen Sentry focus of the 2012 Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget provides for the implementation of the Mauritius National Identity Card (MNIC) project. As a matter of fact, this project aims at replacing the existing laminated ID card with a highly secure identity document based on the smart card technology. The new ID card, besides being a secure identity document, will open up progressively opportunities for the citizens and the business community to interact with the Government electronically in a secured manner.

Mr Speaker, Sir, from all quarters, it is recognised that ICT does improve the quality in which business is conducted. However, for the sake of securing electronic transactions, appropriate safeguards must be inbuilt in the system. My Ministry is, for that matter, implementing a well-designed IT security strategy as advocated in the NICTSP for the years 2011-2014.

My Ministry will, with provisions made in the 2012 Budget, be accelerating the implementation of information security management systems at several Government sites. As part of the overall implementation process, public officers are being sensitised on information security threats and measures, while technical guidelines are being issued to relevant IT staffs to protect the Government networks and systems. This is important to protect the integrity of the conduct of official business through ICT.

M. le président, le TIC est un secteur qui nous ouvre des opportunités réelles en terme de création d'emploi. De ce fait, il est crucial à ce que les conditions nécessaires

soient mises en place pour non seulement pallier au manque des compétences mais pour attirer davantage des jeunes vers ce secteur prometteur.

Il m'est agréable d'informer la Chambre que déjà toute une panoplie de mesures est appliquée et des actions sont menées pour doter le secteur des compétences requises. Mon ministère procède actuellement sur la base d'un modèle impliquant le secteur public aussi bien que le secteur privé, à la mise sur pied d'une académie spécifiquement destinée à la formation des ressources humaines de telle manière à ce qu'elles répondent aux besoins du secteur de TIC.

M. le président, je voudrais souligner, à ce stade, que cette Académie ne serait pas qu'un simple centre de formation. Au fait, les cours de formation qui seront dispensés répondront directement aux besoins de l'industrie et surtout dans le temps voulu. *It will be industry-driven*, pareil comme l'école hôtelière ; c'est calquer à la manière de l'école hôtelière où si on a besoin 'X' nombre de travailleurs dans ce secteur, ils font une demande auprès de l'ICT Académie, on donne la formation voulue et à ce moment ces gens peuvent continuer à faire leurs cours.

Des démarches sont présentement entreprises, ou ont déjà été conclues auprès des organisations de renom telles que HP, Microsoft et Infosys afin que les diplômes délivrés soient reconnus par l'ensemble de la communauté internationale. On a fait une demande d'accréditation auprès de l'ITU *Council* et je peux vous dire que d'ici peu, cet ICT Académie sera le centre d'excellence pour la région d'Afrique et nous attendons ces résultats dans les jours qui viennent et ils vont nous informer éventuellement. Ceci aurait pour effet de donner un rayonnement à la formation, suivi par des candidats et favoriserait leurs chances de trouver un emploi taillé d'après leurs profils.

C'est un honneur pour moi, M. le président, d'informer la Chambre que mon ministère, à travers le *National Computer Board*, en ligne avec les provisions du budget a mis en place différents projets qui permettent la création et le partage d'informations et de connaissances pour le développement communautaire.

Comme vous le savez, dans les écoles primaires nous avons l'internet gratuit, dans les collèges et dans les universités c'est la même chose. Maintenant on vient avec un projet *Citizen Sentry* où il y aura 190 '*Computer Clubs*' à travers le pays, où les personnes âgées qui n'ont pas un *PC* peuvent aller au centre communautaire où ils

peuvent avoir l'internet gratuit. Déjà on l'a fait avec le projet PIAP. Dans tous les bureaux de postes vous avez l'internet. En ce moment-ci, on vient de lancer des appels d'offre pour le projet 'WiFi' et d'ici décembre de cette année une partie de l'île – c'est un projet pilote – une partie de l'île sera déjà couverte avec le 'WiFi Mauritius'.

Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam a fait de l'éducation un droit de tous les citoyens et maintenant c'est au tour de notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, de faire de l'internet un droit de tous les citoyens. D'ailleurs, on avait dit qu'on veut faire *internet become a basic citizen's right*.

M. le président, afin de promouvoir et encourager la culture informatique à travers le pays, depuis mai 2011, un 3^{ème} *Cyber Caravan* est opérationnel et propose des formations dans toutes les régions à travers l'île indépendamment de l'âge, l'éducation de base ou de la profession. A ce jour, quelques 100,000 citoyens ont bénéficié de cette facilité.

Grâce au projet '*Universal ICT Education Programme*' du Premier Ministre, plus de 130,000 de nos concitoyens ont reçu une formation de base sur le TIC à travers les cours 'IC3' qui est internationalement reconnu.

Malgré tous nos efforts, M. le président, nous ne serons pas en mesure de faire de ce secteur un pilier phare de notre économie si nous n'améliorons pas notre visibilité sur le paysage international. *We have to get that international recognition*. M. le président, comme préconisé dans le discours du budget 2012, mon ministère travaillera en étroite collaboration avec la BOI et *Enterprise Mauritius* pour développer des stratégies de promotion et de *marketing* en conséquence.

Nous devrions nous concentrer à se positionner dans des niches à forte valeur ajoutée où notre pays a un avantage compétitif par rapport à d'autres pays concurrents.

Permettez-moi de citer deux de ces axes de développement : premièrement, la promotion de notre pays comme un *Disaster Recovery Centre* en s'appuyant, entre autres, sur notre avantage géographique, notre très bonne connectivité à l'internationale et une main-d'œuvre compétitive et compétente. Et d'ici décembre de cette année-ci, il y aura l'inauguration d'un de ces *Disaster Recovery Centres* à Maurice.

Le deuxième segment dont nous nous pencherons est d'attirer les investisseurs et des entreprises de renom internationales en matière de TIC-BPO pour les marchés traditionnels aussi bien qu'émergents.

M. le président, dans cet élan d'attirer les investissements directs étrangers, mon ministère, en collaboration avec les acteurs du secteur des TICs, a organisé l'*International ICT-BPO Conference* afin de promouvoir notre pays comme une destination d'externalisation par excellence. On a eu le privilège de recevoir le Premier ministre pour le lancement officiel de la conférence et pour la première fois, nous avons pu rassembler sous une seule plateforme trois entreprises consultantes de renommée internationale : Gartner, AT Kearney et le *World Economic Forum*. Cela a permis à l'île Maurice d'être sélectionnée pour figurer, pour la première fois, comme un *case study* dans la prochaine publication du *World Economic Forum*. Ceci ne peut que renforcer l'image et la crédibilité de notre secteur des TICs au niveau international. Une autre retombée de cette conférence est que les Nations Unies pour la région d'Afrique a adopté ce forum et, chaque année, ils vont organiser cette conférence à Maurice pour la région d'Afrique.

M. le président, pour pouvoir positionner notre île comme une destination concurrentielle pour le TIC et, comme annoncé par mon collègue, le ministre des finances, le prix de la bande passante reste un facteur déterminant. Depuis 2005, quand le gouvernement, dirigé par notre Premier ministre actuel, est venu au pouvoir, les prix des services de télécommunication à Maurice ont été révisés à la baisse régulièrement. Le prix de la bande passante internationale est descendu de 68% entre décembre 2005 et janvier 2011, et je suis confiant qu'avec les mesures annoncées dans ce budget, nous prévoyons d'autres réductions.

Ce budget nous permet de renforcer certaines des mesures que nous avons déjà prises et qui viendront davantage stimuler la concurrence dans le domaine de TIC.

En octobre de l'année dernière, le gouvernement avait promulgué la politique dite '*Open Access*' sur le fibre optique sous-marin. Ceci a permis aux opérateurs qui ne sont pas membres du consortium SAFE d'obtenir l'accès à la capacité de bande passante sur le SAFE et à concurrencer la *Mauritius Telecom* sur le marché au détail. Actuellement, nous n'avons que le câble *SAFE (South African Far East)*. Avec ce *open access policy*, il y a

l'opérateur Emtel qui a pu acheter le *IRU, Indefeasible Rights of Use de Mauritius Telecom* et a pu offrir des services de télécommunication aux entreprises à des prix allant jusqu'à 44% moins chers. Nous prenons dans ce budget d'autres mesures pour approfondir le principe d'*Open Access* en ouvrant l'accès aux stations dites "*Landing Station*" pour les opérateurs qui détiennent une licence ILD. Il est aussi bon de souligner qu'avec les amendements apportés à l'*ICT Act* dans ce budget, l'ICTA aura dorénavant le pouvoir de déterminer les modalités et les conditions de l'accès sous un modèle d'offre d'interconnexion de référence.

M. le président, une des mesures clés annoncée dans le discours du budget est l'engagement pour la mise en œuvre d'un projet qui vise à connecter l'île Rodrigues par un câble sous-marin à fibre optique pour augmenter d'une manière substantielle la bande passante. Ce développement entrainerait dans son sillage un changement important en terme d'une amélioration conséquente dans le monde des affaires à Rodrigues aussi bien que dans la possibilité d'épanouissement de tous les citoyens de Rodrigues. Rodrigues est partie intégrante de l'île Maurice et si on veut faire de l'internet un droit de tous les citoyens à Maurice, cela doit s'appliquer à Rodrigues et, avec cette mesure, nous sommes sûrs et certains que nos amis Rodriguais vont bénéficier pleinement de cela.

Nul doute que c'est un projet d'envergure qui nécessite un investissement colossal. Il est donc une initiative fort louable car le gouvernement s'est engagé à trouver les fonds nécessaires pour la réalisation de ce projet. Sans cette initiative, ce projet resterait à l'état de projet et le développement en tant que tel ne se fera jamais et ceci serait au détriment de toute la population Rodriguaise. Le plus tôt possible, la machinerie sera mise en marche pour faire avancer cette proposition de projet.

M. le président, en ce qui concerne la taxe imposée sur les SMS, ce n'est pas un secret que chaque gouvernement se trouve confronté à faire des choix pour rapporter des revenus à la caisse de l'Etat afin qu'on puisse mieux financer et emmener à terme les différents projets sociaux.

A titre d'exemple, on connaît très bien ce qui se passe actuellement en Europe et, surtout en France, où des mesures drastiques ont été préconisées. L'observatoire d'Italie, dans son édition en ligne d'hier mentionnait, je cite -

« *Les membres de l'Union Européenne se serrent la ceinture: Les pays européens sont rentrés dans une période de rigueur budgétaire. Baisse des dépenses, hausse des impôts, les gouvernements imposent de lourds sacrifices aux contribuables* »

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum : M. le président, la taxe sur les SMS n'est rien de comparable par rapport aux mesures rigides qui sont prises dans les pays développés. Même avec cette mesure, le prix d'un SMS à Maurice reste toujours en dessous de ce qui est pratiqué dans des pays tels que le Finlande, qui est reconnu comme le premier pays qui a fait de l'accès à l'internet un droit fondamental des citoyens, ou encore ce qui est pratiqué en Corée du Sud qui est le pays le mieux connecté en *broadband*. Ce tarif est le tarif le plus bas au monde.

Par cette mesure, on constate que, par rapport au nombre des SMS échangés (1.3 milliards par an), ce gouvernement n'est pas en train d'appauvrir la population, comme c'était le cas entre 2000 et 2005 où le gouvernement d'alors avait choisi d'augmenter la TVA à trois reprises.

M. le président, mardi dernier, j'ai été surpris d'entendre le *Leader* de l'Opposition qualifier la taxe sur les SMS comme une taxe contre les jeunes. Je ne peux qu'être révolté par cette désinvolture et l'hypocrisie du *Leader* de l'Opposition.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order ! The hon. Minister should withdraw the word '*hypocrisie*'.

(Interruptions)

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum : I withdraw the word, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Il a oublié qu'à l'époque ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum : ... il était ministre des finances, en deux occasions ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr Pillay Chedumbrum : ... il avait augmenté et taxé impitoyablement les plus démunis en augmentant la TVA de 5% à 15%. M. le président, cette augmentation de la TVA a fait beaucoup souffrir les jeunes plus que n'importe quelle mesure jamais prise.

M. le président, pour conclure, je voudrais de nouveau féliciter vivement le vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances pour avoir présenté un budget qui, non seulement, répond aux attentes de nos différents secteurs économiques mais qui accorde une attention toute particulière à la dimension sociale de notre développement économique. Il convient de faire ressortir que ce n'est pas du tout une tâche facile.

L'exploit est encore plus remarquable quand on réalise que les mesures budgétaires ont été taillées d'une telle manière à ce que l'économie nationale soit mise, autant que possible, à l'abri des conséquences dévastatrices de la crise financière mondiale qui s'annonce.

Je suis très confiant, M. le président, que le Budget 2012 entrainera dans sa foulée une bonne croissance économique pour le pays malgré la conjoncture internationale difficile. Toutes les couches de notre société y trouveront leur part, surtout celles qui sont économiquement vulnérables.

Toute personne de bonne foi va reconnaître que ce Budget en est un qui focalise sur l'aspect social du développement de notre pays. C'est tellement évident que même un oiseau de mauvais augure penserait à deux fois avant de s'aventurer dans la médisance.

M. le président, je vous remercie.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Dr. S. Boolell, would you like to start now or after lunch?

(Interruptions)

Dr. S. Boolell: I would be much grateful if I could start after lunch. It would be one straight flow.

Mr Speaker: So, we suspend and we will resume at 2.15 p.m. and not 2.30 p.m.

At 12.41 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.16 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Dr. S. Boolell (Second Member for Curepipe & Midlands): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, during the whole of the speech made by the Minister of Finance, there was a sentence that kept coming back to me: ‘the beginning of the end’. It was quite ominous that what he was saying sounded the beginning of the end for the Welfare State and it was the first dent in our Welfare State Health Service. There is one sentence which is actually used in that Budget where it is well spelt out: “Health is Wealth”. The person who wrote that sentence is no doubt an intelligent man. Because whose health are we talking about and whose wealth are we talking about? When we start getting in the reports and reactions to the Budget, the first positive reaction from the Budget came from the pontiffs of the private sector, a major breakthrough in the insurance system by taking contributions towards a private health insurance. It always starts this way, kind of a voluntary contribution, then it becomes not so voluntary, then it becomes almost compulsory and, at the end of the day, if you do not have an insurance, it is peer group pressure because your neighbours have contributed for the National Savings Fund, you feel that you have to contribute. I would really love to know which are the insurance companies which stand to gain. Which of the insurers which have close links with clinics? You are...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, address the Chair! I do not want any Member to interrupt, please!

Dr. S. Boolell: Maybe, an insurance will have to come out for opticians as well. Then, maybe we will have better glasses to look through!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Do not interrupt, please!

Dr. S. Boolell: The bell tolls for this Welfare State, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It seems that despite all the travels of people who have dealt with this Budget, people who have travelled to the United States, they have not realised the constraints of the insurance

system and healthcare in the United States. President Obama and, before him, Mrs Clinton, when she was the wife of Mr Bill Clinton, they all broke their necks trying to sort out a perfect kind of insurance system that would enable Americans to be entitled to health care. In some cases, one might consider it unconstitutional; do we not have the right not to have health care? The way things are going on, we might feel that we might have to rely on the Almighty only and not go through insurance and not go through healthcare.

The next words which keep coming up in this Budget are 'medical hub'. I was quite confused about the meaning of the word 'hub' and I think that I had to go to the dictionary and find out that 'hub' actually means the centre around which the wheel rolls. Now we are having this medical hub, which is going to be the responsibility of the Board of Investment which has been given the responsibility of promoting the medical hub, at the same time as not telling us exactly how it is going to go about it. We need, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, an urgent blueprint. In the words of the Budget, the word "SMART" is being used, Specific Monitorable Actionable Relevant Time-bound.

We do need for the medical hub an appropriate legal institutional framework. We do not wish people to turn up in Mauritius, start working as doctors, functioning as doctors and leaving a lot of damage behind and we do not know who to sue afterwards. But, with the medical hub, the dangers of medical negligence, and those who commit the negligence is quite real. If you do not have that kind of framework, the medical hub will know the same fate, maybe as Jin Fei or the Land Based Oceanic Industry.

Again, when we look at the Budget, we find the words "Medical Tourism". There is a paradox in this country that, while we are promoting medical tourism, people have to come over here to have their haemorrhoids operated upon and at the same time we are trying to increase the sum of money towards sending patients who are inoperable in Mauritius. We are going to be one medical hub, with a form of medical tourism, promoting the exports of our inoperable patients. Here, I would like to ask the hon. Minister Finance to be a bit generous. I am grateful to the hon. Prime Minister and to the hon. Minister of Finance to have agreed to increase the sum from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000, but this applies to households which earn less than Rs50,000. I would like

the hon. Minister of Finance to think also of other households; those who earn more than Rs50,000 because when we must deal with the calamity of falling sick, with a disease inoperable in Mauritius, we never know. Now, I am dealing with a case which is costing us more than Rs1 m., around Rs1.2 m. in India. The Rs500,000 will not go a long way because this child will have to stay in India for six months. So, I will ask the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, to try to be generous, and at least maintain a sum for those households above Rs50,000. Maybe one blanket sum of Rs200,000 for those above Rs50,000.

I am, maybe, naïve in thinking that, just like the wine & cigarette prices went up straightaway, this sum can be made available straightaway to patients inoperable in Mauritius. I do believe that this sum will be available as from January, because people who are sick right now and who need the sum should be waiting until January, because this is the only way they can get Rs300,000 more. I would be most grateful, if, maybe, Government, in trying to appear to be a caring Government, gives a kind of amnesty for the whole year and whoever has gone overseas for this year, be entitled to the sum of Rs500,000.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue!

Dr. S. Boolell: Also, at the same time we need to have a service to backup this sum of Rs500,000. It is within my knowledge that recently somebody had to be transferred to Reunion Island urgently, and was unable to get a passport. I think the hon. Deputy Prime Minister intervened personally at that time, to ensure that this person obtained a passport, to enable him to go overseas. The Ministry of Health should be able to provide this one-stop service because if you fall ill during the weekend, when the Police cannot give you a passport, nobody is there to give you a passport! You die in your own bed, not even in the hospital!

Looking at the Budget, I am trying to restrict myself to the health sector. I turn to the item of the Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts and Alcoholics. The sum of Rs51 m. is being allocated for the Rehabilitation of Drug Addicts and Alcoholics and at the end of the day, we have to ask ourselves, who gets the cash? You have the NATReSA, which is

totally understaffed, a lack of officers all over the place. The hon. Minister responsible for the NATReSA, I am sure, stands flooded with a lot of requests for its staffing.

We also have the National Empowerment Foundation, which I think will be entrusted with building houses for those drug addicts, who want to be rehabilitated. But, we do not even have a National Drug Policy. The National Drug Policy has been found wanting for years. Hepatitis C, if one were to believe in what was in the press yesterday is rising to about 64% in all intravenous drug addicts.

The rise in wine prices, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, will not deter anybody from consuming, especially with the New Year around the corner. If one wanted to conduct the proper advocacy for a reduction in wine consumption, maybe one dry day per month, would be more appropriate in getting the message across rather than raising the prices.

We do have 4,375 persons on Methadone therapy and 6,000 persons on needle exchange. It is not surprising that the *dépistage* at the Prison of Beau Bassin is not done routinely; it is done under false pretences, under the pretence of a check up. No chest X-ray is conducted on anybody who gets interned in Beau Bassin Prison. This is why recently in the outburst of tuberculosis everybody was caught. There was an outbreak of tuberculosis in Beau Bassin Prison and in Richelieu. They has been no conclusion as yet. It is my belief, and I am willing to lay my experience as a pathologist on the line, that the animals were actually infected by the inmates at the level of *traite des vaches*, etc. because these cows which went to Richelieu, came with a good health; with a clean bill of health from Palma.

Nobody is actually concerned. Tuberculosis does not seem to be a priority right now. We are talking about a Medical Tourism Hub. We are going to promote Mauritius as a safe destination. There is not only that. Linked to it, we have food safety, and almost, every week, salmonella infection in some schools or other. We are trying to say that the *marchands ambulants* outside the school who are bringing the infected foods. The ice chain is not respected. Two days ago, we got case of gastroenteritis death in 2011 in a hospital. Totally *inacceptable!* You have the pest infestation, the Leptospirosis with the rats. The rats in Mauritius would be qualified for the Guinness Book of record in size. We have no policy for a rotavirus immunisation programme because many of the

admissions to hospital with diarrhoea, fever and vomiting are due to rotavirus, but there is no immunisation policy. And, yet we are going to go for Medical Tourism and we are going to bring everybody to have their teeth done, hair grafted, their bottoms lifted and not to go for any other parts of the anatomy.

We talked about medical care. It is a major breakthrough in the Budget. We are going to recruit 300 nurses, maybe that figure is almost equivalent to those who have retired over the past two years or who have gone to Saudi Arabia or to the UK to work. We have an excess of doctors. China, Ukraine, Belle Rive and Réduit, they are all producing doctors. We don't have to create a Medical Hub for doctors because we have an excess in the production of doctors. You only have to look at the publicity in the press, to find out the prices, the one stop-shop of becoming a specialist in China; we are flooded with doctors. Yet, there is a solution. The solution is: doctors have to wait for about 18 months before getting the chance of doing their internship and being allowed to function. Many families have invested in their children to become professionals and they are waiting at home. This is not the people's Budget. There is nothing mentioned about what you are going to do and it would be easy for our ambassadors - and we will have two more - who will be roaming in Africa, to go and find some form of placement for these doctors in Africa, the SADC countries where they lack doctors. We have to export because we have no choice. There is a spirit of economic diplomacy which has often been used in this world and why not put this economic diplomacy to task.

When we talk about the non-communicable diseases, these are now relying on CSR Funds, under item 4 of the new guidelines. VAT is being removed on smoker's gum, as if, chewing that gum will prevent you from smoking. I beg to differ. I would rather like VAT to be removed on all anti-diabetic products, like artificially sweetened products and common diabetic supplements. We have to look at the common diseases; the common diseases of the people, what the poor man suffers from, and his bill at the pharmacy. I find nothing being mentioned on the prices of pharmaceutical products, which are as expensive as before. It is not the pharmacy which is responsible. The prices are there, the imports are there, and there is absolutely no reduction. And what about quality control, the poor man's medication? Do we have any sampling? We keep hearing about the third world being flooded with substandard products. Nothing is being done.

So, anybody might import almost anything and sell, and we have a public always ready to buy.

I get to the major disease of it all, cancer. Recently, there was a major cancer symposium in Mauritius. The treatment of cancer, as you know, is centralised at Victoria Hospital. An upgrading of the premises of cancer means getting a coat of paint on the wall, cleaning the premises of the hospital, making sure that the guests do not take photographs of what seems to be a fairly disastrous unit, a fairly depressing unit. Even the curtains are depressing, and when you look at cancer, there are 1,500 new cases per year with 1,000 deaths. These are the figures given to me by 'Link to Life', not by the Statistics Bureau. We need to have a decentralisation of cancer services. If you look at *le chemin de croix d'un malade de cancer*, when he arrives at the hospital in the morning and is sent to the lab to have his blood tested, where he will wait two hours before getting the results and then come back to that unit, then you feel that you are being really discriminated against. When you look at patients with cancer who are mobile, who are transferred from the cancer ward for sleeping purposes in other wards, then you start getting worried about what form of treatment. I am not even talking about Rodrigues, about the quality of care we are giving to Rodrigues. If the MPs from Rodrigues complain about the quality of the medical service in Rodrigues, we would not be able to blame them. For a population of 1.2 million, we have only about nine mammography apparatuses and, for the other apparatuses in the service we have one of the highest rates of breakdown in the service. You are all MPs, you all have mandates, and you all have people whom you send to hospital, people who come to you. And to supplement the action of the service, Rs21 m. have been paid to one private clinic over three years, because the X-ray machine keeps breaking down. I think those who are in charge of the maintenance are not even fit to repair a simple camera, let alone the X-ray machine.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden, I don't see you, but I hear you! Just tone down, please.

(Interruptions)

I am not telling that you are interrupting the hon. Member, but I am hearing your voice. Just tone down, please.

Dr. S. Boolell: At the end of the day, when you are trying to improve the service, there is a Medical Council which acts to the best of its ability and tries to maintain some form of cohesion in the profession. It is not exactly the best Council that one might have, but this time there is something which has been announced in the Budget, namely –

“The Medical Council Act will be reviewed to facilitate registration of doctors by the Council, to promote the sharing of their experience in the field of high-tech medicine.”

It is as if we did not produce enough doctors of our own. More doctors will be coming in, who are probably not eligible for registration, and now the Medical Council Act will have to be modified to allow them in. I fail to understand why, in the Budget, it has to be mentioned that it is going to be modified.

How can I not talk about this Budget not being a caring budget? At the same time that we are seen wanting for money, but from the National Resilience Fund Rs500 m. have been earmarked for three organisations to go and promote the interest of Mauritius outside, that is, the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority, Enterprise Mauritius and the new power behind the throne, the Board of Investment, in addition to Rs390 m. already being given as a current grant to the Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority. There is a word which has been used in this Budget; maybe it is a mistake. It is written that this government never shrinks behind helping. This government actually does not shrink; it swells. And we, on this side of the House, will not shirk from our responsibility of - because the word was shirk actually - of pointing out the shortcomings in this Budget.

Especially as far as the Medical Council is concerned, if somebody wants to come and share his technology in government to government exchanges, there is never any problem. Finally, who are those that we are going to bring in? We are going to end up having five types of medicine in this country: the poor man’s medicine at the hospital; the insurance paying Mauritian at the clinic; the rich cowboy who walks in at the airport to have his face lifted; the hair transplant surgery guy and, maybe, a fifth one, the local

having cosmetic surgery. In terms of cosmetic surgery, there was quite a lovely publicity which appeared in the press yesterday. I take the liberty of reading -

« *Nous avons besoin de VOUS!*

Nous recherchons des volontaires ayant les critères suivants :

1. ACNE

- *Boutons/Acné au visage*
- *Taches pigmentaires*
- *Hommes ou femmes*

Agés de 18 à 40 ans »

And then, the colour bar discrimination comes in.

« *2. Dos Clair*

- *Hommes et femmes*
- *Agés de 18 à 40 ans*
- *Ayant le teint clair au niveau du dos. »*

I don't think many MPs will qualify under this condition. But, anyway, if you want to take a break!

“*Durée: 7 semaines*”

Hon. Ms Anquetil seems to be smiling. Maybe, just...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Have you finished hon. Dr. S. Boolell?

Dr. S. Boolell: No. I am waiting for somebody to think about his *teint clair* before I proceed any further.

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair, please!

Dr. S. Boolell: What has the Budget contributed to our dental services? There is almost nothing. The schools' dental service is lacking staff, because you ought actually to start with the schools and aim for saving the teeth of school children!

(Interruptions)

Thank you! I believe your Ministry is doing well; there is an improvement. The hon. Minister reassures that there is an improvement, but we have become a country of extractions. We extract teeth in this country; we promote prostheses and dentures. But, maybe, only when you are actually ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! No cross-talking!

Dr. S. Boolell: There is enough controversy around the dental schools. I always said to someone: when you have a dental school called MORAS, you need one which is called '*Mo plomber*'!

(Interruptions)

And then, we get to these units that we have heard of *ad nauseam*, Institute for Women and Children and in the Budget, we see that further studies are still to be conducted. I fail to understand what further studies. We need land, a house, we need a doctor inside. The Deputy Prime Minister is a paediatrician of long-standing and he has practised most of his life as a senior paediatrician in a small surgery. That's enough! An institute for Children, that's not too much and also, we hear nothing about geriatric medicine. Since the MedPoint affair, we could have actually - until waiting for the MedPoint affair to resolve - open two wards in every single hospital. We neglect the elderly because the elderly, maybe, represent only 10% of votes. If they represented more then maybe, we would have taken care of them better. If we look at this House, including myself, maybe we have quite a collection of geriatric individuals. So, we have to take care of ourselves.

(Interruptions)

Again, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I come to the bit I like: cosmetic surgery. What is cosmetic surgery? Teeth realignment, body servicing, body work, hair transplant? I hope we do not promote liposuction which has become a dangerous exercise, when people are dying over here from liposuction surgery. Go to Mauritius, be liposucked,

change your wife and bring back a new one! This should be the type of advertisement one could actually have...

(Interruptions)

We can change the husband, also.

I will be failing towards my previous profession in the world of death without talking about law and order. Mauritius is going to become the one country which is going to rely on closed-circuit television to be able to solve the crime problem. Closed-circuit television helps you towards petty larceny; if somebody breaks into your car, maybe, the camera will get it on. But, we have a major problem at society level because almost every week it's somebody killing somebody from within the family surrounding - father, husband, wife, in-laws, neighbours, and friends. It has become almost un *fait divers*. *Personne ne se soucie plus des mœurs de Maurice*. Nobody cares. Maybe, at the level of MPs all we care is that there is a funeral that we have to go to and be seen, present our sympathies, and get some votes and come back. But, nobody cares about the breakdown of law and order, and we are not surprised when legal aid is being increased for lawyers to get money and not victims? I am sorry for all the lawyers present but lawyers will get more money out of legal aid than victims. There is no Criminal Compensation Act which should have been introduced for the victims.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. S. Boolell: You have to go for the victims. If some form of compensation could be drawn from the capacity of an inmate who serves at Beau Bassin Prison to pay for the victim's upkeep it should be done. That came to my mind because recently, in the Supreme Court somebody accused of rape, volunteered to the judge, to take over the safekeeping of the victim for the next few years if he would not be able to get a wife of his own, he was going to keep the victim with him and take care of her. What do we do for victims? There is a victim support organisation, but no government support. Is there anything in this Budget which will save a victim and help the victim to be rehabilitated?

But, as far as the accused are concerned, they will have legal aid. It's a paradox, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

We are talking again about medical tourism, tourism *tout court* and we cannot but help thinking about the crime in Legends, the crimes against tourists. How do we proceed? Are we promoting some form of real justice to compensate victims, some form of real justice to clean up society? Do we expect the Police to react? There is going to be 800 policemen recruited in this Budget. I always take out the figure 300 because it makes up for the 300 who have retired. 500 policemen - they will mostly disappear in some form of obscure units and you will be back where you started - walking down the road with no policeman to be seen around on the beat. The only time you see policemen is when you have VIPs present. All the policemen in the district are out taking care of the cars and trying to guide you in and saluting everybody right, left and centre. This is the best time to break into somebody's house and steal, when you have a VIP function down the road. You are sure nobody will attend to you.

Yesterday, I think, on BBC there has been a programme on child begging as a major issue in London. But, if we look at Mauritius in the problems of child abuse, there is nothing in the Budget to actually deal with the problem of child mendicity, child prostitution, child labour and child abuse. Child labour - you have to go to almost any market; children who should be out in school are there. Nothing is done, no action is being taken! Then, you have the famous group of the street children - if you are going down near the State Bank, they will stop your car, knock on the car and ask you for money. Street children! What are we doing as a caring society, as a caring Budget? All we can do so far for these children - if they are fair of skin or black of skin - send them as volunteers for cosmetic surgery! Do you think we will be able to send them to Summer School? Don't you think the time has come for these Budgets to consider giving a meal or a glass of milk or something to all kids who go to school in this country because the kids then, will come to school if only for the meal. They will not have to wait for the Summer School to get a hot meal three times a week.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is a poorly motivated Police Force. This is the bit nobody is looking at: no promotions, exams being held and the results - apply, apply, and

no reply, like they say. I suggest that maybe the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate should take over the exams in the Police Force. No results! Do you expect Mr Policeman down the road, with the frustration of such a career, not having had a promotion, to go and risk his life for you, especially? No!

Before concluding, I would like just to invite you to just take a look at one sample of a Constituency and see whether this Budget is going to change the destiny of the Members of that Constituency. I am talking about going into Curepipe, passing by the SBM Park and straightaway finding the derelict forum, the abandoned MBC, the stadium where football is never played and then, you go straight into the town where you find a market which is remarkable by the size of its rats, its dirt and its lack of toilets. If you go further around, you have twelve inner cities and most the Constituencies of the MPs have the inner cities where we hope that the Rs200 per unit will be enough for the syndic. I do not think it will be enough but, at least, it's a good gesture. We, in our programme at the time of elections, mentioned it, but nobody cares. But who decided and how it has been decided, does not matter provided it has been decided to set up a syndic. This is one Constituency, a *Ville Lumière* and I look at all the other constituencies, be it rural, be it urban, especially Rodrigues where the lack of facilities is impressive, where the Rodriguan's way to health is getting a ticket out to the airport for seats in the airplane, with seats being removed to accommodate stretchers, and out to Mauritius. I am grateful to Government for having decided to provide some form of accommodation for those who accompany these patients from Rodrigues. This was not the case in the past; they came, left their relatives at the Nehru Hospital and they left at about 11 p.m. or midnight by taking a taxi to the tune of Rs500 or Rs600 and ending up with a Rodriguan relative somewhere.

But, having said all this, I have to end. My thirty five minutes are up. I consider this Budget to be a cosmetic Budget, quite cosmetic. Cosmetic meaning, justice is always depicted like a woman with the eyes blindfolded.

(Interruptions)

I don't deal with *confetti*, maybe you do; I do not.

But, in this case, if I take the liberty of considering this Budget as a woman; it is a woman who has had cosmetic surgery. The eyelashes are false.

(Interruptions)

A man! You want it unisex, all right, a man. If I can get some form of consensus on a unisex individual who has had cosmetic surgery, who is looking good, good eyelashes, no flab around the waist, no protruding bottom, the right teeth, slim fit, having had cosmetic surgery, looking so lovely that this individual goes out to Africa and comes out first in every competition like my friend, hon. Issack said yesterday. It is an illusion. Hon. Issack did not realise that coming out first with a cosmetic product, is an illusion. This is this illusion with which the private sector has fallen in love and saying that this is a breakthrough Budget for the world of insurance because at the end of the day, money cannot be created. It can only be transferred and this Budget will ensure that it gets transferred from the poor men to the rich men.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(2.51 p.m.)

Ms K. R. Deerpalsing (Third Member for Belle Rose & Quatre Bornes): M. le président, je voudrai d'abord commencer par féliciter mon collègue et mon colistier, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval pour ce budget et aussi féliciter le Premier ministre pour garder la voie qu'on avait tracé depuis 2005 quand on avait dit « Une Ile Maurice Pour Tous », l'égalité des chances étant un des piliers de cette vision.

Ce budget est un budget d'égalité des chances, M. le président, pour toutes ces femmes - *my colleague there has a problem with women*. Pour toutes ces femmes...

(Interruptions)

No, your examples are always about cosmetic surgery. Anyway, I'll pass.

C'est un budget d'égalité des chances pour toutes ces femmes qui auront l'occasion d'avoir, autour de leur lieu de travail, des crèches pour que leurs enfants puissent être *attended to*. Parce que nous tous, ici, vous aussi, vous avez

des mandants, des femmes dans vos circonscriptions qui ne peuvent pas aller travailler en dehors de leurs maisons parce qu'elles ont des enfants en bas âge et donc, ce qui fait que, pour elles-mêmes pour commencer, elles ne peuvent pas avoir l'*empowerment*, le *financial independence* qu'elles auraient pu avoir s'il y avait justement les facilités de crèches et de garderies. C'est un budget d'égalité des chances pour les femmes là et on est en train de parler des femmes au bas de l'échelle.

It is levelling the playing field between them and those who have the means to pay for those *garderies* and those *crèches*. It is giving them the way, the means and the opportunity to empower themselves, to liberate themselves to go and be in the workforce, for themselves first, for their financial independence, for their dignity, but also for the production capacity of this country.

M. le président, presque la moitié de notre *workforce* sont des femmes. Je ne dis pas que toutes les femmes ne travaillent pas, mais on voit que dans les chiffres du chômage, il y a une bonne partie de chômage au féminin. *What does that mean?* Cela veut dire qu'on est en train de restreindre notre capacité de production dans ce pays parce que ces femmes ne peuvent pas aller participer dans l'activité économique. Mais il y a plus que cela. Il y a aussi se libérer soi-même et être financièrement indépendant.

C'est un budget d'égalité des chances pour ces jeunes. Encore une fois, je prends des exemples concrets. Tous les jours, toutes les semaines, tous les mois, nous avons des jeunes qui viennent nous voir, qui sont diplômés de la SC, de la HSC, de l'Université, etc., et qui n'ont pas encore eu leur premier job. Quand ils partent, ils postulent pour un boulot, on leur dit : *sorry, you don't have job experience*. Mais comment ils vont avoir le *job experience* s'ils ne peuvent pas mettre un pied dans l'entreprise. Et ce budget permet à ces jeunes d'avoir un pied *inside in order to work and to get that work experience so that when they are on that stage*, ils sortent et ils peuvent mettre sur leur CV : *I have worked at this place and so on and so forth*. C'est un budget d'égalité des chances encore une

fois. C'est pour *level the playing field* entre eux et les autres qui ont accès à des moyens pour aller voir une agence de recrutement, etc.

C'est un budget d'égalité des chances pour les sportifs avec les nouvelles opportunités qui viennent. Je ne vais pas entrer dans les détails, M. le président, sinon je prendrai trop de temps.

M. le président, le budget de mon collègue, ami et colistier, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval...

(Interruptions)

Ce budget d'égalité des chances, M. le président, c'est quoi un budget ? L'exercice budgétaire, c'est quoi ? *It's to raise revenues and then to plan for the expenditures.* There is a choice that you make about the expenditures. I heard the hon. Member - he is very cynical; his cynicism and his sarcasm are very entertaining. As I said, you put him and hon. Li Kwong Wing together, you get nice slam.

(Interruptions)

He used the word 'swell' versus the word 'shrink'. Let me tell you what 'swelling' is all about! Swelling in terms of total public sector debt, my good friend! When you look at the period of 2001 to 2005, do you know what public sector debt was? About 70%! 71.4% in one year!

(Interruptions)

Ki l'héritage avant? Let me tell you what '*l'héritage avant*' was. I have the figures for before; you asked for it; the year before you guys came to power, it was 67%, when you came to power it became 70.9%. It goes up. *Ça c'est l'héritage avant! Zonn faire li vine pire.* And it keeps going on. 71.4% in one of the years! This is swelling! You know, your own leader, the hon. Leader of the Opposition, who has been very fair in his comments, I have to say, but he himself, on Tuesday, he said that when public sector debt goes above 62%, we are entering in the danger zone. You were 70%.

(Interruptions)

Much, much more than the 62% danger zone! No wonder, *c'est effectivement pour cela qu'il avait dit que le pays, après le ministre des finances qu'il avait eu, avait été mis dans un état d'urgence économique* with this swelling of public debt. This is it ! I can lay it on the Table for you.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Don't interrupt, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: I want to make it very clear. I will lay it on the Table for them. C'est très clair que we are comparing like with like, not the changing of definition. So, they can check it themselves.

M. le président, quand l'honorable membre...

(Interruptions)

Revé, to capav revé !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: That is better! The hon. Member should look at me.

Ms Deerpalsing: L'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval n'a pas mis de taxe sur les rêves, heureusement pour eux ! *They can continue to dream !*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please !

Ms Deerpalsing : M. le président, j'ai entendu l'honorable membre dire qu'on ne peut pas créer de l'argent, on peut juste transférer. *Wrong ! This is the whole point about creating growth.* Créer de la croissance, c'est ça ! On ne doit pas juste transférer. *We have to create growth.* Je vais dire quelques mots par rapport à un certain commentaire que le *Leader* de l'opposition a fait. Je dois dire qu'il a été assez *fair*, mais je vais juste répondre à certains des chiffres qu'il a cités. Il a dit que c'était un aveu d'échec parce que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval a dit que la croissance va être 4% et qu'avant c'était 4.1%. Mais ce n'est pas un aveu d'échec parce qu'ils ne sont pas en train de prendre en considération que si on restait avec ce qu'on avait, cela serait sorti de 4.1%, cela aurait été un point quelque chose. Mais, certainement, pas quatre.

(Interruptions)

Mais to ène zéro même toi de toute lé façon !

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair!

Ms Deerpalsing: *Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about what it would have been if things had stayed the same. Donc, ce n'est pas un aveu d'échec qu'on est en train de prudently forecast a growth rate of 4%. Au contraire, we are putting all the chances on our side, in a very difficult international economic condition. I don't think that I need to paint a picture. Otherwise, I can take hon. Seeruttun's speech of last year. We will see how much he was talking about the international configuration and, from last year, to this year, it is worse. I am sure hon. Members here have listened to what has happened yesterday. I hope everybody who is sitting here is aware that there was a bit of a crash in the euro yesterday, parce que dans l'eurozone, avec ce qui se passe en Italie, ils ne sont pas encore confiants qu'avec le départ de Berlusconi, les choses vont s'améliorer. Je suis sûre que l'honorable Li Kwong Wing avait vu le marché hier et qu'il y a eu un significant dip dans l'euro zone.*

Donc, c'est dans l'Europe entière parce que si l'Italie part, il y a d'autres *domino effect*. Dans une situation pareille, ce que le vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances a fait, c'est *put every chance on our side so that we can boost up growth*.

(Interruptions)

Yes, we can and we will! M. le président, ce n'est pas n'importe quelle croissance. Même avec ce contexte international difficile, on est en train de parler de *inclusive growth*. La croissance inclusive ! Pourquoi ? Qui va créer cette croissance? Bien sûr, ceux qui ont les moyens et on a donné tout ce qu'on peut donner, *put every chance on our side so that the growth can come. But it is not just those who are the most powerful, that is why, I am talking about inclusive growth*. La croissance inclusive ! Je vais revenir tout à l'heure sur les mesures concernant le PME. C'est du jamais vu ! C'est du jamais fait ! C'est vraiment sans précédent. Qui va créer cette croissance ? Je crois qu'un des membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre a dit: *"rightfully so that the small and medium enterprises create 55,000 jobs, I think, which is enormous and if we can boost them and create more jobs..."*.

(Interruptions)

Sorry – 250,000 ! C'est cela la croissance inclusive parce que cela va venir de tout le monde, pas juste d'un secteur de l'économie, mais de tout le monde. La

croissance inclusive c'est important. M. le président, le *Leader* de l'Opposition a aussi parlé de Singapour, de la Grèce. Il a dit pourquoi on prend les exemples des faillites quand on a parlé de la Grèce, de l'Espagne. Mais il faut voir ce que la Grèce était avant la faillite. Ils doivent aller comparer les indicateurs économiques. Je suis sûre que l'honorable Li Kwong Wing peut faire cela pour eux.

Quand ils vont voir les indicateurs économiques, ils vont voir ce que la Grèce et l'Espagne étaient avant la faillite, qu'est-ce que ces économies étaient. Quand on parle de Singapour comme modèle, c'est justement un '*high wage economy*'. L'année dernière, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing avait parlé à juste titre dans son discours qu'on ne peut pas être soutenable avec un *low wage economy*, qu'on ne peut pas avoir un *low wage economy*.

(Interruptions)

Je vais revenir sur ce qu'il a dit aussi après !

The Deputy Speaker : Order, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: Donc, ce qu'on est en train de faire dans ce budget, M. le président, dans un contexte extrêmement difficile, c'est justement de *empower people so that we can move to a high wage, high growth economy, because let's not make any illusion. If we continue with a low wage economy, we will never get to high growth economy. We can forecast the medium growth that we get, not like what is happening in Europe. I have figures which I will share with Members later.* Si on ne bouge pas vers une économie - et comment on va faire ça ? C'est justement par *empowering the sectors. We have talked about the ICT sector and empowering the young people to get into the market place upgrading their skills and so on and so forth.*

C'est ce que ce budget est en train de faire ! M. le président, permettez-moi maintenant de voir ce que le *Leader* de l'Opposition a aussi dit sur le *current account*. Il a dit que le vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances a parlé du surplus dans la balance des paiements, mais qu'il faudrait peut-être voir le *current account*. Mais, comme on le sait, ce qui est important - les économistes vont comprendre - c'est que quand on regarde le *current account*, il faut voir aussi l'activité qui se passe dans le *capital account*. *This is important. What we have today, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that one of the most fundamental benchmarks of a country's trading position is the level of international*

reserves, when we are looking at the imports and exports and we are talking about current account and the balance of payments.

It will be good to note that in international reserves in term of our capacity to fund our imports, today the international reserves are at 8.9 months, well higher than the required three months. We are at 8.9 months so that we can fund our trading activities. Cela est important. Ce n'est pas juste regarder le current account mais regarder la qualité des activités dans le capital account. Qu'est-ce qui est en train de se passer dans le capital account ? Juste as an aside, M. le président - je pense que c'est important parce que, on est en train de parler de cela - on entend parler de l'or. Vous savez l'or c'est un refuge asset – valeur refuge. D'habitude quand les autres currencies tombent, les gens bougent vers l'or, mais regardez ce qui s'est passé hier et vous pouvez voir le trend. What I am saying for yesterday is about the trend. Yesterday, when the euro went down - because there was a little bit of a crash - si l'or était encore perçu dans le marché comme une valeur refuge, you would have expected, as the euro goes down, that gold would have shot up. No, Mr Deputy Speaker. Hier, at the close of the market, le prix du dollar était à 1,768 dollars per ounce falling from 1,785 dollars on the eve, ce qui veut dire que sur le marché actuel, il y a beaucoup d'instabilité and unpredictability. Even gold is not perceived as a refuge value aujourd'hui. Donc, dire qu'il faut faire ceci ou cela, il n'y a pas de visibilité. C'est dangereux de préconiser des policies sur le trend sur l'or, etc. Il faut voir ce qui se passe aujourd'hui, M. le président.

Let me talk about the forecast about growth. Si vous regardez le forecast 2012 de la croissance en Angleterre pour l'année prochaine, c'est 1.6% et pour nous c'est 4%. En France, c'est 1%. En Amérique, c'est 1.8%, but the worse, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir - I just pulled a graph from the Economist website. You know 'The Economist', they have a pool of forecasters and they have a global mix of very reputed economists dans leur pool of forecasters - if you look at the graph, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, et que vous regardez entre avril, mai, juin, juillet, août, septembre, octobre et novembre, de mois en mois, ils sont en train de changer leur forecasts sur leur croissance downwards every month.

(Interruptions)

Of course, I am coming to that later. I am talking about the euro zone and the US which is our main markets. My point is that when you have such unpredictability, the most reputed economists in the world every month are changing their forecast downwards and we are predicting a growth of 4%. M. le président, je crois que c'est très honorable, plus qu'honorable. Donc, M. le président, bien sûr, je comprends. Au fait, si vous lisez bien le discours du *Leader* de l'Opposition, il a applaudi le budget. Je suis là depuis 2005 et c'est la première fois que j'entends un discours du *Leader* de l'Opposition sur le budget qui est différent de tous ses autres discours. Bien sûr, il a dû faire un peu de maquillage *in order to show* « *oh no, we don't totally agree, etc* » mais, au fond, quand vous regardez, vous décidez ce qu'il a dit, il est d'accord avec ce budget. *When you look at*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please ! Order !

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: We know, don't worry! We know.

M. le président, quand il a parlé de gaspillage *recurrent account*, ce qui est important de noter c'est que nous avons de plus cette année un surplus sur le *recurrent account*. C'est important ça. Un surplus sur le *recurrent account* veut dire que l'État emprunte seulement pour investir. Le taux d'augmentation des dépenses étatiques est en dessous du taux d'inflation. *This is not swelling hon. Boolell.* Donc c'est un budget en même temps responsable. C'est un budget comme le Premier ministre et le vice-Premier ministre avaient dit avant la présentation du budget - que ce n'est pas un budget « *faire la bouche doux* », ce n'est pas un budget électoraliste, c'est un budget responsable dans le contexte actuel parce qu'on va être là l'année prochaine, l'année d'après et l'année ensuite. Après les prochaines élections, nous serons de nouveau là et donc il nous faut garder cette économie très responsable pour qu'on puisse gérer ce pays et emmener ce pays vers la vision du Premier ministre avec une île Maurice pour tous, avec l'égalité des chances et l'opportunité pour tous.

Donc, M. le président, je crois que j'ai répondu à ce que le leader de l'opposition avait à dire. Grosso modo, quand j'ai relu son discours, c'est plus ou moins les petits trucs qu'il a trouvé à redire sur le budget, sinon c'était assez positif.

Laissez-moi venir maintenant sur certains commentaires qui ont été faits par l'autre côté de l'opposition. M. le président, en écoutant certains des membres, même des membres de l'opposition, bien sûr, qu'est-ce qu'ils peuvent faire? Ils doivent critiquer, ils ne peuvent pas venir dire que tout est bon. Même l'honorable Dr. S. Boolell quand il a parlé avant moi, mais vous auriez l'impression qu'on est dans l'eldorado ici; qu'il y a le pétrole qui est en train de *gush out*, l'or, le minéral, etc. On est un petit pays ; on peut créer de la croissance à une certaine capacité *and it is on the capacity that we have that we can meet our social obligations. Of course, we would like to do everything that you have said. Do you think we would not like to do it? Hon. Dr. S. Boolell, you were not in the House - he was saying why not give an amnesty and give to everybody this year who has gone overseas for operations the grant that we are giving. Of course, we would like to. I mean in that sense we would even be higher than we are today, mais seulement, bien sûr...*

(Interruptions)

Mais il y a une limite à tout ; on ne peut pas tout faire. *I am sure if you give it to the hon. vice-Prime Minister, he can take a look at it, but what I am trying to say is that the Opposition cannot talk as if petrol is gushing out from the floor.*

Quand vous regardez la performance du FDI, M. le président, c'est un crime. M. le président, quand l'ancien ministre des finances était là, le FDI a plongé de combien vous pensez? De 69% dans le premier trimestre et de 46% dans le deuxième trimestre !

M. le président, vous vous imaginez parce que tous les économistes savent que le FDI....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo please!

Hon. Jhugroo, please! You will answer later on.

Ms Deerpalsing: Tous les économistes savent que le FDI c'est la croissance de demain.

(Interruptions)

Tout le monde sait que les investissements...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aimée, please! You will get your chance later on also.

Ms Deerpalsing: Tout le monde sait que les investissements d'aujourd'hui et d'hier, c'est la croissance de demain. Pas d'investissement, on est un petit pays perdu au milieu de l'océan indien, loin de nos marchés, *no one owes us a living*. Pas d'investissement veut dire *nothing for anyone*. L'investissement, le FDI a chuté par 69% quand l'ancien ministre des finances était là le premier trimestre. Vous vous imaginez ce que cela veut dire ! Par 46% dans le deuxième trimestre. Dieu merci qu'il y avait le clan familial à sauver et non pas le pays !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order ! Order!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: *You will have the time to reply.* Dieu merci qu'il y avait le clan familial à sauver et qu'il fallait décommander les rendez-vous avec les investisseurs de l'extérieur et de retourner en quatrième vitesse pour sauver le clan familial et non pas le pays. Dieu merci qu'on a eu un nouveau ministre des finances !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Ms Deerpalsing: *It hurts, I know it hurts. You will have your time to reply, no problem.* Dieu merci qu'on a eu l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval pour reprendre la barre...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing:...et pour remettre. Bien sûr cela fait mal, je sais. Le clan familial, bien sûr cela fait mal, mais attendez votre tour. M. le président, tout cela assorti d'une mentalité vraiment rétrograde.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, I am warning you, please. If you have anything to say you will have the opportunity and now I want to listen to the hon. Member in silence.

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Everybody has a chance to say his bit here. So, tout cela assorti d'une mentalité rétrograde. Vous savez, M. le président, quand Mme Sheila Bappoo était ministre de la femme et il y avait le *CDU*, l'égalité du genre, le *CDU* avait un manque de fonds crucial, vital. Et, qui était en train de souffrir, l'honorable Mme Bappoo ? Ce n'était pas Mme Bappoo qui était en train de souffrir, mais ces pauvres enfants en dehors. M. le président, on disait qu'il n'y avait pas de marge - aujourd'hui on est en train de dire qu'il y a une marge de manœuvre, qui *FDI inn tombé par 69%*. Mais à ce moment là, il n'y avait pas de marge de manœuvre pour ces enfants battus. Pour ces malheureux petits millions, il n'y avait pas de marge de manœuvre. C'est une mentalité, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

Talère to réponde, mo connais faire di mal !

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Jhugroo!

Ms Deerpalsing: Cela fait mal, je sais. M. le président, on est en train aujourd'hui de parler : 'Ah, et les produits alimentaires, on n'a pas baissé, etc.!' Ce qu'il faut savoir - je sais qu'il y a de la démagogie à faire - c'est que le budget n'est pas un forum pour baisser les prix des aliments. Il y a d'autres moyens, la compensation salariale, etc. M. le président, ils sont en train de parler de parfum, etc.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, quand on parle de parfum, on est en train de faire une comparaison entre les aliments qui n'ont pas baissé, mais on est en train de baisser sur les parfums, c'est de la démagogie ! Et ils savent que c'est de la démagogie! En tout cas, parce qu'il y a un accord pour que les *duties* s'effacent d'année en année. Définitivement, d'année en année, il y aura d'autres produits sur lesquels le *duty* va baisser et donc c'est clair que c'est pour cela que les parfums ont baissé – ce n'est pas parce que c'est un choix. Enfin il y avait un choix à l'époque. On avait retiré le *duty* sur d'autres articles à l'époque, tels que sur les équipements de ski, ça aussi c'est un choix. M. le président, en ce qu'il s'agit du prix des aliments, on est en train de parler de soi-disant il y avait une préparation de certains produits alimentaires sur lesquels cela allait baisser.

Let me come to the Budget Speech of last year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Wait, not for this one, but wait, do not be too fast. Paragraph 402, I will tell things that you do not know, that has not come out yet. When the previous Minister of Finance announced that he was moving a list of products from zero rated to exempt, wheat flour and brand, edible oils, margarine, sterilised liquid milk, curdle milk, cream, yoghurt, chickens and chicks, animal feed and fertilisers. *Vous savez ce que cela allait faire, M. le président. C'est bien rare que je fais cela, mais je vais take a quote from the speech of the Leader of the Opposition last year.*

(Interruptions)

M. le président, I quote what the Leader of the Opposition said and I will tell you then what happened. I quote from the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, last year, to explain what that meant, moving this list of products from zero rated to exempt. Donc, le *Leader* de l'Opposition l'année dernière dit –

“Il y aussi sa décision de move certain items *from zero-rated to exempt*”.

Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire? Cela veut dire alors qu'on ne payait pas de *Value Added Tax* sur les entrants pour toute une série de produits : l'huile comestible, la farine, le yaourt, le poulet, sur tout cela on ne payait pas la TVA sur les entrants et cette mesure

allait introduire la TVA sur les entrants. Now I can tell you what happened when the previous Finance Minister brought the Finance Bill, because that was going to be in the Finance Bill, we got it out.

(Interruptions)

Non, non! On Saturday there was another thing. I will tell you, because the Budget – no, let me tell how it happened...

The Deputy Speaker: Please, tell me!

Ms Deerpalsing: Let me tell you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Le budget est présenté le vendredi. Et, bien sûr, quand la lecture est faite, etc., on fait une analyse le vendredi soir, parce que le Premier ministre a son équipe, indépendant de l'équipe du ministère des finances. L'analyse est faite, le samedi...

(Interruptions)

Je vais vous dire, il y a les ministres aussi. Who tells you that there was?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aimée, keep the rest for your speech.

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, le samedi, déjà on avait vu ce que cela voulait dire. Il n'y avait pas que cela, il y avait une autre mesure que même l'honorable Seeruttun avait décrit, c'était sur les petits planteurs, sur l'exemption *on the 60 tonnes of sugar where the previous vice-Prime Minister had added a line that only that exemption on the 60 tonnes of sugar would be only for those who had solely revenue from sugar. You remember that...*

(Interruptions)

Attendez ! Le samedi, moi, avant ; c'est le mardi que le *Leader* de l'Opposition parle ; le samedi, le jour après le budget, je vais voir le *Chief of staff* du Premier ministre. Je lui dis, surtout sur le *sugar*, je peux dire maintenant, parce qu'à ce moment-là, on ne pouvait pas dire au public, je lui dis...

(Interruptions)

Non, mon collègue sera là.

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Deerpalsing: *Li pas éna clan familial pour défann li !*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, even hon. Seeruttun talked about ‘solely on revenue from sugar’. We discussed these two measures about ‘zero-rated to exempt’ and the one about ‘solely’ on Saturday, and we decided that we would have to change those two things. As you can see, when the Finance Bill came, these two things were modified because if you had wanted it, but we did not want it, it would never have happened. We wanted it on this side of the House. You could have said it, but it would not necessarily have happened if we had not put pressure. We said that it was going to be catastrophic. Moving that list!

On est en train de parler de produits alimentaires; on a préparé une liste de produits alimentaires. Enfin, M. le président, comme l’honorable Seeruttun a dit hier, heureusement que le ridicule ne tue pas!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, don’t interrupt!

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, c’est cela qu’on est en train de dire. Et d’ailleurs, je vois que les honorables membres du côté de l’opposition MMM sont en train de dire qu’ils avaient déjà dit cela. Laissez-moi vous rappeler, M. le président, que quand l’honorable ex-ministre des finances s’est levé pour faire son *summing-up*, l’opposition MMM avait fait un *walk-out*. Vous n’étiez pas là; vous étiez dehors. Le MMM avait fait un *walk-out*. Quand j’ai dit que tout cela était assorti d’une mentalité rétrograde, je vais vous dire encore une fois ce qui nous a embarrassés. On ne pouvait pas le dire, mais maintenant, je le peux. Quand le vice-premier ministre ...

(Interruptions)

Mais c’est bon de savoir pour l’histoire ! M. le président ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Deerpalsing: Quand l'opposition MMM a fait son *walk-out* ...

(Interruptions)

Je vais vous montrer ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Hon. Jhugroo, if you persist, I will have to take sanction!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mohamed, please!

(Interruptions)

But you don't do my work! I know what I have to do! Please!

(Interruptions)

I don't have to take orders from the hon. Minister!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when the MMM walked out, the ex vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance - we were deeply embarrassed, but we could not say it - got up to do his summing-up speech and said -

"I understand it is 7 o'clock. We know there is a call. Mr Speaker, it reminds me of a person that we know who is called Johnny. He is of Scottish origin, but anyway he keeps walking all the time."

As soon as he said those words, I looked at my neighbour

(Interruptions)

Can you please let me speak?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Aimée, please don't provoke!

Ms Deerpalsing: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is *la mentalité rétrograde assortie*. Aussitôt qu'il a prononcé ces mots, j'ai regardé le Premier ministre qui était là. Quand un vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances se lève pour faire un *summing-up speech* et

tient ce genre de langage, M. le président, cela vous dit tout. D'ailleurs, cela me rappelle ce qu'on a dit sur l'honorable Reza Uteem. On avait dit que peut être que Monsieur Bérenger savait quelque chose que d'autres personnes - *inn dire si pas* Reza Uteem est le fils de Cassam Uteem.

(Interruptions)

Qui avait dit cela ? *'Quit fois Bérenger conne quit chose qui nous pas konner.'* Vous savez ce que le *Leader* de l'opposition a répondu dans une conférence de presse. Il a dit ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Deerpalsing: C'est bon pour l'histoire ! Le *Leader* de l'Opposition avait ceci à dire. C'est la mentalité. Le *Leader* de l'Opposition avait dit : *'sa ti couyon là, ti vermine la, seki linn faire c'est honteux, de l'infamie. Marquer garder, nous pou tasse are li jusqu'à la fin so la vie politique ek sa. Linn prouver qui li enn jeune malpropre. Quand linn fer sa, line disqualifier li a jamais couma enn politicien.'* Famous last words of the *Leader* of the Opposition !

M. le président, peut-être que c'est pour cela qu'on a eu le fameux mot *'mentalité crétin.'* Je ne vais pas entrer sur les *'lalangues, les cravates, etc.'*

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on a point of order.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Jugnauth: The Member, after having referred to certain speeches made, is now qualifying me as somebody having a *mentalité crétin*. This is what it comes to, and I strongly take objection to this.

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: If you go and check the recording, you will note...

The Deputy Speaker: If the hon. Member is telling me that she is not referring to the hon. Member...

Ms Deerpalsing: No, I'm not!

The Deputy Speaker: Then, it's all right.

Ms Deerpalsing: I said that mention was made by the hon. Leader of the Opposition of a *mentalité crétin*. That's all I said. I was just repeating what the hon. Leader of the Opposition had said then. That's all.

(Interruptions)

I'm not saying it. I'm just taking what he had said. That's all. I'm just saying what hon. Bérenger had said.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Deerpalsing: On est en train de parler de croissance, et on est en train de parler comment cette croissance est redistribuée avec les membres ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

(Interruptions)

Order!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: Please, let me talk!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Varma, please! If you have something...

(Interruptions)

Please!

(Interruptions)

Please, address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Ms Deerpalsing: That's their level; let them be. What do you expect from them?

The Deputy Speaker: I will ask you to address the Chair, please! I will tell all Members that we have been listening with much passion to the hon. Member, and we'll continue to listen to her. If any Member has got to settle score, he must do so outside this House, please.

Ms Deerpalsing: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When we are talking about a budget exercise, we are talking about *comment la croissance est créée et comment c'est redistribuée. On est en train de parler comment la croissance...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should address the Chair.

Ms Deerpalsing: No, but they are disturbing me.

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Ms Deerpalsing: M. le président, dans un exercice budgétaire, on parle comment la croissance est créée et comment c'est redistribuée. On est en train de parler, de nos jours, comment on va faire pour *bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Let me show you facts, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir from the CSO figures from the Household Budget Surveys. I have talked about that before. I have copies, which I can give to Members who want.*

Regardez cela, M. le président! The graph is a snapshot of a 15-year period, between 1991 and 1995, 1995 to 2000 and 2000 to 2005. When, in 1991 to 1995, the MMM and the MSM were in government - the toxic duo, as I call it; and we are talking about remake of the toxic duo - look at what happened. These are not my figures; these are the CSO figures. When you look from the first decile to the last decile, *c'est à dire, les 10% plus pauvres jusqu'aux 10% les plus riches. Quand vous regardez comment les gens ont gagné ou ont perdu sur la période, quand vous regardez de 1991 à 1995 - regardez celui qui est en orange - tout le monde perd.* Everybody goes down in income

over that period, except for the 10% richest. *On n'a aucun problème que the 10% richest also have to live but, at the expense of everybody else? Quand on regarde 2000 à 2005, surprise, surprise, it is the same pattern. Everybody else loses, except the 10% richest. So, whenever the MMM and the MSM have been in alliance, this is what the remake brings to the people, from the 10% poorest to the 9th decile. Only the 10% richest, the most powerful benefit! These are CSO figures. But look at 1995 to 2000 when the Labour Party and the MMM - but then the MMM left - and what happens to income, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, everybody gains, except the 10% richest. C'est éloquent !*

(Interruptions)

Ce sont les chiffres du CSO. Allez vérifier! This is what progressive politics is all about!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to talk now very quickly on a couple of projects that concern the Democratisation of the Economy before I come very briefly to my constituency.

M. le président, je voudrais, en passant, remercier le Premier ministre de m'avoir nommée présidente de la Commission pour la Démocratisation de l'Economie. Je suis extrêmement contente des mesures inédites que le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances a présenté dans la Chambre pour les PME. Il y a toute une série, M. le président. Mais, ce qu'on est en train de dire, *this negotiated rate of 8.5%*, négocié avec la banque, n'était pas facile. Le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances, et le Premier ministre, vont vous dire que cette négociation n'était pas facile. Mais il y a eu une négociation d'un taux d'intérêt de 8.5%. Ce n'est pas que R 3 milliards pour les PME. Quand on dit PME, on a tendance à penser que ce ne sont que les petites entreprises, mais il y a aussi les moyennes entreprises parce que c'est pour ceux qui ont un *turnover of less than Rs50 m.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about a whole range of businesses here. It is not just for the new ones, it is for the existing ones as well. It gives them a boost and they can refinance their loan and get the 8.5%.

Qu'est ce que cela veut dire de concret? Qu'il y a R 3 milliards pour les trois prochaines années, des opportunités ! R 3 milliards d'opportunités à prendre ! R 3 milliards pour la démocratisation de l'économie ! M. le président, bien sûr, il faut avoir des projets. Ce qu'on est en train de dire à ceux qui ont des projets, à ceux qui sont des petites et moyennes entreprises aujourd'hui : « *Expand, seize the day*, prenez l'opportunité et progressez » ! Bien sûr, le *Leader* de l'Opposition a dit: "*the devil is in the details*".

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, here, I would like to make a suggestion to the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, - because this is a very groundbreaking measure that the hon. Minister of Finance has brought to the House - in order to make sure that it is implemented, and it is being implemented and that we do not wait for six months to see what is happening, if we can have the Bank of Mauritius prepare a return on a monthly basis how many applications they have received and how many they have rejected and on what is going on.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would also like to make a request. I heard people say that as well. Since this measure has been announced, I do not hear the banks coming up, informing their customers and saying: "hey guys, I am putting an SME desk and so on". They do not seem to be very proactive.

(Interruptions)

For the private commercial banks I can understand, but the State Bank and the MPCB should already come forward. I think that we should push - at least, there has to be a leader and the others will follow. Because this is a very groundbreaking measure and we cannot afford for it not to be seized by people. *Donc, M. le président, c'est une mesure phare pour la démocratisation de l'économie.*

M. le président, en ce qui concerne l'autre mesure qui tombe sous ma responsabilité et celle de mes autres collègues, le vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances l'a annoncée au paragraphe 175 du budget. L'honorable Mme Labelle a fait des commentaires là-dessus. Elle a posé des questions et voulait savoir pourquoi c'est la

Commission pour la Démocratisation de l'Economie qui est en train de *spearhead this project. It is an agroecology project, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what we want to do, in the objective of taking democratization one step further to the grass roots level, we have designed an agroecology programme which will be available to all unemployed, especially women who are interested in small scale farming, because at the Commission for the Democratization of the Economy, we sit on this panel for the 1,000 arpents of land that the hon. Prime Minister has secured. There are 2,000 arpents, but 1,000 arpents are for food security.

M. le président, étant donné qu'on est sur ce panel, on a pensé qu'on peut lancer le small scale farming. What will this do? This aims to empower vulnerable women and men into small scale farming, thus making it possible for them to have first of all, an accessible means to improve their own food security and, second, to have greater control over their lives and livelihood by engaging into entrepreneurial food production. The question asked was: Why it is at the Commission for the Democratization of the Economy?

M. le président, ce n'est pas que pour me donner un rôle, c'est simplement parce que cela va impliquer la collaboration du ministère de l'Egalité des genres, cela va impliquer la collaboration du ministère des PME, cela va impliquer le ministère de l'Intégration sociale aussi bien que celle du ministère de l'Agro-industrie. Il y a plusieurs ministères qui sont impliqués, donc cela ne peut être sous un seul ministère. La Commission pour la Démocratisation de l'Economie, on ne peut pas implémenter car on n'a pas le moyen de le faire. *But, we will be the driver and will be monitoring for this to happen. This is why, just to create the synergy between the Ministries. This was to answer hon. Mrs Labelle.*

I will just brush over the other programme that falls under the responsibility of the Commission for The Democratization of the Economy under special projects is the NICE (National Institute for Civic Education) and the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced it at paragraph 310. This is another groundbreaking measure.

Probably people have not really taken note of what it means. With the aim of furthering nation-building, the pilot project is to start a National Civic Service for the young of this country, there will be a pilot group of 200 youths who will be enrolled into this programme to inculcate a common sense of purpose. I will have the honour and the pleasure to oversee the pilot project of this groundbreaking measure also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to a few issues on our constituency. M. le président, pendant les trois dernières années, nous avons eu à Quatre Bornes, les travaux de la *wastewater* qui nous a un peu retardés sur certains autres travaux. Mais, ce budget va nous permettre d'aller de l'avant et d'ailleurs avec l'honorable ministre Aimée, pour le *Local Government*, le ministère des finances et l'honorable ministre Bachoo concernant la NDU, on est en train de bouger très, très vite. Je peux vous dire que l'Avenue Tulipes ...

(Interruptions)

Bé mo kont lor mo bann députés!

(Interruptions)

Oui mais zott mo députés là-bas. L'Avenue des Tulipes va être agrandie, M. le président. *I have raised this issue many times.* L'Avenue des Tulipes est devenue un *link road* et les habitants de la Résidence St Jean ont beaucoup de problèmes parce qu'ils n'ont pas de *footpath* et c'est très dangereux. Cela va être agrandi et il y aura des *footpaths* des deux côtés.

The Candos jogging track, the leisure park of Candos *est un bijou*. When we will go and open this, you will see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over so much ground, it is really something that we are very proud of. There are several football grounds that have been renewed and that have already been opened.

Pour les habitants d'Avenue Ollier, de La Source et de Résidence St. Jean, avec la collaboration du *Local Government*, le ministère des finances et la NDU, on est en train d'ajouter des étages pour qu'on puisse faire des *fitness centres* dans toutes ces régions,

qui vont bénéficier aux habitants de ces régions. On est aussi en train de mettre des *CCTV cameras* à Quatre Bornes. Nous avons le cimetière, le terrain est déjà prêt et l'investissement va être fait. Et nous avons aussi notre fameux bazar. On a eu une réunion avec l'honorable Bachoo. On sait que lui, il bouge avec la vitesse TGV, pas des années de lumières, mais réalisable. Donc, l'honorable Bachoo va nous donner un coup de main pour la réalisation de notre bazar, et j'en suis très, très, très contente.

M. le président, je vais terminer en disant que ce budget, *as I said when I started, leaves no stone unturned to put every single chance on our side so that we can weather* les incertitudes qui planent dans le contexte international. Il ne faut pas croire, il ne faut pas être nombriliste, il faut savoir qu'on vit sur une planète intégrée et ce qui se passe là-bas a un effet sur nous.

This Budget puts everything, all the chances on our side to create growth, to boost the economy, to empower people, to have not only growth, but inclusive growth, to push people who are under-trodden, to lift them up and put them in the mainstream, in the middle class.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me end with a quote from Theodore Roosevelt because we hear criticisms, some of them have to criticise, I don't mind -

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how strong the man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man or the woman who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who strives valiantly, who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcomings, but who does actually strive to do the deed, who knows great enthusiasm (team spirit), great devotion, spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows that in the end, the triumph of high achievement and who, at worst, if he fails, at least he fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

With these words, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish good luck to the implementation of this Budget. I wish good luck to the hon. Prime Minister and for him

to hold this team steadfastly despite all the tries, *tout ce que vous allez essayer va échouer* because this hon. Prime Minister holds this team steadfastly, in a team spirit, *soudé* and we will be here after next year, after the year after, after the third year, after the fourth year and after the next general election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we will have...

(Interruptions)

It doesn't matter!

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Ms Deerpalsing: It doesn't matter what I get, what matters is that this Prime Minister will still be Prime Minister; my Prime Minister will still be here afterwards for 10 years, 15 years to come.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(3.55 p.m.)

Mrs P. Bholah (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my feeling towards Budget 2012 is one of deception. I observe that it is geared towards empowering the private sector and deepening economic liberalism. It fails to respond to urgent needs of the sons and daughters of this land. By removing the land transfer tax, the Government is missing out millions from its treasury, especially when we know how much IRS, ERS bring in through the land transfer tax.

The Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, fails to respond to the urgent needs of the population, who have been toiling hard in this country. Fortunately, the NRPT and interest taxes have been removed by the former Finance Minister, hon. Pravind Jugnauth, last year. The 2012 Budget does not pay any attention to the tornado of the social crisis heading on us at great pace -

- scarcity of water;
- inadequate control of NGOs in the social sector, and
- increased price of commodities with the lack of incentives for local agro-industries, except for those already given last year. It mainly

caters for the richer community, leaving those at the lower ladder in great discomfort.

The Resilience Fund of some Rs7 billion, which gives the impression that this Budget is making big effort to address the problems, might arise to face the crisis, but the truth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that that sum was already provided last year and is being carried forward in the 2012 Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, throughout his speech, the hon. Minister of Finance has tried to give some measures, trying to bring a sort of feel good factor. But the truth is that today, people can foresee, but a very grim future ahead and can hardly smile at each other.

According to the hon. Minister of Finance, people will now eat more shampoos, perfumes, cosmetics and shoes because he has chosen to remove duties from these products. But he has completely ignored the outcry from the population at large to intervene on the price of basic foodstuffs. This is where the nation is suffering. There is no single action to listen to the outcry of the people in these difficult times, where prices are going up every day without control. In fact, there is no incentive to enhance local food production. A concrete example is the depletion of green lands replaced by a panorama of concrete where more agricultural activities could be effected, thus producing more and more food crops.

It is simply a danger to our food security. Removing VAT from agricultural equipment is nothing but a mirage since you cannot buy such equipment as there is no soil left to toil. Where is the integrated farming proposed by the hon. Minister of Finance going to be located? Certainly not near the malls!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nothing has been put to heal the nation. We are having an increasing number of social problems. It is now hitting all regions of the country, with families often falling in the violence trap and having the most horrible crimes in regions, once known as very peaceful. The lack of leisure and good quality of life are causing an unsuspected level of stress in Mauritian families. But, this does not seem to have been considered in the present Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the prevalence of gender base violence remains very high and is a great source of concern in Mauritius. In a bid to prohibit all forms of gender base violence, the SADC Protocol stipulates that legislation must be enforced. Although the Budget makes provision for a Victim Assistance Scheme, including sexual offences, there is no mention of shelters for such victims. It is also about the time that the Sexual Offences Bill be passed.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been a bold decision in the Budget for creating six shelters for vulnerable children as well as the recruitment of 20 Support Officers for the Child Development Unit. Children shall no longer be subject to violence only from 9 to 4 pm but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, measures must be taken to that vulnerable children get a-24 hour service. Moreover, the idea of foster families should be encouraged without having to go for lengthy adoption procedures with the aim to bring in the children with a homely environment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking about social housing, it has been a complete failure under this Government since 2005. We should go far beyond the subsidies to NHDC syndics in order to avoid a social crisis in the NHDC complexes. Although syndics have been working satisfactory during the year 2000 to 2005 they completely failed afterwards due to lack of consideration from Government. The reintroduction of syndics should be established through a very meticulous canvassing in order to create awareness with the NHDC population through an adequate methodology, proper regulations and all other criteria necessary to make it functional. Let us not forget that quite a few of these complexes are in a bad state and urgent action should be taken to improve the situation and the environment as a matter of priority where the lands claimed to have taken from sugar barons for social housing. They are not to be seen not even in dreams. Today, I believe that the Minister has forgotten his time spent at the Ministry of Social Integration because the words 'Social Integration' are not mentioned at all at the Budget speech not a single time and to add insult to injury, the hon. Minister of Finance is coming up with a social register of poor people to categorise them to make them behave as per the agenda of private lobbies to entitle them to a housing unit. This is why I said: it is an attack on human dignity. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, poverty devastates families, communities and nations. Kofi Annan said, I quote –

“Let us recognise that extreme poverty anywhere is a threat to human security everywhere. Let us recall that poverty is a denial of human rights. For the first time in history in this age of unprecedented wealth and technical prowess we have the power to save humanity from this shameful scourge. Let us summon the will to do it”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the facilities that companies will give for *crèche*, kindergarten through the Corporate Social Responsibility, women will be encouraged to join the workforce. Furthermore, the extension of the pre-primary education grant will also encourage them to work as their children will apparently be taken care of. As a lure for needy mothers who must work to be able to survive they will receive some Rs1,500 per month to send their children who are under three to a *crèche* but, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these *crèches* will not ease the life of working mothers as, on the contrary, they will be compelled to work odd stressful hours. Consequently, this is bound to create stress in their family life. This may be considered as a form of modern slavery.

One cannot just pay lip service to a mere wish of women joining the manual workforce without creating the ideal conditions for same. We want the women to get better pay for the work they are doing. We need some quality jobs for women and we can just laugh when we hear now that 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. But we all know that the Commission for the Democratisation of the Economy is a non-starter. It is a waste of public funds, it is useless unless if democratisation of the economy means giving contracts like Betamax or the Duty Free Paradise. In my constituency, people of Panchavati are desperate to land such jackpots.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my humble opinion, women are not in a position to take loans to start business ventures at this time of great economic turmoil. The hon. Minister of Finance has not stated how the commercial banks will make loan available to women. What is needed is a form of equity in the business projects rather. The 8.5% of interest is still very high for SMEs start-up which, by definition, do not have enough financial strength to stand on their own specially with the forecast of a stunted economic growth rate of 4.4 % or even less in 2012, compared to 4.2% for the current year 2011.

M. le président, c'est un fait connu que, quand une femme veut lancer une affaire, personne ne peut l'arrêter, même si elle ne dispose pas d'un local. Presque chaque jour, les médias rapportent l'histoire de femmes qui ont converti une petite chambre de leur domicile en usine. Désormais, avec la provision budgétaire de construction de 175 unités industrielles additionnelles pour les PME, les femmes n'auront plus besoin de travailler dans leurs maisons. Mais elles doivent s'assurer qu'elles aient leur part du gâteau. Attention aux farceurs !

M. le président, permettez-moi de vous dire que ce budget est très décevant, surtout en ce qui concerne la femme mauricienne. La femme est le socle principal d'une société et sans un vrai *empowerment* de celle-ci, nous ne ferons pas de progrès et la société restera en arrière pour longtemps encore. C'est surprenant et inacceptable que la femme mauricienne n'a pas été considérée à sa juste valeur. La femme est au centre de tout développement, elle qui s'occupe de sa famille, des vieux et des jeunes. Elle qui est au centre même de ce qu'on appelle '*le care economy*', ce secteur qui reste non-rémunéré, a été largement ignorée et pourtant toute les instances internationales ne cessent de nous dire à quel point c'est important de lutter contre toute forme d'inégalité envers les femmes. Un des meilleurs moyens pour lutter contre le *gender inequality* c'est, bien sûr, à travers le budget, mais ce dernier reste grossièrement silencieux sur la création d'emplois pour les femmes. Le marché du travail mauricien est très biaisé, le taux de chômage parmi les femmes est supérieur à celui des hommes, mais l'Etat semble considérer cela comme étant très peu important. Et quid de nos jeunes femmes sortant des quartiers défavorisés et celles qui sont victimes d'un système scolaire, qui ne fait que reproduire des inégalités, sont souvent proies à toute forme de pathologie sociale qui engendre un cercle vicieux de la pauvreté.

Mais au lieu de faire sortir les femmes des métiers traditionnels qui sont considérés comme des *low-paid, low-status jobs*, le ministre des finances fait de sorte à ce que les femmes restent confinées dans des positions marginales. Les mesures prônées renforceraient l'inégalité des genres.

L'*empowerment* de la femme passe par plusieurs étapes. Le programme gouvernemental lui-même avait fait ressortir qu'il faut que chaque ministère ait un

Gender Policy mais en termes de ressources allouées pour ce projet si important, le budget n'a rien proposé.

Le budget aurait dû, par exemple, proposer un audit du secteur pré-vocationnel pour mieux comprendre la disparité qui existe entre filles et garçons dans le secteur et mettre les mesures appropriées pour donner des chances égales à nos jeunes citoyennes et citoyens. Ainsi on éviterait l'émergence d'autres pathologies sociales et le cercle vicieux de la pauvreté.

Un budget qui n'est pas *gender-sensitive* est un budget qui va à l'encontre du développement de la nation. La République de Maurice a signé et ratifié le CEDAW (Convention of Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women), mais lorsque nous voyons les conditions dans lesquelles nos sœurs Rodriguaises, surtout celles qui sont venues à Maurice, dans l'espoir de trouver une meilleure chance, on ne peut que conclure que ce budget ne fait pas honneur à notre pays.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, talking of education, I find it very disappointing that the budget address has not considered the issue of providing more mitigating measures against increasing school-violence, school gangs in traffic centres, absconding, bullying and other major problems amongst the student population. There are so many live social issues as from the primary level as well which have not been addressed closely.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, although education is free in Mauritius and both girls and boys have the same access to education, very often girls are at a disadvantage as they have to help with household chores. The chapter on "Shaping the Education, Training and Skilling for the 21st Century" puts in place "Summer School Programme" whereby slow learners and those who are behind with the curriculum can catch up. They will also be provided with hot meals. This measure is only to achieve universal primary education goal as well as the SADC Protocol which highlights retention in primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational and non-formal education. But, the effects of offering schooling during summer may prove to be detrimental to the *épanouissement de l'enfant* since he will be away from his peers while everybody will be enjoying their holidays.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the provision of Rs500,000, already available since January this year for the upgrading of all Government schools, but which is greatly inadequate, we hope that the Minister of Education, and his officers will see to it that schools become a clean and safe place for our children as well as making sure that there are adequate and separate toilets for girls and boys. We all know girls have different needs and cannot use the same toilets as boys.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, whilst the Budget is emphasising on foreign students, there is not much emphasis on safe and accessible accommodation for these students and facilities for student accommodation is a prerequisite for any country wishing to attract foreign students. Also, there needs to be emphasis on medical check-ups also for these students (as risk of communicable diseases could potentially be introduced) and who will pay for these?

Whilst there is money invested for IT infrastructure and other physical infrastructure as well as maintenance, there is no mention of funds invested for the continued training of teachers, exchange programmes for teachers, increased intake of teaching staff and other support staff.

No doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, investment in human resources is important to achieve excellence. In fact, real innovation measures would have included holiday schools to further introduce school children to extracurricular activities and free parents to go to work; access to schools that foster creativity, for example, publicly funded music, dance, art, drama schools for school children who are more inclined in these subjects. Currently, parents have to pay a lot to have access to these activities, musical instruments in private schools etc. to enhance creativity amongst our youth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, research is such a crucial aspect in countries which want to achieve growth, and again, not much attention for research and development or innovation has been made in this budget. There is a complete disinterest in scientific research. If we look at what Singapore is doing in terms of Research Investment, this budget seems to have missed out the idea completely.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at tertiary level, we are heading towards a disaster with many graduates not obtaining jobs as a result of mismatch between choice and career opportunities. In scarcity areas Government has to import human resources whereas on the other hand, graduates are queuing up to obtain a decent job. We only hope meritocracy will still be put into practice contrary to what everybody heard about the news of fishy type of recruitment. This is another explosive situation. It's very good to have campuses all over the island, but the Government must see to it that those coming out with diplomas and degrees do not work as clerical or are jobless otherwise. In his plight to create job experience training opportunities, no emphasis have been put by the Minister of Finance on the creation of jobs of specific nature related to the courses being offered. In my opinion, a new study should be carried out for career prospective prior to introducing courses in the tertiary curriculum.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I suggest that the vision of research be broadened by setting up a National Research Foundation (NRF) like in Singapore with the following objective -

1. Setting the national direction for Research and Development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise;
2. Funding of strategic initiatives;
3. Building up research and development capabilities and capacities through nurturing our own and attracting foreign talent, and
4. Coordinating the research agendas of different agencies to transform our country into a knowledge-intensive, innovative and entrepreneurial economy.

While talking of infrastructure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, more specifically in my Constituency No. 7, Piton/Rivière du Rempart, sufficient funds have been released by the former Minister of Finance, following identification of various projects. Under the emergency flood rehabilitation programme some important projects, namely in Panchavati and L'Amitié have been identified and initiated by the Minister of Public

Infrastructure. As for other projects related to road safety, particularly at Piton Junction and Labourdonnais, I only hope that these projects be considered and executed in the near future to avoid any further road calamity.

While concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we want in short to have a country where all Mauritians have decent employment opportunities, a country which provide safe and healthy lifestyle, which has a modern infrastructure and vibrant economy and where the standard of living is high. The 2012 Budget, according to me, does not completely reflect the legitimate aspiration of the people of this country.

Thank you for your attention.

The Deputy Speaker: I suspend for half an hour for tea!

At 4.20 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.55 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs M. Martin): Mr Speaker, Sir, from the very outset, let me congratulate the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, for the presentation of his very first Budget since he assumed office in August last.

The common thread that permeates through the 2012 Budget reflects the vision of the hon. Prime Minister. A vision which embeds the ideals of ‘unity, equity and modernity’ as stipulated in the Government Programme 2010-2015.

Guided by these fundamental principles, the Ministry of Finance has aptly succeeded in striking the right balance between economic and social perspectives in this 2012 Budget.

M. le président, n’en déplaise à certains et je parle en particulier pour les membres absents de l’opposition, ce budget est un budget qui est très bien accueilli au sein de la population. A tel point que les mauvaises langues se croient obligées, comme l’avait dit l’honorable Reza Issack dans son discours d’hier, d’utiliser des arguments

d'une bassesse inouïe visant à faire croire au peuple que ce budget n'a été construit que pour venir en aide à une section spécifique de la population.

Ce genre d'argument démagogique, heureusement, M. le président, ne trompe pas les vrais patriotes de ce pays.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to share with you my personal observation. According to me, Mr Speaker, Sir, life and experiences undoubtedly shape a man or a woman for that matter. It is something that I truly believe in. I am sure that the experience and career path of hon. Xavier-Luc Duval have, over the years, moulded his outlook in human development.

Outside, there is wide consensus that his experience as Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment has definitely inspired him in the design and elaboration of this Budget.

At this stage, I would like to acknowledge the wisdom and vision of the hon. Prime Minister in setting up a Ministry like this, the Social Integration and Economic Empowerment Ministry, following the 2010 elections. This is a Ministry that caters specifically for the disadvantaged and most vulnerable and this measure was long awaited in the fight against poverty.

The resulting synergy, that is, the Prime Minister's vision, hon. Duval's passage first at the Ministry of Social Integration then vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development, as well as the contribution of one and all from this side of the House is testimony that this Government remains committed to the ideals announced throughout the electoral campaign and in the Presidential Address, that is, of promoting efficiency and social justice.

Indeed, this Budget remains firmly focussed on a longer term transformation challenge, by finding ways to respond to the unpredictable international economic scenario, hon. Ms Deerpalsing also said it just before. Only yesterday we had a problem in the eurozone.

Our primary goal, Mr Speaker, Sir, remains the consolidation of the economy and this Budget is yet another step in the journey on which we have embarked with the

people who have voted us to Government in May 2010. The budgetary measures speak out to an all-inclusive development and it responds to the promises made to the population.

Today, we are again proving that our intention is to work towards the progressive building of a shared future. A future in which we can all take pride in high quality services delivery, creation of jobs and protection of the vulnerable as well as the population at large.

The budgetary measures spelt out last Friday, confirm that this Government means business. Even, more it underpins the fact that we firmly believe in translating commitments into actions. If proof was needed, in order to ensure that measures stipulated in our Government Programme do not stay mere declaration of intent, this Budget makes provision for a road map to monitor the implementation of each and every measure enunciated therein.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today, we are at crossroads. There are certain people who are trying to depict a purely gloomy picture ahead, but bottom-line is that we need to live up, and we are committed to live up to the expectations of the population. At a time when the world's economy is fraught with uncertainties, our fellow citizens are looking up to government to find solutions for them and provide answers to the pressing issues that are likely to affect their livelihoods. It is a time when we should all stand by them. And I am speaking here for all those who had been voted in this government by the people for the people.

We have no right and they had no right to disengage themselves from our social contract and from our pledge to work in the interest of the nation, because, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a time when we all should act collectively to shield our country from the impact of the volatile international economic environment. At such times, we cannot afford to adopt individualistic approaches or even try to destabilise the country for personal reasons and selfish ambitions. This is what they were trying to do, Mr Speaker, Sir.

On the contrary, we need to have the required selflessness to act for the superior well-being and stability of our Republic, and all those who are not here because they are not courageous enough and who are calling my colleague and I '*transfuges*', have

understood nothing. In times like these, we should work harder and shoulder our responsibilities to help our nation mitigate the adverse effects of the world economic crisis.

M. le président, le discours du budget a suscité beaucoup de commentaires positifs de la part de la population en majorité, tandis que du côté de l'opposition c'est encore et toujours la même rengaine. En effet, ce n'est guère surprenant et, sans même les écouter, nous savions déjà ce qu'ils allaient dire. Telle chose n'est pas bonne, telle ou telle chose aurait du être faite autrement, aurait pu être réalisée différemment. En fait, M. le président, hormis une poignée de personnes de l'opposition, on a eu droit à très peu de critiques constructives. Nous avons le regard posé sur le côté du verre plein, et eux avaient toujours le regard posé du côté du verre vide. Ils jouaient aussi, et vont encore continuer, à l'oiseau de mauvais augure, comme dans les tragédies grecques. Et si on les écoute, nous courrons tout droit à la catastrophe avec ce budget. Mais, que voulez vous ? C'est cela le jeu démocratique ! On doit bien les écouter, comme ils auraient dû nous écouter.

Ce gouvernement est là, M. le président, pour remplir son contrat avec la population, que cela fasse plaisir à l'opposition ou non. Malheureusement pour elle, la population nous a votés nous pour diriger ce pays, et c'est ce que nous faisons. C'est Dr. Navin Ramgoolam qui est le Premier ministre voté par le peuple, et il a nommé l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval ministre des finances après la défection du MSM, et c'est cela le choix du peuple; et *Vox Populi*, M. le président, c'est *Vox Dei* ! Je suis sûre que l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval accomplira un bien meilleur travail.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we remain guided by the leadership of the Prime Minister. Our orientations are aligned with this government's programme. We have the ability, the capability, the human capital and, above all, the commitment and determination to fulfil our mandate and our promise to the Mauritian people. It is so easy to run away, much more difficult to stay and face the challenge. This is what is called real courage! This is what is called honour and respect to the pledge made to the people! I thank God every day that I realised that in time. That is not to say though, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the challenges ahead are any less easier.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the overall measures enunciated in the Budget are, in fact, a gamut of priority programmes required for maintaining macro-economic stability, as well as introducing innovative measures, all for 'Growth for the Greater Good'. These measures are about intensifying our actions that make a difference to the lives of men, women, children, the youth, the unemployed, the poor, the senior citizens, as well as invigorating our institutions for enhanced service delivery.

The Minister of Finance has been strategic in the formulation of various social and economic policies aimed at strengthening the domestic business environment, to consolidate growth whilst, at the same time, enhancing the quality of life of our fellow citizens, whether these pertain, *inter alia*, to tax reforms, promoting Mauritius as a quality destination for FDI, portraying our Republic as a potential hub that offers new avenues for the education and medical sectors, restructuring our institutions, reinforcing the justice system, revisiting our housing policies for the vulnerable and, finally, mainstreaming gender, a subject which is of particular relevance to my ministry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was listening, just before the break, to the hon. first Member of Constituency No. 7, and I was wondering whether she had really understood the Budget; the way that it has been presented.

Mr Speaker Sir, various provisions contained in the Budget are gender sensitive. Mr Kofi Annan, the former UN Secretary-General, stated, and rightly so, I quote -

“If development is not engendered, it will be endangered”.

Indeed, every aspect of development should have a gender perspective, and that is the only way men and women will be able to demonstrate their full potential and equally contribute to the progress and development of their country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, speaking of gender, allow me now to elaborate on how the various measures of 2012 Budget are indeed aligned with the mandate of my Ministry. I am sorry that hon. Mrs Bholah is not here; she would have understood a little bit better. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Minister of Finance, who has been sensitive to the emerging needs and priorities of my Ministry as regards gender issues.

The turning point, Mr Speaker, Sir, was in 2010. The renaming of my Ministry from the Ministry of Women's Rights, Child Development and Family Welfare to that of Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Again, this decisive, innovative and visionary step was taken by the Prime Minister. It is aligned with these international trends pertaining to the paradigm shift from a woman in development perspective to a gender and development perspective.

Gender being a cross cutting issue, my Ministry has, since May 2010, been working towards mainstreaming this concept in all government programmes and policies.

In fact, since June 2010, my Ministry is actively engaged in raising awareness on the gender concept for the population at large and, as regards the query that was made by the hon. first Member for Constituency No. 7, when she was saying that there was no budget for engendering Ministries, we are also helping Ministries to engender their sectoral policies and programmes. Eight Ministries have already had gender focal cells. Now we are engendering four more and we will go on engendering Ministries until all the Ministries of this Government have gender focus policies. This concept of gender is often misunderstood.

My Ministry has, as at date, been able to sensitise about 2,000 persons on this issue. We are convinced that progress in our campaign will contribute significantly in changing mindsets. It is essential especially when we speak of women's empowerment that all our policies are seen from a gender lens. It is for this reason, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I am grateful that several budgetary measures are gender sensitive and I am sure that these will contribute positively to addressing prevailing gender gaps.

For instance, I am particularly pleased, Mr Speaker, Sir, to note that this Budget places a massive focus on the SME sector, but I believe that although the budgetary measures regarding this sector have been announced in a gender neutral perspective, all efforts should be made to encourage women to take advantage of these measures. The provisions under this component will surely create the space for women entrepreneurs to evolve on the same footing as their male counterparts.

My Ministry firmly believes that the economic empowerment of women remains a key factor in their overall wellbeing. It is within this perspective that the National Women Entrepreneur Council has, over the years, implemented various projects for women entrepreneurship development.

Small businesses are an important source of revenue as well as job creation. Adequate resources and additional facilities have been allocated to those engaged in SMEs, namely through -

- The release of three billion rupees at a reasonable rate over the years;
- Waiving of bank administrative charges;
- Provision for back up regarding guarantee on overdraft, and
- abolition of inscription fees leviable on loans

All these, Mr Speaker, Sir, confirm that this Government recognises the importance that SMEs hold for the economic empowerment of its citizens and that is all the more pertinent for women.

I was surprised also yesterday that hon. Mrs Labelle tagged the National Women Entrepreneur Council as being ineffective, talking of an '*aveu d'échec*', to quote her own words when she mentioned that the Commission for the Democratisation of the Economy was going to implement a pilot programme to empower vulnerable women through small-scale farming projects.

Anyone taking cognizance of the achievements of the NWECC would concur that since the setting up of this institution, it has helped many women entrepreneurs enhance their livelihoods whilst contributing to the economic development of the country.

With the backup support provided by the Council, many women entrepreneurs, registered with this Council, have made constant progress in their endeavour to develop their sector of activities.

We have currently, Mr Speaker, Sir, around 3,350 women entrepreneurs who have benefited or are benefiting from a wide array of services offered both at the National Development Centre at Phoenix and the Women Empowerment Centre at Triolet.

Women entrepreneurs are also benefiting from incubator facilities at very minimal cost at Phoenix, thereby facilitating them to manufacture and market their products in a conducive environment and stimulate growth of women owned enterprises.

Facilities that are provided at the Incubator Centres comprise business counselling, marketing assistance, skills development, product display and mentoring services amongst others. Gradually our investments in entrepreneurial ventures and our focus on women owned micro, small and medium enterprises are paying dividends.

Women entrepreneurs are today participating in national and regional trade fairs organised by SADC and COMESA.

Soon I shall revive the Women Entrepreneurship Award as a means of enlarging the scope of participation of women entrepreneurs and encouraging them to further professionalise their businesses.

My aim is to motivate women entrepreneurs engaged into micro, small and medium enterprises to demonstrate their skills, know-how and talent in the field of entrepreneurship whilst, at the same time, helping them to become more and more visible in the business world.

Moreover, the National Women Entrepreneur Council has been organising regular buyers-sellers meetings which provide a forum for women entrepreneurs to market their products. A number of them have established, through this measure, contacts with supermarkets, hotels and large firms. In the same vein, the market centre at Phoenix and the Boutique at Wooton Social Welfare Centre are strategic outlets that would gain if they were better known for women entrepreneurs to market their products.

The National Women Entrepreneur Council has established a strategic partnership with the British American Insurance Company and the Barclays Bank through the signature of MoUs and has received funding to strengthen the entrepreneurship culture amongst its affiliates.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am convinced that the new facilities provided in the 2012 Budget will reinvigorate women-owned enterprises because when we consider the figures for the quarter April to June 2011, we see that only 19,600 women are self-employed as compared to 69,100 men.

Sustaining gender and development approach will surely, Mr Speaker, Sir, yield our expected results.

The onus is now on women entrepreneurs to take full advantage of the innovative measures that this Budget offers.

In a bid to provide all the backup support essential as start-ups for an enterprise, it is imperative that potential women entrepreneurs be provided with a Ready Reckoner, that is, a user-friendly handbook which will spell out clearly the steps to be followed to ensure the viability of their enterprises. To that end, the National Women Entrepreneur Council is shortly coming up with a guide for women entrepreneurs that sets forth clear guidelines and provides useful tips on how to go about setting an enterprise.

Feedback from the ground so far has shown that due to various impediments, women entrepreneurs often restrict themselves to a limited *clientèle*. This, in turn, results in limited turnover, hence the importance of giving them more visibility on the regional, local and international markets.

The National Women Entrepreneur Council is, in this context, coming up with a directory in 2012 that will list out the particulars of its affiliates. This will, at the same time, serve as an important tool to market their products and services.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to reiterate my commitment to boost up the entrepreneurship culture amongst women. It remains one of the main avenues for women's access to economic empowerment and autonomy. We know that not all women can access the labour market. We are also aware that some women have the potential and required expertise to excel in enterprise development. Hence, my Ministry and the National Women Entrepreneur Council will constantly provide support through existing and upcoming entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, experience has proven that the clustering of women entrepreneurs engaged in similar entrepreneurial activities, have more bargaining power whilst tapping for resources from various agencies; negotiating for their products and ultimately gaining more visibility in the business world. To that end, I am envisaging as from early 2012 to motivate women entrepreneurs engaged in micro and small businesses to go for clusters. I am referring here to those engaged in the textile, handicraft, agri-business and food processing sectors as well as other services. I am

convinced that the array of services to be made available to women entrepreneurs will surely redress the gender inequality in the sector of enterprise development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I also wish to commend the decision to have additional budgetary allocations in support of 175 units in the industrial estates as a means to address a long felt need. Most women are engaged in micro or small enterprises, as I said earlier, and often they choose to operate from their homes. But for those who wish to do otherwise, I will appeal to the Minister of Finance that they have equal access, as their male counterparts, to space at the industrial units at subsidised rentals, at an initial stage and thereby do business in a better, in a more conducive environment.

Concurrently, this process will pave the way to a culture of competitiveness and equal opportunity while offering to women also the possibility to engage themselves in innovative sectors. Our awareness campaign on Women Entrepreneurship Development reveals that many women have had to abandon their business ventures prematurely. This is often due to difficulties encountered to generate revenue at the initial phase of their activities. I am confident that a monthly grant of up to Rs20,000 to entrepreneurs during the initial year of doing business will go a long way to motivate potential women entrepreneurs to set up their enterprises. I will ensure that NWECD provides all the technical support to potential women entrepreneurs to help them design innovative business plans so that they can take full advantage of this measure. This is a good strategy to help them stabilise their enterprises at the initial phase of operation.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am personally concerned on how best we can collectively address the issue of unemployment amongst women which stands at 12.1% as at end of June 2011 as compared to 5.5% amongst men. The various opportunities offered to boost up unemployment should be maximised by women. With the view to improving girls' and women's employability, my Ministry has over the past two years provided capacity building programmes to some 8,000 young girls and women in our Women Centres. These programmes focused on providing them with relevant skills in various sectors. Feedback from the ground reveals that our training strategies have enabled women to find employment and become economically independent. This is, indeed, our goal.

Moreover, given that my Ministry has set up Agricultural Clubs in its Women Centres and Social Welfare Centres, I look forward to the fact that members of these clubs can benefit from the pilot programmes related to small scale farming projects as announced. Mr Speaker, Sir, innovative measures such as the Sponsored Pre-Job Training Initiative, through the target of 8,000 unemployed youths also has a gender dimension. Unemployed girls and women should have equal chances to enter the world of work. Often, like has been said by hon. Ms Deerpalsing, our youths are denied employment opportunities because they lack experience. This initiative offers our young job seekers real hope that the apprenticeship programme will impart to them the right knowledge, the skills and attitude that is essential for their future careers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now elaborate on issues pertaining to the rights and protection of children. Let me first acknowledge with deep gratitude, the measures enunciated in the budget to reinforce the capacities of institutions working for the survival and protection of our children. I am more specifically referring here to the National Children's Council and the Child Development Unit. We have unfortunately, over recent years, been witnessing a recrudescence of cases as well as the emergence of more and more complex child violence cases. These range from cases of neglect of children, child battering cases to manslaughter and murder of children, amongst others. Sexual violence is also taking its toll on our children and youth. Urgent actions to curb and eliminate both sexual and physical violence against our children are highly warranted.

Institutional set ups with respect to providing the right environment, with trained personnel, to deal with child protection issues is of paramount importance. These infrastructures and techniques need to be constantly revisited, so that our services are more efficient and effective.

Mr Speaker, Sir, during the short while that I have assumed office as Minister for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, I have noticed that often inadequate resources have been one of the main factors that impeded on immediate intervention in cases of child violence. I can still recall last year hon. Mrs Bappoo complaining about this. I was sitting in Parliament and listening to her, complaining that

she did not have enough officers to tend to the different cases. But now that I am in the seat that she occupied previously, I can see how right she was.

Given the complexity of the cases with which our officers are dealing on a daily basis, it is of vital importance for them to intervene promptly to calls from doctors, Police, teachers, grandparents, neighbours or any anonymous callers reporting on an alleged case of a child being victim of violence. This process may entail removing children temporarily from their homes and parents' custody, if the situation so warrants.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the stakes are high. It is not our aim to separate a child from his/her family. In fact, our mandate is to preserve the family unit for the optimal development of the child. But while we agree that overestimating the dangers and the degrees of dangers can at times needlessly shatter a family and thereby fragilising the child's closest relationships, we must also bear in mind that underestimating the dangers can entail suffering and, in some cases, even death for the victim.

In order to ensure a closer monitoring of the services being offered in Day Care Centres, it is imperative to have a pool of officers to regularly conduct visits thereto, to ensure that these operate in conformity with established rules and standards. To that end, I am proposing to set up an Inspectorate Unit shortly.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Members of the House are well aware of the degree of criticism that is regularly leveled against the Child Development Unit (CDU), especially by the media. This in turn projects a negative image of the CDU to the public. Child Protection Officers, Mr Speaker, Sir, are central players in the Government's response to child abuse. Their work is often unacknowledged mainly because of the necessity for the CDU officers to remain silent in order to protect the identity of victims. A certain section of the press on the other hand has other agendas, where they do not hesitate to splash over the news each gory details of every intimate story that is handed to them often by doubtful and inaccurate sources. This sensationalism is in turn highly detrimental to the victims themselves and undermines the efforts of the CDU in preserving the confidentiality of these sensitive cases and helping the victims to reconstruct their self-confidence.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the CDU officers are, in fact, the first ones to attend to cases of children victims of violence reported to them. The CDU services encompass family

therapy, child therapy, parent education, emergency sheltering, amongst others and thus inadequate human resources impacts negatively on service delivery. The forthcoming recruitment of 20 officers to help in child protection is most welcome. I must here thank again the hon. Minister of Finance because when I asked him for help and I went to his office and discussed with him, he immediately agreed to help which, apparently, had not been the case for hon. Mrs Bappoo when she went to ask for help to the former Minister of Finance. This additional human resource will undoubtedly help to rationalise the service delivery of CDU while adopting a child friendlier approach.

(Interruptions)

I would have liked them to be here, they would have understood what I am talking about.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are definitely here geared towards growth for the greater good. As rightly pointed out by the hon. Minister of Finance, growth does require investment and investment in its turn requires demand. Investment can be interpreted, not only as monetary inputs, but also as investment in human capital. I am relieved to note that this Budget is indeed facing up to the demand challenge even when the situation is bleak as regards the situation of children who have to be placed in shelters. Here again, hon. Duval has positively responded to our demand for more space to accommodate them in places of safety.

In its commitment to provide with six new shelters to ensure that each district of this country will have a full-fledged shelter for children, this Government is leaving no stone unturned to extend comprehensive social protection to those distressed and needy children.

My Ministry places high on its agenda that appropriate care and accommodation be provided for children who have been removed from their family settings. All the existing shelters, Mr Speaker, Sir, be them private or public, are presently operating beyond capacity and it is precisely within this backdrop that, since I have assumed office and taken cognizance, namely of the situation prevailing at our shelter of Pointe aux Sables, that I realised the urgency of having additional shelters.

The present intake capacity of this shelter is overstretched. Such a situation is not conducive for a child who is already traumatised. I am sure that all Members of this House are sensitive to this issue.

At this stage, I would like to point out that my colleague, hon. Mrs Bappoo, had already set the ball rolling regarding this pressing issue. In fact, I wish to seize this opportunity to thank her for initiating the process of setting up a shelter for boys at Cap Malheureux and for babies at Floreal. As at date, Mr Speaker, Sir, the number of children placed by my Ministry in different shelters and institutions amounts to an average of 500.

In order to accelerate the accommodation of children victims of abuse, I find it more realistic to operate shelters in rented buildings. Decentralising our services will make the results also smarter. In this endeavour, strategic partnerships between Government/NGOs/Civil Society will serve best the interest of children.

Mr Speaker, Sir, poverty, delinquency, violence, abuse are, but few factors that undermine the well-being of our children. Mauritius being signatory to various international children's rights instruments, confirms of our commitment to address this multi-faceted scourge. I would also like to make an earnest appeal to NGOs working in the interest of children to come forward with project proposals for the rehabilitation of children victims of violence. Government alone, without the help of NGOs and the support of the civil society, cannot handle effectively the sensitive problem. We need the help of everyone. It is imperative that maximum efforts be deployed to curb this societal ill. And some of the budget provisions announced are doing just that. For example, the provision of access to standard '*crèche*' to some 2,000 children in Mauritius and Rodrigues will contribute to relieve the problems of many parents who often do not have other alternatives than to leave their children or their babies in unsafe conditions.

It is also encouraging to note that companies will now be able to use their CSR funds to provide free of charge, *crèche* and kindergarten facilities for their employees earning less than Rs12,000 a month. This new measure shall enable children coming from families with limited income to evolve in a healthy environment that will, in turn, improve the chances of those children to progress in life.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we frequently come across cases of children who are denied access to pre-primary education due to financial constraints of parents. The extension of the pre-primary grant to children of 3 years old is, in this case, most welcome. It will also go a long way in helping women willing to take up employment thereby improving the economic situations of their families.

In a bid to raise the family income, more and more women wish to engage themselves in remunerative jobs. The need for adequate and safe child minding services is, therefore, becoming primordial. In this context, the decision of Government to amend the Early Childhood and Care Education Act to provide Child Care facilities for children beyond the hours of operation of pre-primary and primary institutions is a laudable initiative. The children, thus taken care of, will be in a safe environment, and that is the more important thing, that will take on board their developmental and protective needs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraph 296 of this Budget Speech, which announces an increase in the grant-in-aid to special education needs schools by 25%, aims at better catering for some 3,000 children in need of special education.

Mr Speaker, Sir, children are children and should always be treated in a non-discriminative manner. This is exactly what this Government is doing by adopting an all-inclusive approach through this measure as well.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the third thrust of my mandate pertains to family welfare. This Budget definitely makes provisions for consolidating the family unit. A healthy social fabric is not only about how we open up economic opportunities for people to participate in wealth creation. It is also about how we give everyone a chance to succeed in his or her life.

Over and above granting land free of charge to 2,000 families who live on CHA housing estates, provision has been made in this Budget to make housing affordable to low-income families by providing that heads of household pay only the final third of cost of a housing unit, subject to them being agreeable to enter into a social contract.

Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make a special appeal. We are witnessing more and more these days a societal trend. There exists in our Mauritian society many single women-headed households, widows, divorcees or single mothers and, very often,

they struggle on their own, along with their children with very little help amidst much prejudice.

I appeal here to the relevant authorities to give due consideration to these women so that if they are also willing to enter into these social contracts, they can equally benefit from such housing facilities.

It is also noteworthy that in the housing policy, Government is not forgetting the *sans domicile fixe* and provision has been made for the creation of a shelter for them by the National Empowerment Foundation. Here again, I urge that the Social Housing Development Fund of Rs1.5 billion takes on board women with no fixed place of abode in the proposed shelter, as my Ministry is often and recurrently confronted with instances where women with children are *sans domicile fixe* and there are no places to which they can be referred for support and assistance.

As regards the key achievement pertaining to family welfare, Mr Speaker, Sir, they include, *inter alia* –

- The effective implementation of the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence and National Action Plan on the Family which were adopted by Government. As at date, 92% of the recommended actions of the National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence and 42% of the recommended actions of the National Action Plan on the Family have been successfully implemented.
- Moreover, in line with the Government Programme 2010-2015, the protection from Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act 2007 has been proclaimed in September this year, to strengthen the enforcement mechanism of the Act and to provide increased protection to victims of domestic violence, and
- Concurrently, a National Platform to End Gender Based Violence was launched on Wednesday 19 October last and a draft National Action Plan to End Gender Based Violence has been recently elaborated to enlarge the scope of interventions of my Ministry in order to address gender based violence in all its forms. Multi-sectoral approaches are based on multiple

partnerships involving Government agencies, Non Governmental Organisations and civil society.

We have also under the Special Collaborative Programme for Support for Women and Children in distress, funded a number of NGOs and Non-State Actors in their endeavour to fight against many scourges affecting the well-being of women and children.

Concurrently, my Ministry has provided financial assistance to NGOs working towards the prevention of Gender Based Violence, particularly those who have also taken on board men to support this cause.

In the context of the commemoration of the International Day against Violence against Women, scheduled on 25 November, the Africa UNite Campaign to End Violence against Women will be launched. I am inviting all my colleagues and I also invite you, Mr Speaker, Sir, to attend. This initiative is yet another means to sustain our actions in protecting women from violence. Actions to combat gender based violence have to be constant with the help and support of all men and women alike to be effective. All human beings have the right to live in dignity and respect.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one of my immediate priorities when I assumed office was to assess our service delivery in the various outstations of my Ministry. During these visits I noted that services being presently offered in Family Support Bureaux need to be revamped. Indeed, once policies and projects are in place, they need to be constantly reviewed to respond to emerging needs and challenges.

Moreover, I see that officers servicing our Family Support Bureaux have to handle complex cases, conduct counseling sessions, as well as attend to court, hospitals and other relevant institutions while assisting victims of violence. I feel that at the pace at which these officers have been delivering services over the years is becoming more and more demanding emotionally, as well as being time consuming. This situation has a negative impact on service delivery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I feel that these officers in turn need to be provided with appropriate support to deal with their pent up emotions. It is within this context that I am therefore envisaging enlisting services of experts in the domain of counseling to conduct regular debriefing sessions with these officers.

M. le président, le stress et la pression externes exercés sur ces officiers, que ce soit à la CDU ou à la *Family Unit*, sont parfois débordants. Ces sessions thérapeutiques de *debriefing* pourront leur permettre de se ressourcer afin qu'ils puissent donner le meilleur d'eux-mêmes dans leur métier.

Another salient feature that struck me is the need to modernise our services presently offered at the shelters catering for the survivors of Gender Based Violence. To that effect, I am exploring the possibility to come up with a Mid-Way Home to cater for women victims of Gender Based Violence on the basis of best practices of other countries. I am here referring to a shelter that would adopt a two-pronged approach: ensuring the safety of the victim whilst at the same time, giving the latter the necessary support to rebuild her confidence and engage into income generating activities. I have no doubt that such a measure will be beneficial to victims of Gender Based Violence and that we would do away with the myth that a shelter for victims of violence should be a place of confinement.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the enactment of the Protection from Domestic Violence Act in 1997 and its subsequent amendments, my Ministry has put into place various services to support victims of violence. In contrast, services for perpetrators of violence have been limited only to awareness campaigns. I will, therefore, explore the possibilities of assistance from international organisations and technical expertise from other countries to train our family counseling officers on how best to engage in counseling of perpetrators.

In a nutshell, Mr Speaker, Sir, our motto is to have a society free of violence, which believes in the preservation of its family values and a society that works towards human dignity. In our endeavour to translate our motto into reality, it is of utmost importance that we make an overall assessment where matters stand in regard to women empowerment and gender equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. It is within this context that I will have recourse to consultancy services to carry out an in-depth audit of the various services offered by all the units of my Ministry.

The rationale behind this exercise is to use a SWOT analysis, that is, identifying the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of the present structures with a view

to enhancing service delivery so that our services are SMART, namely: Specific, Measureable, Affordable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Given that the CDU has been lately the focus of criticism from various quarters, I have decided that it would be strategic to start the auditing exercise with this unit. I am hopeful that the findings and recommendations will give my Ministry a clearer orientation on how best to gear its policies while maximising on its present human resources.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are dealing with human lives, we cannot afford to be complacent and let blindfolded criticisms undermine all the good work being undertaken by my Ministry. I insist that when it comes to children, victims of violence and abuse, their identities should not be disclosed to the public. As regards adult victims, only with their permission should their identities be made known. The CDU for its part will continue to respect the confidentiality of cases handed over to them and not fall prey to the media who are relentlessly trying to take them on the path of sensationalism.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government will keep its promise, work hard so that all the speculations that our future is at stake, as voiced out by Members of the Opposition, are proved wrong.

To end, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me thank both the Prime Minister and the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the efforts put in, ...

(Interruptions)

...for this budgetary exercise ...

(Interruptions)

I am happy to see you here....

(Interruptions)

...for this budgetary exercise in order to keep our country on a steady course and provide innovative insights to support both the economic and social perspectives of development. All the measures spelt out in the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, will undoubtedly sail us through the journey on which we have embarked. Now is the time for all of us to say that the real work begins with you and me. There are plenty of opportunities ahead and our task is to transform these opportunities into real and tangible outcomes as our actions today will determine our tomorrow.

I thank you for your attention.

(5.50 p.m.)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, right from the outcome, this Budget is a Budget *pour les petits copains du secteur privé*.

Before I tackle the content of the Budget speech of the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to throw some light on the world economy. Every human being on earth currently carries a debt burden of nearly Rs700,000 on average. Mr Speaker, Sir, every child is sharing the same burden debt at birth. In fact, debt liabilities are growing faster than GDP expansion rate. Overall, outstanding debt worldwide has more than doubled in the past ten years to \$158 trillion in 2010 up from \$78 trillion in 2000. The global population is currently estimated at \$7 billion whereas worldwide gross domestic products reach \$75 trillion last year. This translates to a per capita GDP of Rs320,000, which is less than half of per capita debt burden of Rs700,000. In theory, this makes the human population a bankrupt race and financially the most dangerously exposed and vulnerable in this history. The debt toll, Mr Speaker, Sir, is rising and it will be higher next year. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is very alarming because we can't say Mauritius is economically protected. We depend on many countries for our economy. Mr Speaker, Sir, we are already facing difficulties, if not nearing to bankruptcy.

Let me now consider the debt burden in Mauritius. Our debt, Mr Speaker, Sir, is about Rs200 billion inclusive of local and foreign debt. Every Mauritian at present carries a debt burden of Rs2 m. on average. The hon. Minister of Education said: 'Education starts from birth, if not from the womb'. Mr Speaker, Sir, I can say today that the debt burden starts from the womb. We must be alarmist, especially when I just heard hon. Ms Deerpalsing mentioning the crash of Euro. Mr Speaker, Sir, we must be alarmed to protect the future of our children, if not ours. The hon. Minister of Finance is focusing a growth rate of 4%, that is, 0.2% less than last year and he said that this will be same as the growth rate GDP in section 3 of his speech. Mr Speaker, Sir, the world GDP is shrinking and may reach to 3.5%. We can't be so optimistic, Mr Speaker, Sir. If our growth rate does not reach 4% and if it will be around 3.8% as predicted by MCCI, this

means that our deficit will be greater than 3.8%, that is, it will be greater than Rs20 billion. Mr Speaker, Sir, to finance this deficit, Government has to borrow and thus, this will in turn increase further our debt burden, which may reach 60% public sector debt to GDP ratio and which will be very alarming.

Mr Speaker, Sir, now let me consider the content of the Budget. The 10 cents tax on the SMS that we, on this side of the House, called it a youth tax, and I humbly beg the hon. Prime Minister to really consider to waive this tax. The hon. Prime Minister, himself, years ago said -

“The youth should live their lives.”

SMS today is a must for the young population to communicate. SMS is not an evil to be taxed. We already pay 15% at source on prepaid card. Please, let the young ones, namely hon. Ms Deerpalsing, continue to send to our dear colleague, hon. Ameer Meea at no extra cost SMS. Mr Speaker, Sir, I honestly hope that hon. Prime Minister, in consultation with the hon. Minister of Finance, will waive this 10 cents tax to take to task the hon. Minister of Education for saying:

“the young ones, that is, students enjoying free travel, etc. should contribute to the revenue of the Government through this 10 cents tax”.

Regarding the old age pensioner, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance, in section 241, I quote -

“We all know people who have worked hard, yet at the age of 60 have very little to show for it”.

The hon. Minister mentioned sharing prosperity with all, but what the hon. Minister of Finance has done, giving a compensation between 6.6% and 11.5% to workers in the low wage bracket. For the Basic Retirement Pension, it will only go up to Rs3,500, an increase of Rs204. The old age pensioners are the one who are suffering the most, Mr Speaker, Sir, their financing for high medicine cost, etc. I beg the hon. Prime Minister and hon. Minister of Finance to fully compensate the old age pensioner to the tune of Rs330.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the CWA - we are very concerned on this side of the House as well as the Government - it has always acted through management by crisis. The latest is the Bagatelle Dam and the dam of Rivière du Poste that was approved by Government, but not implemented to divert water to Mare aux Vacoas. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Utilities replied on Wednesday last that the project is ongoing. This is not the case because in a reply to a Parliamentary Question, he said: 'the basement of the dam had to be dug deeper and the cost was too high and the case has been abandoned so far'. Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are paying the price because the project was not well planned and studied.

Mr Speaker, Sir, project planning is one of the most crucial phases in the life cycle of a project. A well planned and structured project, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a determining factor leading to its successful implementation. This has not been the case for Rivière du Poste dam, which was about to divert – if I am not mistaken -10,000 metres cubes of water daily. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, because '*pani nai ba*' we are getting duty free beauty care; perfumes, *eau de toilette*, etc. This, I am sure will help those who can't have a shower because of lack of water. It is a well known fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that hotels get priority for water supply. I propose to the hon. Minister of Finance to consider seriously for the hotels to contribute to a fund that can be used for erecting reservoir for neighbouring villages.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance mentioned in section 89 that law will be amended for Permanent Residence holders who can purchase an apartment and attract more FDI. I would like to bring to the attention of the House that Permanent Residence holders, should not be allowed to apply for a loan locally, to finance their purchase. We really want to increase our FDI. So, they must get their money from abroad, and the government should insist on that and watch on it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding public officers working on Saturdays for accessibility of the public to public services, I am for it. But there is evidence that, where people work on Saturdays in the public sector, there is an increase percentage of absentees on Monday, even if they are paid overtime for Saturday work.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the Rs500,000 grant mentioned in paragraph 307 to every government school, that is, to the PTA Committee, this is very welcoming because this will definitely improve the school environment. But, in paragraph 309, it is said –

‘(...) the community at large must be able to use these facilities for learning social, cultural and sport activities’.

Let me bring to the attention of this House that, where the PTAs spend on the school environment, they always refuse for others to get access freely, fearing the damaging of amenities; something to consider for PTAs not to be discouraged to attend to the needs of the students.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the increase of Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 for the inoperable cases in Mauritius, I just want to draw the attention of the House that, in the near future, we should not fall in the trap of lobbies from private clinics to enjoy this grant by trying to operate on patients locally by ‘*soi-disant*’ expert doctors coming from abroad. The hon. Minister of Finance, Mr Speaker, Sir, mentioned in paragraph 178 that –

‘The Medical Council Act will be amended to review the criteria for registration of general practitioners and specialists’.

I am only hoping that the amendment will not lower our standard of cure as compared to some years ago, by recognising local and qualified doctors with less experience and training, as is stipulated in the Act presently. Some locally qualified doctors and dental surgeons rush to China or elsewhere for specialisation without experience and exposure in clinical domain. I know one dental surgeon who left for specialisation in dentistry without even being registered with the Dental Council or having clinical experience. And when they come back, they are going to ask to be employed as specialists.

As I am speaking on dentistry, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would humbly ask the hon. Minister of Health to strongly consider the reintroduction of fluoride tablets to pre-primary and primary students, because fluoride therapy is the best preventive measure for

dental caries. I have loads and loads of evidence, Mr Speaker, Sir, to show that fluoride treatment is the best preventive measure.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if this Budget can give multi-millions to the rich, why can't this government spend one or two million rupees for better dental care? Since I am speaking of capitalist budget, my conclusion on this Budget is that it is a fatty Budget for the private sector. But, what in return from them? Do we know their programme of investment and project? Well, I don't! It should be a 'give and take' mechanism. Of course, I don't mean corruptive taking mechanism; I mean it must be a muscular participation in our economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now come to infrastructure. Multi-billions have been spent and will be spent for the decongestion programme. We need to improve our infrastructure; it is a more than a must, Mr Speaker, Sir. But what do we see? I can sum it all by saying that it is management by crisis. Let me start with the famous Soreze diversion. Yesterday or the day before, the speed limit was 60 km, and now it is 40 km. Why? Because now, they come to know that we have on average one accident per day.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the design of curvatures at this diversion, I am absolutely sure, does not form part in the theory of civil engineer curriculum. The 'S' shape design - and here, at Soreze, we have double 'S' shape design - with a radius of less than 100 kilometres which never will be accepted by well qualified engineers. At the Soreze diversion, the curvatures are too sharp with about 20 metres radius. The design could have been different; visibility is very poor, and one must see, at least, five cars in front when he is going on his way. A curve in a highway should have radius curvature of about 130 metres. The radius of curvature defines the degree of curvature along the centre line of a roadway that a travelling vehicle must follow during construction of a road. Vehicles should be allowed to travel at maximum allowable design speed. The curvature must be optimised to permit fast but safe vehicle speed. The more severe the curvature of road, the slower the permissible vehicle speed. When performing route planning and computing speed prediction on a specific road, one of the most important considerations is the roadway radius of curvature, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The Soreze diversion, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are told, will be for about a year. Let me say, with my observative experience, it will last more than two years, and I pray God not to witness a fatal accident in the near future. We have seen what havoc was caused recently by just one lorry having its tyre punctured. 45 minutes traffic jam! And even the Leader of the Opposition could not come in time in this House.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me talk about the Phoenix roundabout. I asked a question, and I said in this House that I was at a loss about the roundabout of Phoenix opposite Phoenix Beverages. Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Infrastructure has given me the plan but, to my great surprise, the plan changed everything. Those coming from Petit Camp, Valentina, all those factories have no access on the roundabout of the IVTB. What they have to do is to make a left turn, go to the Dowlut roundabout, come down to go to Port Louis or to Jumbo. That is what we call decongestion diversion. For example, do you know how a lorry of the Phoenix Beverages coming from Curepipe will get into its factory? It has to go to St Jean roundabout, come up and take the left side to enter its factory. This is what we call decongestion; moving one type of decongestion to another place, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is costly to those running cars. I suspect that there will be problems very soon with Valentina and Petit Camp residents.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the St. Jean Roundabout, that's another big problem. Nobody knows! Millions and millions of rupees are being spent and not a single one, except probably the Minister of Public Utilities who knows what will be the *tracé* on the flyover of St. Jean Roundabout. We are the taxpayers and we should know where all this development is going. I am making an appeal to the hon. Minister of Public Utilities, that when there are road projects, they should be publicised or publish a communiqué and give the plan to the public so that they can give their opinion. It should not be after having done it that the public will make their objection known after they see that the system is not working. This is management by crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What about the famous Caudan flyover, Mr Speaker, Sir? So far, I understand that there was more than Rs60 m. as additional cost. Just for a small place already an additional Rs60 m.! And what we are giving to Rodrigues, Mr Speaker, Sir? A meagre

Rs45 m.! There are other places also where there have been additional costs, coming to Rs100 m., Mr Speaker, Sir.

The project at Caudan was to help reduce decongestion. Decongestion at the Caudan Roundabout was horizontal and we could hardly see forward. What the hon. Minister of Public Utilities is doing now is to have a flyover so that you can see when you go on top. It is giving opportunity for drivers to get congested on top so that they can see 100 cars waiting at Place D'Armes! Mr Speaker, Sir, this will be a bottleneck and before it starts, there is a non-avenue already.

What about the famous Phoenix to Beau Songes link road, Mr Speaker, Sir, with intersection at Vacoas Road? What do we see? The Minister says it is to decongest La Louise and that people from the Upper Plaine Wilhems can take the Beau Songes Road. Mr Speaker, Sir, from the outright - from the implementation of the plan - the plan had to be diverted from the original one, because they could not implement it. The project was not well-structured. They had to do a left turn and to have two traffic lights on the Vacoas Road, which is about 150 to 200 metres apart. What more, between those two traffic lights, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is a bus stop. I just learned this morning that the two traffic lights are not functioning and this is causing morning and evening congestion on the Vacoas Road. Mr Speaker, Sir, we had a chat about that with Dr. Hawoldar. The inhabitants of this area are asking for speed breakers and for CCTV cameras, because of high-speed cars and motorcycles racing down there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am just hoping, and I always pray God that we do not have fatal accidents on the Beau Songes Road. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me talk about the famous Jin Fei project. Tianli did not sound Chinese enough and they changed it to Jin Fei so that when we criticise the project they can say it is China bashing. Mr Speaker, Sir, what a human tragedy, causing a lot of suffering to planters who have been dislodged with poor compensation! More than Rs800 m. have been spent by the Government. It is taxpayers' money, Mr Speaker, Sir. Up to now, what do we see? Only a huge billboard to make people dream! Huge infrastructures, roads, drains, electricity, water and telecommunications, and not to forget weeds and grasses are growing fast there because it was a prime agricultural land. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister of Finance

has forgotten to vote a few millions of rupees as he has done for Rodrigues; Rs45 m. to clear land - *'Alle rasse l'herbe à Rodrigues'*. And, here, I think very soon they will have to vote a sum to clear the land.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you allow me, I will read two sections from an article which made reference to Jin Fei in Mauritius. Mr Speaker, Sir, the Chinese Government identified six countries, that is, six countries were selected through a competitive bidding process. Presently, Special Economic Zones are under construction in Egypt, Utopia, Mauritius, Nigeria and Zambia. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what an article in Mauritius says in conclusion, and I quote -

“To conclude, we believe the economic benefits arising from Chinese Special Economic Zones will be rather small relative to the costs incurred by Government in terms of road infrastructure and utility and telecommunication networks. Environmental concerns aside, there are also fears that providing water to the industrial zone will deprive already-vulnerable areas of the island of this precious commodity, especially in the dry season when water supply runs low and cuts are more frequent. Moreover, the Special Economic Zones will consume a tremendous amount of electricity, putting pressure on existing capacity, and inflating the important oil bill.

The Government has brandished the potential economic benefits of the project, and has claimed credit for attracting FDI on such a massive scale. However, the analysis suggests that the Special Economic Zones will bring little in terms of jobs, incomes, export earnings or technology spillovers. On the other hand, the Government will certainly lose in terms of tax revenue foregone due to many fiscal concessions granted to the Chinese operators and face heavier debt service charges as a result of borrowing to finance infrastructure and services. The Government had the opportunity to extract a better deal from the Chinese. Unfortunately, it missed the chance”.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what about our famous Neo Town? Up to now, Mr Speaker, Sir, the EIA has not been issued - I don't know why. But, what I do know is that the Government - that is, taxpayers' money - has agreed to finance water to the Neo Town to

the tune of Rs120 m., electricity to the tune of Rs1.2 billion, wastewater probably to the tune of Rs500 m. to Rs600 m., Telecom, etc. Up to now, not a single *coup de pioche*, Mr Speaker, Sir! Here, I can say that through the Patel Engineering, the reputation of Mauritius is at stake; it is the wrong message to the world for big development, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will end by mentioning the National Transport Corporation. What a catastrophic Corporation! There has been debt after debt and it still owes the Chinese Government since the early 90s. To a parliamentary question which I put to the hon. Minister recently, he circulated the costs of second hand vehicles and new spare parts. To my surprise, Mr Speaker, Sir, for the last four years, the total cost comes to Rs300 m. What more, the National Transport Corporation has bought for the last four years! 48 second hand engines! What a waste of fund, Mr Speaker, Sir! How many new buses could NTA have bought with Rs325 m., Mr Speaker, Sir?

To conclude, I would say that the world economy is at stake. Our economy depends on these countries. We must be very prudent; we should not be overconfident. All our projects should be well-planned and structured. We, in the Opposition, are here to bring constructive criticisms. The hon. Minister of Finance will learn more from this side of the House from his Budget than from his fellow colleagues on the other side who only flatter him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a fatty Budget for the private sector with no muscular activity from them. Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(6.22 p.m.)

The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr J. Seetaram):
Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to join my colleagues who have preceded me to extend my congratulations to the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development and to the hon. Prime Minister for the quality of the Budget proposed and for the innovative and far-reaching measures which have been outlined. These congratulations, Mr Speaker, Sir, are well-deserved to the hon. Prime Minister and to this Government because this Government has come through a lot recently. This Government

is standing firm and shall stand firm for a long time again because there have been so many attempts by so many people, so many *prophètes de malheurs* who even tried for a *coup de palais* against this Government.

(Interruptions)

But this Government, under the leadership of our hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, stood like a Mighty General behind his mighty army and fought all of them through. And all his warriors stood firm under his leadership and shall do so for years to come, for five years to come, for mandates to come.

(Interruptions)

Also, the belief in the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister, the trust of the population, and the people of this country lies on the responsible shoulders of our hon. Prime Minister. Some people who were hiding under his wings made it to this Parliament and history has revealed that they were ungrateful. This Government has been elected for a 5-year mandate. The alliance was and still is '*l'Alliance de l'Avenir*'. Everyone in this Government, when the party under which we all stood - PTR-PMSD-MSM - we all stood under one Prime Minister. The one and only! Mr Speaker, Sir, we find, for reason exposed before this Parliament only yesterday, that some people left this Government. Yesterday, hon. Seeruttun had the guts of accusing us of *transfuges*. Who are the real *transfuges*? Who are they?

(Interruptions)

They are not here today. This shows how irresponsible they are. And personally on the trust, on the belief of all the constituents of No. 10, myself, hon. Sayed-Hossen and hon. Jeetah, we were elected by our constituents and our duty is to do a mandate of five years.

(Interruptions)

That is the wish of the people and those who did not choose to follow that path, who did not wish to live up to the trust of the population, unfortunately, we can't do much for them because our duty is towards the future of this country and the future of this nation lies on this Budget.

I, again, congratulate our vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval for such a Budget. Indeed, as has rightly been pointed out, in many quarters, it is after a very long period that such a pragmatic and responsible Budget is being presented, Mr Speaker, Sir. Indeed, the Budget that provides the climate and conditions conducive to setting up and successfully carrying out business in our country.

Hon. Dr. Sorefan was talking about ways and highways and what not, un *discours décousu*, because he didn't even know where he was going. I am sure he was going in a no entry and to be able to live the right highway to the secured future of our country lies in the hands of our hon. Prime Minister.

This Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, cannot be considered in isolation. It must be placed in its real context, which is that, over the last six years, Mauritius had to deal with numerous external shocks, one after another. This included –

“The worst food price inflation and biggest surge in oil prices in decades, the worst financial turmoil in a hundred years, the worst economic crisis Europe has seen in a very long time, and now the relapse of global economic recovery”.

And this Government has remained resilient and shall continue to remain resilient.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on a daily basis we hear and read that the world economy is critically sick, is unsustainable, unfair, unstable, and creates unhappiness. But when we look at this Budget, we find that it is sustainable, fair and, above all, once the different measures have been implemented, it will increase the happiness of our population and enhance their well-being. We would, thus, be a better Mauritius.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget reflects the collective determination of this Government to address, with energy and devotion, the challenges ahead of us, of creating jobs, reducing poverty, building infrastructure and expanding our economy. It sets out a financial framework for implementing this vision, but also recognising building a Mauritius for the future, that it is an on-going project that must invigorate our capacity to grow, and must include all our citizens in that process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition asked: what does this Budget offer to the Mauritian population? I believe that they have not read the Budget or have not heard it because it offers to the investors a better climate by removing taxes that were inhibiting

investments. It sets the base for a high-investment, high-productivity, high-efficiency, high-technology and high-wage economy. It provides the means to market our products where the demand lies, a series of institutional reforms that will further consolidate our progress on governance, embed efficiency, provide greater satisfaction to employees, and improve our service delivery. For the civil servants, it offers additional possibilities for training that will enhance their capacity to deliver a high class service. For the youth, it offers the possibility to start a business, to obtain pre-employment experience, and in line with the adage "*mens sana in corpore sano*" which means a sound mind in a sound body. It also offers multiple possibilities for their physical development and for the poor, it offers better housing facilities and better social protection to the elderly and other vulnerable segments of society.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is long and I have tried to highlight only some parts which will have a profound impact on the life of the population. We are living in a defining time in human history - it is a time of change and transition. In fact, the paradox is that nowadays the only constant is change and change is fraught with risk, but also with immense opportunities. New economies are emerging, Mr Speaker, Sir, and are becoming *incontournables* on the world scene. They influence anything and everything. They are both large producers and consumers. They constantly move into new products and improving the ways of manufacturing the things they sell. If we do nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir, then we will day by day fall further behind. So, we have to act and this Budget is about action, vision.

It is in this context that this Budget is bold, and innovative is the word. Innovation is the way ahead and innovative measures are being proposed for potential entrepreneurs and for the SME community to graduate into competitive enterprises and face the challenges of a global economy.

Concerning the Start up Entrepreneurship Scheme, Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the most innovative measures of this Budget, is the Start up Entrepreneurship Scheme which is a truly innovative measure which can become an excellent platform to drive the youth and potential entrepreneurs to start a project and become successful entrepreneurs.

The contours of the scheme are already in place and my Ministry is now working with other stakeholders, on the details so that come January 2012, the scheme would be

in place. In fact, this scheme will subsidise selected entrepreneurs by paying a basic monthly salary of Rs20,000, for initially a period of one year, but could be extended to a maximum of three years. A selected entrepreneur means that his plan and strategy would have been vetted and approved by the MBGS as being a viable and potentially successful project.

This scheme is aimed at entrepreneurs with fresh, innovative, creative ideas, business models, or products or services, who may not be able to leave their job and also gainful income and start a business. Entrepreneurs would be mentored all the way through his project via the MBGS. This monthly salary allowance of Rs20,000 will be a way to encourage entrepreneurs with exciting, innovative ideas to make the jump and start a new business while having a guaranteed minimum salary.

This scheme which would operate under the aegis of the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme Unit adds an additional feather to an already garnished cap of the MBGS. Mr Speaker, Sir, you must certainly be aware that this Unit started its operation just one year back. It has a lean structure and is manned by highly qualified and competent employees. It operates with tight standards and has earned the respect of the business community. Up till now, 69 projects have been approved out of the 275 applications received and it is under progress. A total amount of over Rs75 m. has been approved and this is just the beginning and we shall continue on this trajectory.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Leader of the Opposition and other Members of the Opposition mentioning that there is no support for such schemes, no support for entrepreneurs. I must point out that the MBGS was created to provide supporting services to enable businesses, particularly the SMEs to grow by creating, managing and maintaining a professional hub. Its primary objectives are to improve access to quality business development, to boost economic growth through higher productivity.

It also provides mentoring and handholding facilities to those who do not meet the required criteria to access the financial instruments on offer. Once these enterprises are eligible for the financial support, the assistance of the MBGS is not to provide consultancy services, but together with the enterprise, to identify the areas where improvements are required, and to secure the services of the best experts to conduct the assignment.

The assistance to SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir, as rightly pointed out by my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, in the time of crisis one of the most vulnerable sectors of this economy is the SMEs sector. Typically, Mr Speaker Sir, SMEs face the following problems: lack of access to finance, lack of access to markets, lack of access to industrial space, lack of access to information and lack of access to cutting edge technology. This Government is fully aware of these constraints and these setbacks have been addressed and it is comprehensively stated in the Budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is an unfortunate perception, but still it is one nurtured by SMEs that most of the Stimulus Packages put into place are for the benefit of the large enterprises and not for SMEs. In fact, it is not true. Mr Speaker, Sir, these budgetary measures have now altered this perception. A complete package is being proposed, exclusively for SMEs and one can say that more could have been done or “enough is never enough” goes the saying, but at least this Budget has addressed the issues and proposed the measures that will improve the status of SMEs and allow them to survive this uncompromising environment, where survival of the fittest is the order of the day.

Following access to finance, Mr Speaker Sir, has been for some years a “*chemin de croix*” for most entrepreneurs. However, improving the access to finance of small and medium enterprises is crucial in fostering entrepreneurship, competition, innovation and growth in our economy.

Access to sufficient and adequate capital is a major difficulty faced by Mauritian entrepreneurs. This situation is compounded by the difficulties in accessing finance as SME financing is considered by many financial providers as a high risk activity and that generates high transaction costs but low returns.

In this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has taken the bull by its horns and has offered a new and revolutionary measure to our entrepreneurs. Over the next three years, a total amount of Rs3 billion would be available to our SMEs. That is not all, Mr Speaker, Sir. The terms and conditions associated are more than favourable. It would sound like “manna falling from heaven” to the entrepreneurs.

What are these terms and conditions, Mr Speaker Sir -

- i) 8.5 % interest rate;

- ii) new overdrafts, new bank loans as well as renewal of existing facilities are also covered;
- iii) no processing costs or related charges;
- iv) a partial guarantee of 35% by the Equity Fund to provide comfort to the Lending Institutions;
- v) bad debts from SMEs under that scheme can be claimed by banks as deduction from tax.
- vi) abolition of the inscription fees leviable on registered loans;
- vii) removal of registration duty which ranges from Rs1,000 to Rs10, 000 on loans not exceeding Rs1 m.

In addition, Mr Speaker, Sir, the DBM would be converted into a Micro Small and Medium Enterprise bank. This is another measure that will go a long way to ease access to finance to the SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, you tell me there is no support for SMEs; there is no vision. It is either ignorance like I said or bad faith. Mr Speaker, Sir, in order to state the less, the alert in its quest to support SMEs in times of global crisis, Government has further come up with a Resilience Plan of Rs7.3 billion for the next three years. SMEs will be able to access support from the National Resilience Fund, for example -

- leasing of equipment
- factoring schemes to assist in working capital
- provision of insurance cover on export and local sales
- Equity Fund to support corporate restructuring

In addition, SME support institutions will also be able access funds from the National Resilience Fund by submitting new project proposals aimed at supporting local enterprises.

Mr Speaker, Sir, few days back I heard a hon. Member from the Opposition mentioning that this Budget again has no bearing, no vision, no scheme to support SMEs. Again, it is either ignorance or total misunderstanding of the measures

announced, or even sheer bad faith. I hope that it is only *lapsus linguae*, as we say, a slip of the tongue and that the hon. Member would make amends.

Mr Speaker: You must not use the words 'bad faith' in relation to a Member of the House.

Mr Seetaram: Slip of the tongue.

Mr Speaker: No, it cannot be, you have to withdraw that.

Mr Seetaram: I withdraw that. Access to markets and quality of products, Mr Speaker, Sir, are the challenges ahead for SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, access to markets by SMEs seems to be the ultimate challenge. Coupled with the fact that the majority of products locally manufactured are not "export ready", it adds a further constraint in the efforts of the Government to promote locally manufactured products abroad.

However, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is natural that SMEs, like their larger counterparts, nurture the desire of exporting to foreign markets. This is perceived as a measure of success and is a powerful instrument in their competitiveness and further development. In addition, exporting to other markets provides the SMEs with certain leverage in respect of lending institutions which are more flexible, when it comes to them.

Nevertheless, in the international environment the battle is fierce, uncompromising and only those who succeed can stand the test of being among the best. This is, unfortunately, not the case presently with many of our SMEs.

This weakness and constraint is being addressed by using a concerted effort among all institutions involved in SME support so that a Market Development Plan for SMEs could be prepared. In addition, SMEDA and the MBGS are providing assistance for those SMEs which have export potential to make the grade and thus achieving export readiness.

In order to assist SMEs in becoming export oriented, Enterprise Mauritius will provide market intelligence as well as an Export Facilitation Desk to the SMEs. With a view to further coordinating their efforts, SMEDA and Enterprise Mauritius are planning

to hold joint meetings of their respective boards. This is a unique initiative which will, I am sure, go a long way to promote our products and secure further share of the global markets.

This Budget also makes ample provisions for tapping our traditional markets as well as exploring emerging markets. In fact, our aim and objective is to bring our products in those places where there is a demand for it. Thus, in addition to our traditional marketing tools, our plan is to hold Mauritius Weeks in places like Paris, Russia and India. Concerning the regional markets, countries forming part of COMESA, SADC and IOC will be targeted and more aggressive campaigns will be conducted.

One of the complaints frequently heard is that the SMEs cannot participate in international fairs. This has also been addressed in this Budget and this Budget provides an amount of Rs100,000 per year to an entrepreneur to cover his travelling and promotion expenses.

While a majority of SMEs have the vocation to internationalize and become global, the stark reality is that some will exist to serve only at a local level, that is, our local market, and a significant share of enterprises rely on the local market to ensure their survival and expansion.

There is provision for preferences to local SMEs in the Public Procurement Act but this has not been successfully implemented. In this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, we are once more revamping the measure by boosting the tendering preferences afforded to SMEs and giving priority to products manufactured by SMEs in the public sector procurement which does not exceed a certain threshold.

In this context, a Public Procurement Facilitation Desk is being set up at the level of SMEDA to assist entrepreneurs who are willing to participate in a bidding process. The operations of the Public Procurement Facilitation exercise will include among others -

- a) establishing links between SMEs and Public Procurement Policy Office;

- b) informing SMEs of available preferences in relation to public procurement;
- c) collection of information on tenders/expressions of interest from newspapers, procurement offices, local authorities, websites, etc.

In addition, SMEDA is extending its outreach in respect of marketing outlets in highly touristic areas of the country. It is viewed that such a measure will provide more visibility to local SMEs and assist them in selling their products. Recently, two SMEDA outlets have been opened at Bon Accueil and St. Pierre. As for Rodrigues, after consultation with my colleague and friend, the Minister for Fisheries, and Members of the Rodrigues Regional Assembly, I have taken necessary steps for the setting up of a Rodrigues SME shop which will be exclusively for the Rodriguan products. We must, at local level, set up more permanent SMEs/cooperative outlets or corners.

Access to industrial space, Mr Speaker, Sir, has also been addressed in this Budget. SMEs have always complained of lack of industrial space at affordable rentals. This constraint has had a stalling effect on the development and expansion of SMEs in the country. This desperate outcry of local entrepreneurs has not gone on deaf ears, Mr Speaker, Sir.

It is proposed to set up Regional SME Industrial parks around the country in selected areas. Industrial space with the required facilities will be provided to entrepreneurs at affordable rentals. An initial project would start soon at La Tour Koenig, La Valette, Bambous, and would, thereafter, be replicated in other localities.

Further, communication is the game, communication is the future and we have to vulgarise, we have to market. So, access to information, access to the right communication is the key, Mr Speaker, Sir. Access to information is vital for the successful expansion of SMEs. With a view to providing them with the necessary information, SMEDA is upgrading its Website into an interactive one and additional features would be incorporated in the existing SME Portal to make it more user-friendly and to promote the concept of E-commerce among the entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, women entrepreneurs have not been left behind in this Budget. Government is continuously formulating and implementing policies with a view to encouraging women's participation in all spheres of our economy. These initiatives are meant to further empower their various roles. Women entrepreneurs are now able to achieve financial independence, contribute to the family budget and raise their standards of living. I am personally committed to support entrepreneurial initiative for women. I have recently participated in the Buyer/Seller Meeting organised by the National Women Entrepreneur Council with my colleague, the Minister for Gender Equality and also in the workshops organised respectively by the *Association Entrepreneur au Féminin Océan Indien* and *Femmes Entrepreneurs de l'Est*.

After having elaborated on the different measures announced in the Budget, one cannot but conclude that now the entrepreneurs have everything they require to implement their project from concept to *commercialisation*.

They are today being provided with the required support institutions, access to finance at a very competitive rate, the possibility of marketing their products either locally or internationally and even adequate industrial space. And this is a first, Mr Speaker, Sir.

What is expected now of them is to upgrade the quality of their goods and services, whether it be in terms of packaging or presentation or in terms of the value for money concept. I believe in this Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance had taken out drawbacks and has laid down the potential solutions to be able to tackle all difficulties that entrepreneurs have been facing.

On the second limb, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the cooperatives sector, also as the Minister responsible for the Cooperatives sector, I wish to inform the House that the cooperative is an alternative way of doing business which equally falls under the category of SMEs. Over 95% of our cooperative societies will also be able to avail themselves of the benefits provided to SMEs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Government has expressed its firm commitment to strive its best for social cohesion, eradication of poverty, sustainable development, harmony at all levels, irrespective of caste, creed or religion. Cooperatives are efficient vehicles to

achieve these goals. Cooperatives are indeed special types of businesses, which enable us to achieve national objectives of democratisation, job creation and sustainable development.

Over the years, cooperatives have diversified and today they are operating in more than 30 different socio-economic activities. There are presently around 900 cooperative societies in Mauritius and Rodrigues which makes a total membership of about 120,000, jointly generating a total turnover of Rs4.1 billion.

Mr Speaker Sir, at a time when national economies are faced with high unemployment and financial instability, it is worth noting that the United Nations has officially launched and declared the year 2012, the International Year of Cooperatives where focus will be on the special way of doing business, namely, the cooperative enterprise model. The theme for International Year of Cooperatives 2012 is “Cooperative Enterprises build a better world”.

Cooperatives have indeed a global importance and ramifications and they should be given due recognition. The year 2012 will be an opportunity not only to raise awareness on cooperatives, but to demonstrate that cooperatives are successful value-based businesses.

I wish to thank my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for having earmarked funds to commemorate the International Year of Cooperatives 2012. A series of activities will be carried out for the cooperative sector by various stakeholders.

With a view to empowering vegetable growers, cow-breeders and women entrepreneurs, grants have been earmarked in the present budget for three Cooperative Federations: the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Federation Ltd. (MAMCF), Mauritius Livestock Marketing Livestock Cooperative Federation Ltd. (MLMCF) and Mauritius Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Federation Ltd. (MWEFCF).

Since my assuming responsibility as the Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives, I have deemed it necessary to have wide consultations with

representatives of Cooperative Federations, serving cooperative societies in various sectors across the island. Cooperators have had their voice heard out and the problems they were facing to attain their goals and objectives.

Cooperatives are being called upon to be more innovative and to make use of modern tools, techniques and equipment. I wish to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the Cooperative Movement is working very well in countries like India and Singapore. The Cooperative Sector in Mauritius has to keep pace with the new trends and evolution in the cooperative world, that is where the development lies.

In Mauritius, cooperatives are pioneering with the bio fertiliser and the Fairtrade concepts. Fairtrade is a relatively new concept, which advocates for a new model of trade, that is the *commerce equitable* and, *inter alia*, entails the payment of a Fairtrade premium to empower and encourage small farmers, producers and workers groups. The budget makes provision for the extension of the fair trade concept to other sectors apart from sugar. This is highly commendable.

Colleagues close to the sugar cane small planters community, will surely know that as at date 32 cooperative credit societies have made a breakthrough in having their sugar Fairtrade certified.

With this initiative, over 4,500 small cane producers are entitled to a Fairtrade premium of 60 US dollars per *tonne* of sugar. This premium is assisting many of our fellow planters to overcome the soaring price of inputs and cost of production.

Having adopted the fair trade measures, the Cooperative Credit Sector is, therefore, not only reaping additional premium, but it is in a way contributing towards the *Maurice Ile Durable* Campaign, to which our Prime Minister, the Rt. hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam has personally devoted much attention.

The concept of fair trade will now have to be extended to other products produced in large quantity by cooperatives and other organisations such as fruits, honey and flowers. This fair trade concept will be vulgarised in Rodrigues also for products such as honey and lemon.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cooperatives involved in the non-sugar agricultural sector will now be more export-oriented with the new freight rebate scheme involving a 25% cost-subsidy element. Cooperatives will thus have the potential of exporting, fruits can be pineapple or litchis in bigger volume.

Concerning our friends the fishermen grouped in cooperatives, they will be entitled to a VAT refund on semi-industrial fishing vessels. Fishers also would be refunded VAT on fishing gear, outboard and inboard engines up to 25 Horse Power as well as on VHF radios.

These measures will provide substantial relief to the fishers and, as such, it is expected that they will avail themselves of the latest technologies to better ensure their safety at sea.

Cow breeders, fishermen and pig breeders will also benefit from exemption of 10% customs duty on refrigerated vehicles. This measure will allow cooperatives involved in production and marketing of milk, fish and pork, not only to increase their profitability but also more importantly to meet the provisions of the Food Act.

We are furthermore proposing to rehabilitate and reorganise the *Maison des Eleveurs* at Henrietta and *Maison des Pêcheurs* at Cap Malheureux, Tamarin and Mahebourg, so as to provide additional marketing outlets for cooperative produce. Moreover, other sales outlets across the island will be envisaged.

Mr Speaker Sir, the Budget has so many measures that I have to mention all of them. Not the least, the Budget equally provides for the broadening of economic space abroad and in the region. Cooperative societies will be encouraged to tap available regional opportunities and explore new markets, so as to embark in cross border initiatives together with their international partners.

For instance, the Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation (MCAF) and the Mauritius Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Federation (MAMCF) may consider the possibility of producing onions, potatoes, garlic on a larger scale in Mozambique and Madagascar, with the assistance of the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Organisation (IFFCO), which is already financing a bio-fertilizer plant in Mauritius.

Let me now, Mr Speaker, Sir, give an outline of the Cooperative Credit Unions, which are presently performing very well, and which are being called upon to play a more prominent role. The objective of credit unions is to foster the savings culture in the country, and make credit more accessible to their members at concessionary rates.

Government in its programme had also called upon credit unions to sensitise individuals and the youth in particular, in mobilising savings and acquiring prudential financial management skills, and to provide appropriate financial products to encourage the setting up of businesses and also small and medium enterprises. Such course of action will help in addressing family indebtedness and promoting a culture of entrepreneurship among co-operators.

There are presently 151 credit unions operating in private companies, parastatal bodies, Ministries and educational institutions amongst others, with a turnover of Rs2.5 billion and a membership of some 70,000, while in Rodrigues there are three well performing credit unions serving around 4,500 members and having a turnover of Rs35 m.

There are presently around 70 Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Societies grouped into a Women Cooperative Federation. The Federation will be assisted in providing, *inter alia*, marketing and management support to its affiliated women societies and their members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is the first time that a grant of Rs500,000 is being allocated to the Mauritius Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Federation. This demonstrates our concern for the well-being of women in various fields of socioeconomic activities. I wish that more women take cognizance of the facilities being offered and benefits that they can obtain from the cooperative sector.

My Ministry will work in close collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare to devise a special scheme to support and empower women entrepreneurs in their endeavours to set up micro and small businesses, and their increasing participation in the cooperative sector.

Concerning the National Institute for Cooperative Entrepreneurship, which is the training wing of my Ministry, will be called upon to organise tailor made courses for women entrepreneurs, to empower them and enhance their management skills.

Mr Speaker Sir, we are already providing marketing support through monthly cooperative fairs in nine localities. These fairs aim at creating greater visibility for cooperatives, including women entrepreneurs.

We shall, henceforth, organise joint SME and cooperative fairs, with a view to widening the customer-based, and creating more market outlets for co-operators and small entrepreneurs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we all know that Rodrigues cannot be excluded from any development in our Republic. Cooperatives in Rodrigues have, over the years, played a vital role in the organisation and upliftment of the quality of life of many Rodriguans. There are 45 active societies, with around 9,254 members operating in various sectors. The percentage of the Rodriguan population grouped in cooperatives is about 25%, twice that of Mauritius. We will work in close collaboration with our Rodriguan partners, to ensure that the cooperatives in Rodrigues contribute further to the Rodriguan economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the budget provides for appropriate measures to enable cooperatives both in Mauritius and Rodrigues to flourish, thus enabling a greater number of our fellow countrymen to reap the benefit of development.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before concluding, I wish to reiterate my congratulations to the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development and also to our Prime Minister, without failing to highlight how this government is taking good care of the various sectors of our economy and society, including the vulnerable groups at risks. We would also wish to think that if such historic budgetary measures came one year ago, we would have benefited so much. Better late than never!

We will surely transcend the barriers to attain the set goals. Our future lies in our conviction that success will prevail. And success, conviction and future simply lie

with the *Parti travailliste*, with the PMSD and with the Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

I also seize this opportunity to invite hon. Members to participate fully in the various activities being organised to commemorate the International Year of Cooperatives 2012.

Thank you very much.

Mr Faugoo: Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

Dr. Jeetah rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Saturday 12 November 2011, at 11.00 a.m.

Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 7.05 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Saturday 12 November 2011, at 11.00 a.m.