

No. 25 of 2011



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

(UNREVISED)

FIRST SESSION

MONDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2011

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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
Dr. the Hon. Arvin Boolell, GOSK	Minister of Foreign Affairs, Regional Integration and International Trade
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
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Dr. the Hon. Rajeshwar Jeetah	Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology

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PRINCIPAL OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS

<i>Mr Speaker</i>	Purryag, Hon. Rajkeswur, GCSK, GOSK
<i>Deputy Speaker</i>	Roopun, Hon. Prithvirajsing
<i>Deputy Chairperson of Committees</i>	Deerpalsing, Ms K. R
<i>Clerk of the National Assembly</i>	Dowlutta, Mr R. Ranjit
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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 25 of 2011

Sitting of Monday 14 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)

PAPER LAID

The Prime Minister: Sir, the Papers have been laid on the Table –

Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

The Digest of Labour Statistics 2010.

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**MR A. K. R. – POLICE CELL - DEATH**

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 late Mr A. K. R. who passed away on 30 July 2011, whilst in Police custody, at the Rivière du Rempart Police Station, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, information as to if -

- (a) an inquiry has been carried out into the circumstances under which his dead body was found lying on the floor of his cell when he is reported to have hanged himself to the iron bar of the cell door and, if so, the outcome thereof;
- (b) his two sons were involved in the post-mortem examination of his body at different times and, if so, how, and
- (c) members of the Very Important Person Security Unit were present at the Rivière du Rempart Police Station, on or about 30 July 2011.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall again state the facts of the case, which I had fully detailed in my reply to Parliamentary Question B/761, made at our sitting of 18 October last, and which was tabled as a written reply.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in the reply, I stated that I was informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 17 July 2011, at 1805 hours, one Mrs M. F. B., aged 42, residing at NHDC, Bois Mangués, Plaine des Papayes, reported at the Plaine des Papayes Police Station the theft of her wristwatch, make unknown, colour yellow and white, from her wardrobe on the same day between 0630 hours and 1730 hours. She also reported that the value of the wristwatch was about Rs7,000. She further reported that she suspected her husband, one Mr J. D. L. B., aged 43, residing at the same address, with whom she was not in good terms. She claimed that her husband has become a heavy drunkard and often steals every handy item in the house, including her personal belongings. The case has been registered as OB 2531/11 - Larceny Breaking at the Plaine des Papayes Police Station.

On 25 July 2011, at 0900 hours, Mr J. D. L. B. was arrested by the police in connection with the case. In his statement to the police, Mr J. D. L. B. admitted having committed the theft and had sold the wristwatch to one Mr A. K. R. for the sum of Rs200.

On the same day, at 1200 hours, Mr A. K. R. was arrested. He denied the charge levelled against him. With his consent, his house and premises were searched, but no incriminating item was found.

As there were no proper detention facilities at Plaine des Papayes Police Station, both Mr A. K. R. and Mr J. D. L. B. were detained at Rivière du Rempart Police Station, which has detention facilities.

On 26 July 2011, a provisional charge for "Possession of Stolen Property" was lodged against Mr A. K. R., and a provisional charge for "Larceny" was lodged against Mr J. D. L. B. before the Pamplemousses District Court.

The police objected to their release on bail, and they were remanded to police cell up to 02 August 2011. They were detained at the Rivière du Rempart Police Station.

On 30 July 2011, at around 0445 hours, the police officer on sentry at the Police Station cells noticed late Mr A. K. R. lying on the floor of his cell and he was not responding to his calls. When he opened the cell door, he found that late Mr A. K. R. had hanged himself to the iron bar of the cell door with a piece of cloth from the mattress cover of the bed in the cell.

Regarding part (b) of the question, I am further informed by the Commissioner of Police that, on 30 July 2011, at Rivière du Rempart Police Station, one of the deceased sons, Mr V. R., had in his statement to the police stated that he was informed of his rights and that he could seek the services of a private doctor of his own choice to assist the autopsy of his late father. He was also informed that he could retain the services of a legal adviser to assist him in the enquiry. He stated that he had no objection to the police medical officer conducting the autopsy, and he did not want to have the services of a private medical officer or legal adviser.

The body was sent for post-mortem examination on 30 July 2011. Prior to the autopsy, one Mr K. R., the other son of the deceased, was informed of his rights and the procedures before the start of the autopsy. After the deceased was undressed, the son and his uncle, Mr D. R., were allowed by the police medical officer to examine the body of the deceased.

I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that it is the normal practice prior to an autopsy for relatives of the deceased to be requested to identify the body. At the same time, they are, in fact, informed that an autopsy will be carried out and if they wish they may seek the services of a private practitioner to be present.

During the course of the autopsy, no unauthorised persons are allowed inside the mortuary except if the relatives opt for the presence of a private medical practitioner with due permission from the District Magistrate.

In regard to this case, the same procedures were adopted. In fact, the son K.R. and the brother of deceased Mr D. R. were allowed access into the mortuary for identification and complete external examination of the body. They were also informed that they can seek the services of a private Medical Practitioner if they wish so. Both of them declined the request as they expressed full trust in the police medical officer.

In his written statement, Mr K.R., the son of Mr A. K. R. stated that he had not seen any marks or injuries, blood clotting or any traces of blood over the body.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that according to the autopsy report, late A. K. R. died of "Asphyxia due to Hanging".

In regard to part (c) of the question, I am informed by the Commissioner of Police, that it is a common practice, and this is in accordance to the instructions of the Commissioner of Police, that VIPSU personnel attached to a particular Minister should deposit their firearms after duty closest to the nearest Police Station to the place of the Minister for safe custody and to retrieve the same when he assumes duty again.

According to the diary book kept at the Rivière du Rempart Police Station, PC 5728, who is attached to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, called at the Police Station at 0745 hours, on 30 July 2011, to take his firearm. He returned his firearm at 1830 hours on the same day.

PC 5728 also called at the Police Station on 26, 27, 28 and 29 of July 2011 for the same purpose. He was on leave on 31 July 2011.

No other member of VIPSU was present at Rivière du Rempart Police Station on or about the 30 July 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, following the complaint received in the case of Mr A. K. R., the National Human Rights Commission initiated an inquiry. It called for the statements given to the Police and the medico legal report and examined the same. According to the Commission, the preliminary investigation has shown that there were no suspicious circumstances surrounding the death of Mr A. K. R. in police custody.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am advised by the Commissioner of Police that the inquiry has been completed and it is being submitted in the course of this week to the Director of Public Prosecutions. The DPP may, under law, advise either further inquiry by the Police or refer it before a Magistrate for judicial inquiry or advise prosecution.

Mr Bérenger: The answer still does not get rid of what puzzles me. In fact, the hon. Prime Minister repeated that the police officer on sentry noticed late Mr A. K. R. lying on the floor of his cell and that he was not responding to his call. Supposedly, when that simple Police Officer opened the cell door, he found that late Mr A. K. R. had hanged himself to the iron bar of the cell door with a piece of cloth from the mattress cover of the bed in his cell.

Is that what we are to believe? That the simple Police Officer saw somebody lying on the floor and went in? To me, only an expert can come to the conclusion that Mr A. K. R. had hanged himself to the iron bar of the cell door with a piece of cloth. How does the Prime Minister explain it?

The Prime Minister: I can't quite understand what the question is about. In fact - if I want to go into the details - when he found the detainee on the floor and not responding to his calls, he called for another performing duty officer, Mr Sooknah, and they both opened the padlock and tried to open the door, but could not do so because it was being retained by something from inside. Then the police constable pulled the door harder and noticed that it was being retained by a piece of cloth with one end attached to the iron bar and the other end around the neck of the detainee. He then cut the cloth with a knife to get access inside the cell where the detainee was found. But what was he supposed to do? I ask the hon. Leader of the Opposition what he was supposed to do. Leave him there?

Mr Bérenger: That is not the point, hon. Prime Minister. How can one explain that, supposedly, they forced the door and found a piece of cloth around his neck, he was lying on the floor, and they concluded that he must have hanged himself? Has there been any further inquiry

into that? Have Senior Officers, other Police Officers, experts come to the conclusion, or was it simply two policemen?

The Prime Minister: It is clear, Mr Speaker, Sir. I just explained that he had to cut the cloth with his knife and he found the body there. Furthermore, there has been an autopsy. It was found he was hanged; he died from asphyxia, from hanging.

Mr Bérenger: Later on we'll come to the autopsy. But is the hon. Prime Minister telling me that he is satisfied that what he has just read to us really took place? Is this credible? Is the hon. Prime Minister really satisfied that this is what took place?

The Prime Minister: I can't understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition. What was supposed to have taken place then? He finds a body not responding, he calls for assistance; he tries to open the door, he finds that he has hanged himself and then he does all the procedures that had to be followed. I can't quite understand what the hon. Leader of the Opposition is getting at.

Mr Bérenger: I am getting at that it is not credible at all hon. Prime Minister! It is not credible at all! But then, can I put my question again? These are two Police Constables. What is the next step after they found this body? Did experts come in, higher grade Police Officers? What is the next step that took place?

The Prime Minister: From what I see here, Mr Speaker, Sir, according to police regulations, they followed all the procedures. The body was taken for autopsy, and he was found to have died from asphyxia from hanging.

Mr Bérenger: Therefore, I take it that, apart from these two junior officers, no expert, no higher officer was called in?

The Prime Minister: I am not saying no, Mr Speaker, Sir. What I am saying is that, from what I see here, they had followed all the procedures that normally they do in cases of hanging, and this is not the first case of hanging that is occurring in a police cell. This has been occurring all the time. The body was removed to the mortuary, where the Chief Police Medical Officer carried out an autopsy. That is what has happened.

Mr Bérenger: I am sure the hon. Prime Minister is not suggesting that people who are found supposedly hanged in police custody, in a Police Station is something common. I hope he

is not suggesting that. But, on that night, there were eight other officers, apart the sentry officer, and five persons detained in the other cells.

Do I take it that, although we are to believe that he hanged himself, no noise was heard, nothing was reported from either the other Police Officers or the five persons detained in other cells next to the cell where this poor man is supposed to have killed himself?

The Prime Minister: No, in fact, there was a question that was asked before and I had made reference to it. In fact, all these Police Officers were questioned; all the detainees - at the time, there were five of them as far as I remember - were questioned and the police inquiry carried on like this. All of them were questioned, including the Police Officers. In fact, the police went as far as to remove the police officers so that the inquiry can be done with all serenity.

Mr Bérenger: Statements were taken. My point is that none of the Police Officers, none of the five persons detained in the other cells, I take it, reported any noise, anything abnormal on that night?

The Prime Minister: My understanding from the Police also is that they had interviewed all of them and, obviously, whatever they had given in the interview will be taken up by the DPP.

Mr Bérenger: Has the hon. Prime Minister asked himself the question of what took place on that autopsy day? If I look at the dates, everything is supposed to have taken place in one day. The man is found dead, two sons are involved. Not one; two sons are involved at different times, all that in one day Mr Speaker, Sir! Has the hon. Prime Minister looked into that? Why two different sons, at two different times, and not the wife of the deceased?

The Prime Minister: The Police Officers went to the house and talked to the son, and this is what they decided. I can't choose for them, Mr Speaker, Sir; neither can the police. They decided that one of the sons would go to the mortuary with the brother of the deceased; the other son had been questioned.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the VIPSU officers are concerned, is the hon. Prime Minister confirming that no VIPSU officer was in contact with the deceased on that day or thereabout?

The Prime Minister: That is not what I see here except that, as I said, one of the VIPSU officers who work with Minister Bachoo, as usual, went to collect his firearm in the morning and left his firearm in the evening, which he does every time he is on duty.

Mr Bérenger: I do not know if the hon. Prime Minister has taken the trouble to check one point. In the provisional charge lodged on 26 July 2011, it was stated that a wristwatch had been stolen during the month of May 2011, whereas in her declaration made on 17 July 2011, Mrs M. F. B. had stated that her wristwatch had been stolen on 17 July. So, it does not tally; the date in the provisional charge and the date the statement made as early as 17 July by the lady concerned. Has the hon. Prime Minister taken the trouble to see why that does not tally?

The Prime Minister: Nobody told me that. On the provisional charge, it says May.

Mr Bérenger: If the hon. Prime Minister wants me to repeat, the provisional charge lodged before the court concerned gives the date. It was stated in the provisional charge that a wristwatch had been stolen during the month of May, whereas in the statement made by Mrs M. F. B. on 17 July, she stated that the wristwatch had been stolen on 17 July 2011.

The Prime Minister: I can only say that there might have been a mistake on the charge, because she said 17 July.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, before being arrested and detained at Rivière du Rempart, was the deceased arrested by the police at any time?

The Prime Minister: The answer is no. He has a clean record, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether officers of the SOCO, Scene of Crime Officers, were called on the spot when that junior officer saw the body in the police cell?

The Prime Minister: When I say all the procedures were followed, I believe that is the case.

Mr Baloomoody: If that is the case, was the learned Magistrate informed immediately of the death? Because we know that the accused was brought - I have a certified copy of the court record - on 26 July where he was provisionally charged, and then it was only on 02 August that the Magistrate was informed of his death. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister why is it that, on the

same day, the learned Magistrate was not informed of the death of the suspect - not even accused?

The Prime Minister: I am not sure whether this is the procedure, but in any case the Magistrate was not available. He stated that he was taken up with another case and he could not attend immediately.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Prime Minister say whether there is any other evidence apart from the evidence that he has just mentioned? First of all, the watch was stolen and, again, further to what the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said, we are not sure about the date on which it was stolen, but it was stolen by her husband who is a heavy drunkard and often steals, making him, in fact, unreliable. The Police have rested on this evidence only in order to arrest late A. K. R.

The Prime Minister: It is the wife who says that her husband is a heavy drunkard and has stolen her personal items in the past and that she suspects her husband. The police went to interview the husband, and he admitted that he had stolen and sold it for Rs200 to Mr A. K. R.

Mr Jhugroo: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister at what time the first son made his statement and at what time the second son made his statement, and the time of *post mortem*?

The Prime Minister: I do not know whether I have the different times, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is on 30 July that one of the sons in his statement stated that he was informed of his rights. The first son was seen on 30 July itself. I do not have the exact time, but he was seen at the same time; it was early morning from what I understand. The same day, in the very early morning, the Police went to the House and talked to the son and they asked for the ID and the birth certificate and all those things, and then he was made to call at the police station.

Mr Baloomoody: On two occasions, both sons, one before the autopsy and one at the police cell, were informed of their rights, whether they want to retain the services of an independent counsel and lawyer. Is that in writing and have they signed in the occurrence book that they are not going to retain the services of a counsel or an independent doctor to assist them? Is this in writing?

Mr Speaker: It appears from the answer which has been given that they gave a statement. A statement can be ...

Mr Baloomoody: With due respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, there are certain procedures. Whenever you caution somebody, they have to sign first, and then they give a statement. In the statement, they relate the event. My question is whether when they were informed of their rights - they were not cautioned - that they can retain the services of either an independent doctor or counsel, and whether this was in writing in the occurrence book. Did they sign and say that they do not want?

The Prime Minister: As far as I understand, they were not the accused; they were just informed of their rights. They were not the accused in this case; they were informed of their rights. Whether they have signed that, I cannot say, but I assume they must have.

Mr Bodha: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether a complaint was made formally by the wife of late A. K. R. against the Police Officers and what is the tenor of the complaint?

The Prime Minister: I think she has made complaints and said that she feels the Police have been negligent.

Mr Baloomoody: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister when was the learned Magistrate informed of this alleged suicide case? According to the District Court and Intermediate Court Act, whenever a Magistrate is informed of a suspicious or violent death, he/she has the power to conduct the inquiry; not the Police. In this case, we are informed that the Police have been conducting the inquiry. Can I know whether there has been a request under section 110 of the Intermediate and Criminal Court Act to ask the learned Magistrate to conduct the inquiry herself?

The Prime Minister: The Magistrate was involved; she was not involved on the very day, because, as she said, she was taken up somewhere else.

Mr Jugnauth: Can the hon. Prime Minister say at what height from the ground floor to the iron bar, did the late A. K. R. hang himself?

The Prime Minister: I do not have the height, but I am told, Mr Speaker, Sir, that this type of hanging is common; it is not usual occurrence, but it has happened many times where they hanged themselves in the police cells.

Mr Jhugroo: Following this answer, hon. Prime Minister, how can someone hang himself with an iron bar of the cell which is ...

Mr Speaker: This is a matter of opinion. The hon. Member is asking the hon. Prime Minister to give his opinion. That is not allowed. Hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Prime Minister say that a Magistrate was involved. Can I know the name of the Magistrate, his court, and on what date was that Magistrate supposedly involved?

The Prime Minister: I do not know the name of the Magistrate, Mr Speaker, Sir, but I can furnish the Leader of the Opposition the exact date.

Mr Bérenger: Can I put in, for the record, a copy of the provisional charge? Is the Prime Minister aware that the lawyer who represented the widow of the deceased wrote to the DPP on 04 August, saying –

“Widow R. has reasonable suspicion that the said A. K. R. has died as a result of gross negligence of duty and/or culpable negligence on behalf of the Police Officers who were on duty ...”

And he adds –

“I am requesting you to call a judicial enquiry to be lodged at your earliest convenience.”

I put in a copy of the reply dated 09 September by the DPP, where he says –

“I refer to your letter dated 04 August and share your concern.”

And he adds -

“The Police have already been asked to treat the matter expeditiously. You will be informed of my decision once the Police file is submitted to this office.”

The letter is dated 09 September 2011 and the Police had already then been asked to expedite matters because that affair was, of course, for concern of the DPP. I think that I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that it is now that the complete file is being sent to the DPP. Can the hon. Prime Minister tell us why did it take so long and when will it be sent to the DPP?

The Prime Minister: I don't consider that it has taken long, Mr Speaker, Sir, because it is often a misconception in this country that, as regards an inquiry, if something has happened today, the next day you can complete it. The Police have acted diligently. As I said, they questioned all the detainees, all the Police Officers. They went through all the procedures and, as I said, they have completed their inquiry and I am informed that they are submitting the file to the DPP during the course of this week.

Mr Baloomoody: The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned that the learned Magistrate was involved after the death of that gentleman. Is he aware that, on the court record – I have a copy of the certified court record – we have the entry on 26 July, where it is stated that the accused is present and he has been provisionally charged? The next entry we have is on 02 September, where the Prosecutor just informed the court: accused has passed away, provisional struck out. There is no mention to the court that the accused has passed away in suspicious circumstances. The provisional was struck out, and the case was over. I beg leave to file a copy of the court record.

The Prime Minister: Does the hon. Member expect me to explain this? How do I get into the explanation? In fact, from the dates I heard the hon. Member just mentioned, I see it is even before he died in other words.

Mr Bérenger: When the hon. Prime Minister will think about it and look at the fine print, I am sure he will no longer be satisfied that everything went smoothly, in the normal manner. Can I, therefore, request the hon. Prime Minister to have a fresh look at that before the Magistrate concerned receives the case? I take it the DPP probably will send him the case; in a case like that, he has to send it for a judicial inquiry. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to have a fresh look at all that took place?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, I have no reason to believe that the police are in that problem. I have no reason at all to believe that. In any case, the file is being sent to the DPP and there will be, hopefully, a judicial inquiry.

Mr Speaker: Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition have any further question?

Mr Bérenger: No.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: In a previous reply to a PQ, the hon. Prime Minister said that Police objected to the release on bail of those two persons, and the hon. Prime Minister has just said that there are no previous offences for Mr A. K. R. Can the hon. Prime Minister say what were the reasons put forward by the Police for the objection of the bail?

The Prime Minister: There was an inquiry. The husband of the lady admitted that he had stolen the property and that he had sold it to that gentleman. That is the evidence.

Mr Speaker: Time is over!

MOTION

SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10 (2)

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, 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.

Question put and agreed to.

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.

(12.05 p.m.)

The Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions (Mrs S. Bappoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, the Budget 2012 is destined to put Mauritius on the path to succeed both on the economic and social fronts. As the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, himself put it, I quote –

“Ce Budget remettra l'économie sur les rails.”

And the Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam emphasizes on his part that the present Budget *“est un Budget responsable avec une vision à long terme.”* This, in itself, demonstrates the strong institutional solidarity, support and governance at the helm of this Government. Nobody, Mr Speaker, Sir, can deny it.

I avail myself of this opportunity to convey my congratulations to my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for coming forward with a Budget that contains innovative measures geared at saving employment, protecting vulnerable people, mitigating the adverse impacts of the global economic slowdown and, at the same time, support the economic sectors to stand up the challenges they are confronting, that is, a Budget which takes everybody on board.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I must also convey my congratulation and appreciation to the bold leadership of the hon. Prime Minister whose relentless support to the Budget 2012 reinforces his vision, amidst his second successive mandate, to pursue on our economic and social agenda to consolidate and modernise our economy and our country and to raise the standard of living of our people.

But, as the House is aware, the Budget 2012 has been prepared under exceptionally difficult circumstances. The country is going through a difficult period in the history of our young Republic at a time when you have been experiencing the worst financial crisis in the fifty years which has rendered the internal and external economic environment very fragile. There is a sentiment of lower GDP growth expected globally, particularly in Europe, where countries are trailing by less than 1%. Emerging economies are still not spared from slow growth prospects and structural problems. With international slowdown, the growth rate in our country is expected to be stable at 4.2% this year and 4% in 2012 likely to be driven by growth in the real estate, tourism, financial services, business activities, ICT etc.

M. le président, l'opposition nous critique déjà comme un aveu d'échec. Il suffit de prendre un peu de recul pour montrer à quel point cette opposition aime à jouer *les silly side kicks* lorsqu'au lendemain de la présentation du Budget, le *Leader* de l'opposition n'a rien trouvé à en redire au sujet de la prévision de la croissance de 4% qualifiée, selon lui, d'aveu d'échec. Et, survenant dans la foulée d'un Budget raisonnable et réaliste et accepté par presque toute la population, il a encore une fois nagé à contre-courant dans son style habituel démagogique, prétendant et qualifiant le Budget 'd'enfantillage, décousu, confetti et désordonné.'

M. le président, les slogans varient, mais la démagogie demeure pour le *Leader* de l'opposition année après année. Mais il faut se méfier de cette opposition *comme tout*, qui prétend pouvoir régler tous les problèmes du pays - la meilleure gestion du monde - auquel elle veut imposer son incompétence. Que cette opposition révise sa copie et fasse son bilan des quatre

années au pouvoir entre 2000 à 2005, marquées par la faillite économique, le déclin social qui amena le Premier ministre d'alors à qualifier la situation 'd'état d'urgence économique', 'situation catastrophique'. Notre constat après les élections générales, n'était autre que 'des squelettes dans l'armoire'. C'est cela que nous avons constaté.

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have in front of us a Budget that will supply the oxygen of confidence to the economy and will give the population renewed hope for the future. Mais, il nous faut maintenir la vigilance, même si jusqu'ici notre pays a su montrer un état de résilience *never seen before*, comme nous l'indique le ministre des finances au paragraphe 8 de son discours du Budget, cela face à la récession mondiale qui entraîne dans son sillage désastres économiques, croissance négative, chômage galopant, pertes d'emploi, gel des salaires et encore, recul des investissements auxquels sont confrontés de nombreux pays.

Pour vous dire, M. le président, que le gouvernement en place pendant ces six dernières années a pu hisser une économie en soins intensifs et la mettre en état de résilience. C'est cela le miracle économique que vante notre gouvernement avec beaucoup de fierté, beaucoup de légitimité et surtout avec humilité.

Mr Speaker, Sir, at a time when more efforts are needed and crystalised around the urgency to solve major issues, what do we see? Some politicians, elected in May 2010 on a programme to serve the country for five years, have chosen to cross the floor and join the Opposition side. Un ministre des finances qui déserte ses fonctions et délaisse ses responsabilités avec sa troupe, M. le président. Rappelons-nous du feuilleton spécial, ce feuilleton qu'on peut appeler la trahison du MSM vis-à-vis du gouvernement de l'Alliance. Première trahison qu'on peut qualifier de *biggest game show* de ce parti.

Le Premier ministre, étant absent du pays, voilà que le ministre des Finances qui se trouvait lui aussi en mission à l'étranger décide d'écourter sa mission et de rentrer d'urgence au pays parce que son ministre de la Santé est accusée provisoirement par l'ICAC et arrêtée par la police. Le spectacle continue avec la décision des cinq ministres du MSM de choisir ce moment pour soumettre leur démission du Conseil des ministres en signe de solidarité avec une de leurs collègues accusée provisoirement par l'ICAC. Cela se passe pendant l'absence du Premier ministre! Démissionner du Conseil des ministres, mais rester solidaire avec le gouvernement. Premier épisode de *lev paké resté*. Les ministres démissionnent en solidarité, les PPS pensaient

qu'il fallait suivre, il y a même un PPS qui pensait dans la logique des choses, démissionner et suivre les ministres. Mais, à notre grand étonnement, le mot d'ordre est donné pour que tous les PPS demeurent en fonction – ce que l'on appelle encore une fois, l'épisode *lev paké resté*. Une telle bouffonnade de la démocratie parlementaire est inédite malheureusement dans ce pays. Des méthodes qui sont loin de se conformer à des principes de loyauté, de confiance et de devoir de responsabilité collective.

Je ne peux ne pas penser, M. le président, si ces agissements du MSM ne sont pas le fruit d'un coup monté mûrement réfléchi, calculé à l'avance pour faire du chantage peut être au Premier ministre, le faire dévier et s'éloigner de ces principes qui est d'intervenir dans le fonctionnement des institutions. Je pose la question. Trop respectueux des institutions, le Premier ministre les a désavoués publiquement, contrairement au MSM qui ne se confine que dans un univers à eux-mêmes où leur clan familial est uniquement préoccupé par des intérêts particuliers. Quant le Premier ministre est retourné, il a tout de suite su gérer la situation. Il faut féliciter le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Il a remanié son Conseil des ministres et le gouvernement s'est de nouveau mis au travail. Quand deux membres du MSM ont préféré rester dans le gouvernement pour soutenir le programme gouvernemental pour lequel ils ont été élus, quelle vulgarité s'est ensuivie de la part du *Leader* du MSM, surtout à l'égard de ma collègue, l'honorable...

Mr Speaker: You cannot use the word 'vulgar'! *Vulgarité* or vulgar is unparliamentary.

Mrs Bappoo: *Mr Speaker, Sir*, des propos ont été dits et je cite: 'vente à l'encan' et attaque à la fille et à la famille de Mme Martin. Est-ce cela le signal qu'on veut transmettre aux femmes de ce pays qui veulent se joindre sur le plan politique? Est-ce cela le signal qu'on veut transmettre aux jeunes de ce pays? L'honorable Ameer Meea avait posé beaucoup de questions sur les jeunes. Qu'est-ce qu'ils pensent? Mais, en écoutant tout cela, M. le président, c'est vraiment un désastre. Après cet épisode, toutes sortes de prétextes ont été avancés par les honorables membres pour expliquer leur démission. Prétexte à l'égard du Premier ministre, prétexte à mon égard, prétexte à plusieurs d'autres membres du gouvernement, plusieurs d'autres ont été blâmés, les honorables Cader Sayed-Hossen, Patrick Assirvaden, Mlle Nita Deerpalsing et moi-même. Quand à moi, la raison avancée par l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth est que Mme Sheila Bappoo ne l'a pas invité le 08 mars à la Journée internationale de la femme 2011...

(Interruptions)

Toutes les femmes parlementaires du MMM étaient présentes à cette Journée du 08 mars. Si on n'appelle pas cela un acte de trahison, qu'en est il, M. le président? Que dit le *Leader* du MSM? '*Ti a pe touffer*' ; on est parti, on a démissionné *parce qui ti a pe touffer* dans gouvernement ; *ti a pe touffer!* Cette déclaration *ti a pe touffer* ne semble que prétexte, M. le président, pour expliquer l'incapacité de résoudre les problèmes économiques survenus avec la crise mondiale. Et le fait maintenant de jeter de la boue sur le gouvernement n'est qu'une cotte de maille en papier pour ceux qui disaient que le gouvernement ne pourrait même pas venir avec le Budget 2012. Or, le Budget 2012 est bel et bien là ! Le Budget 2012 est bel et bien là, rationnel dans son approche, pertinent dans son contenu social, systématique dans ses objectifs pour alléger la pauvreté et le maintien de la protection sociale, et équitable dans sa finalité qui a eu l'approbation de toutes les composantes de la société. Ne venez pas aujourd'hui, faute d'arguments, essayer de communaliser ce Budget et taxer le ministre des Finances qu'il a favorisé une certaine communauté. Pour moi, M. le président, ce n'est que de la bassesse et de la petitesse d'esprit. On doit dire non à ces nouvelles cassandres de la politique locale qui ont préféré désertir leur poste de responsabilité au sein du gouvernement sous des prétextes creux et des excuses les plus farfelues.

De notre côté, M. le président, je le dis très haut : l'ambiance est sérieuse, c'est le travail, la discipline. On est tous sereins. L'Alliance Parti Travailleuse/PMSD est plus que soudée.

Avec ce Budget, la machine gouvernementale est déjà lancée. C'est là un changement de stratégie, à la mise en œuvre des mesures budgétaires pour lesquelles on se donne six mois, selon un calendrier établi par mon collègue, le ministre des Finances, en consultation avec tous les ministères, afin de s'assurer que le résultat soit visible et palpable. Donc, pas d'effet d'annonce, mais voilà une autre garantie que ce gouvernement donne à la population quant à l'application des mesures budgétaires.

If the Opposition cannot offer any useful solution to the problem of Budgetary deficit or economic growth or unemployment, but what about agreeing that we are right and we are going to deliver.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before coming to the different Budgetary measures and those of my Ministry, I wish to say a few words on the situation of child abuse and children in distress. As former Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, I had as mandate the responsibility to provide to those children in distress an appropriate place of safety and all that is psychological support and follow up to their cases. Today, the Budget Speech, paragraph 302 reads as follows. I quote -

“And we must attend to children who are abused. Government is recruiting 20 additional support officers to reinforce the National Children Council and the Child Development Unit (...) and six new children shelters will be opened across the country in 2012.”

I must here, congratulate the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Mr Xavier Duval, for his praiseworthy decision. He has done an excellent job, Mr Speaker, Sir. He has understood the difficulties of these children. *Il a eu du cœur pour ces enfants*. He has been honest. He has been sincere as a true patriot for the benefit of the welfare of children suffering from abuse, from negligence and from abandonment.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Will I have to repeat the remark that I had made last week, especially on Saturday, that is, when somebody is speaking, others have to keep quiet? If they want to talk, they should go out of the House.

Mrs Bappoo: For 14 months, Mr Speaker, Sir, during my stay in office at that Ministry, I have been urging for more support, more financial assistance to cater for the speedy and urgent needs of those children who are on the increase and for more supporting staff. On avait devant nous le dysfonctionnement de la famille, l'irresponsabilité des parents, la violence, l'agression, l'alcoolisme, la maltraitance, l'abandon des enfants, et tout cela affecte la vie de nombreux enfants innocents. Ces enfants sont innocents; bébés, âges pré-primaires, âges primaires et adolescents. Mais, M. le président, on n'a pas voulu me comprendre sur la gravité du problème, c'est triste. Au contraire, on m'a mal comprise, on m'a critiquée et on m'a accusée d'avoir critiqué l'ex-ministre des Finances. La méfiance à mon égard s'est installée - du Sun Trust Building à l'Hôtel du Gouvernement. Il y a eu des sorties brutales à travers les medias, mais comme avait dit l'ex-ministre de la Santé 'les chiens aboient, la caravane passe'.

Aujourd'hui, je tiens encore une fois, à saluer mon collègue, l'honorable Anil Bachoo, qui à été le premier sauveur de ces enfants en détresse, en créant des conditions favorables, en vue de l'aménagement de deux abris; un à Cap Malheureux pour une trentaine de garçons adolescents en vue de décongestionner celui de Pointe aux Sables et l'autre à Floréal, pour accommoder une quinzaine de bébés, victimes de parents irresponsables. J'espère que ma collègue, l'honorable Mme Mireille Martin, pourra fêter Noël, cette année-ci, avec ces enfants dans ces nouveaux locaux.

La nécessité de l'aménagement des abris et l'apport des 20 *Enforcement Officers* émanait du comité interministériel qui était présidé par l'honorable *Deputy Prime Minister*, Dr. Rashid Beebeejaun, et plusieurs de mes collègues, dont le ministre de l'éducation. J'avais fait moi-même cette proposition d'augmenter le personnel, d'avoir plus de *shelters*, mais il y a eu de la résistance.

Le paradoxe le plus inouï de cette résistance des finances, tient de l'absence assourdissant de cerner l'enjeu visant à mieux sécuriser ces enfants vivant dans leur vulnérabilité au risque d'abus, d'agression, de maltraitance. Avec le Budget de l'ex-ministre des Finances, Maurice entier se passionnait de la résurgence des crimes les plus atroces, les plus répréhensibles contre ces enfants, alors que le seul abri que gère le ministère et ceux sous l'administration des ONG étaient surabondés ; pas de place. Il a fallu trouver l'argent nécessaire pour l'aménagement de nouveaux abris. J'ai essayé un refus instinctif qui se murait dans un silence. Est-ce le non-intérêt de voir ces enfants en détresse évoluer dans un confort quelconque ? Faut-il trouver dans ce refus la preuve d'absence de compassion et de manque d'égard vis-à-vis de ces enfants?

Ces enfants ne trouvaient abri que dans le seul *shelter* 'La Colombe' à Pointe aux Sables. Cet abri, M. le président, a une capacité d'abriter 60 enfants. Avec un nombre d'enfants qui augmente semaine après semaine, en juillet 2011, l'abri avait environ 160 à 165 enfants, et bien souvent les *caregivers* de ce *shelter* se trouvaient avec deux bébés dans un même berceau. Je n'ai jamais vu cela, M. le président ; c'est inimaginable. Mais j'ai vécu ces moments atroces.

Quant au suivi des cas des enfants sur le terrain, c'était impossible parce que la CDU, en raison de manque aigu de personnel, n'avait pas de suivi. Les enfants et ces familles sont laissés sur eux-mêmes. Je ne pourrai jamais, M. le président, oublier ces enfants qui cherchaient de la chaleur humaine ; ces enfants innocents qui cherchaient la chaleur maternelle à chaque fois que

je les visitais. Ils sont et seront toujours dans ma pensée. *It is really a sad case* de voir ces enfants comme dans un ‘*dumping ground*’ par rapport au problème de *child abuse*.

Pourtant, M. le président, le présent Budget fait provision pour six *shelters* supplémentaires, vingt *Enforcement Officers* pour le suivi sur le terrain, et je suis extrêmement ravie. Un grand bravo à l’honorable Xavier Duval. Cette décision restera pour la postérité ; l’histoire retiendra ce Budget 2012.

Now, let me come to other important Budgetary measures. This Budget indeed strikes the right and judicious balance between economic growth and social justice in our relentless effort to create a more inclusive society that provides opportunities for all. We know that Mauritius has to create more jobs and tackle the problem of unemployment, that’s why, as the hon. Minister of Finance said in his Budget: the Budget focus on the development of entrepreneurship, SMEs. The promotion of the SME sector is an exercise in empowerment of our fellow citizens who are currently on the fringe of the mainstream of our economic landscape. SMEs need more access to finance, credit, market development and space for their workshops. Government has an integrated approach to SMEs, and nothing is being done in isolation. In the European Union, for example, jobs are being created by small entrepreneurs, and government’s goal is to support these small and flexible enterprises that can respond to market opportunities. Some Members in the Opposition have all the way expressed doubts on our emphasis to SMEs. This reminds me, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the slogan in the 80s ‘*zone franche, zone souffrance*’. *C’est la même chose. On essaye de faire quelque chose de mieux, mais on est négatif. A cette époque, pour relancer la zone franche, l’opposition d’alors ne faisait que répéter chaque jour ‘zone franche, zone souffrance’.*

(Interruptions)

Mrs Bappoo: We believe in the development of small entrepreneurship...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mrs Bappoo: ...and we’ve helped those who have entrepreneurial talent...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order I said!

Mrs Bappoo: ...to start business.

Mr Speaker: There are so many people who have corrected themselves since 1980 up to now on the issues that they had raised in the 1980s!

Mrs Bappoo: Already we have noted positive signs, Mr Speaker, Sir. As former Minister responsible for women entrepreneurship, I have been instrumental in introducing a number of significant initiatives to meet the specific needs of women entrepreneurs, such as access to financial resources and to market development. The Leader of the Opposition rightly said that, despite government's commitment to empower SMEs, there needs to be more support schemes as *mesures d'accompagnement*.

This government is not only committed, but it is also in its philosophy to support potential Mauritians who want to venture in that sector as they are apt to become major job creators in the years to come. It should not be forgotten that research has shown that, without the support of business friendly banks, many small enterprises may fail. It was vital for us, as a forward looking government with a vision, to create the most favourable environment and infrastructure for our entrepreneurs, and this is in line with the Budgetary measures at paragraphs 199 and 203, including access to more industrial space at lower cost, the removal of registration duty, which ranges from Rs1,000 to Rs10,000 on loans which do not exceed to Rs1 m., and the setting up of a National Resilience Fund to the tune of Rs7.3 billion, out of which, in time of difficulty, SMEs can take advantage in case the economic crisis worsens.

Let me now elaborate, Mr Speaker, Sir, on some of our main social protection policies. The 2012 Budget caters for the welfare of the citizens at large and also further reinforces the current policy of social welfare during the difficult times. In spite of the global financial crisis and the falling down of government revenue, we have not only but also more importantly consolidated the welfare state with a host of measures affecting positively the conditions of life of the vulnerable people. One of the most important is the free bus transport for elders, for students, and for people with disabilities. We have maintained subsidies on flour and cooking gas, and we have increased social benefits from Rs9.6 billion in 2005 to Rs17.6 billion in 2010 and, indeed, the social benefits have increased by 82%. The number of beneficiaries of BRP has increased by 27.9%, from 120,802 elderly people in June 2005 to 157,126 pensioners as at today. During his first mandate after 1995, the hon. Prime Minister increased the BRP by 48% and

brought it to Rs1,000 in March 1996, by other 30% in July 1998, and finally to Rs1,500 in July 2000. My colleague Dr. Vasant Bunwaree was the then Minister of Finance.

In August 2005, he amended the National Pension Act to restore the Basic Retirement Pension to every citizen on a universal basis, after pushing away the most abject targeting policy of the MMM-MSM Government to pull down one of the main pillars of the welfare state, that is, the Basic Retirement Pension. We all know the confusion, the threats, the panic caused to our elders, whereby the then Prime Minister and the then Minister of Social Security had to apologise to the elders of this country. At the head of a caring government, the Prime Minister prides himself to having year in year out, since 2005, increased the BRP by an overall of 43%, the BIP by 40%, the Carer's allowance by 40% and the BRP for person aged over 90 by 36%.

Today, Mr Speaker, Sir, a person at the age of 60 is receiving a Basic Retirement Pension amounting to Rs3,146 monthly. As from January 2012, he will be entitled to Rs3,350, that is, an increase of Rs204. Someone between 90 years and below hundred, currently drawing a BRP to an amount of Rs9,357, will be entitled to Rs9,975 monthly in January 2012, an increase of Rs618. *Un centenaire* who benefits currently a pension amounting to Rs10,621 will be paid Rs11,320 a month, which is an increase of Rs699 as from January 2012; in addition to the end of year bonus in December 2011. This is an increase based as always, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the full 6.6% inflation rate, whereas the very, very low income group - these employees - has got a wage increase of Rs330 on their wages. One is pension, and the other one is wage increase. So, we don't mix issues. The amount paid on Basic Pension as at September 2012 is about Rs6.3 billion and, for the same month, some 241,028 beneficiaries were paid. The major part of the beneficiaries consists of obtaining Basic Retirement Pension, which amounts to 153,800 beneficiaries, to a total of Rs4.4 billion in terms of funds disbursed. Since 2008, there has been an increase of 9% in terms of number of beneficiaries of Basic Pension, while the amount disbursed has been increased approximately by 24%. This demonstrates government's commitment to provide greater protection, solidarity and compassion to the vulnerable groups and the needy. This has been made possible in our country, where there are no mineral resources such as gold and diamond, as mentioned the other day by my friend, hon. Nita Deerpalsing. This has been made possible when some least developing countries are still striving for one-dollar-a-day revenue.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has always been faithful to its heritage. It will continue to side with the weakest sections of the society. The vast array of social measures in the various Budgets testified to this commitment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before speaking on the new policy measures of my Ministry, I would like to enlighten the House on a few comments made by Members of the Opposition. The first was from hon. Rajesh Bhagwan, regarding delay in the payment of pension to our senior citizens during the current month, that is, November.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it was mentioned by the hon. Member, that thousands, *des milliers de bénéficiaires* of Basic Pension could not draw their pensions at the beginning of this month as 01 November 2011 and 02 November 2011 were public holidays.

I wish to inform the House that as a caring Government, which has at heart the welfare of the elderly, my Ministry in 2009 changed the pay dates for beneficiaries of Basic Pensions who have opted to be paid through direct credit into bank. Long before, beneficiaries were being paid as from the 15th of each month and, since December 2009, their pensions are credited into banks from the second working day of each month, which means that they draw their pension in advance instead of at the end of the month. They are paid in advance, compared to other employees and civil servants who are paid at the end of the month. They have never been deprived, Mr Speaker, Sir, for late payment at the end of the month.

It was the same for the month of November 2011. We had two public holidays on 01 and 02; and 04 November was, therefore, considered as the second working day of the month. Accordingly, all Basic Pensions were credited to the different banks on 03. Beneficiaries' accounts were updated on 04 November and payment was effected as from that same date.

Similarly, 01 October 2011 was a Saturday, and the second day was a Sunday; pensions were credited to the banks on 03 October, and payment was effected as from the second working day, that is, 04 October, and in advance. So far, none of our local officers have registered any complaints relating to delay in the payment of pension for these two months.

Henceforth, we have also decided that we shall regularly issue communiqué to again inform beneficiaries of the standing arrangements and when public holidays occur. When the

new measure was introduced in December 2009, a massive sensitisation campaign was carried out. It created such a positive impact that a number of those who were drawing their pension through post offices, shifted to bank payment enabling Government to effect a huge saving on the monthly transaction fee paid out to post offices in respect of each beneficiary.

On her part, hon. Mrs Françoise Labelle, in her Budget intervention last week, said that Government should encourage self-employed seasonal employees to adhere to the National Pension Fund through the provision of a subsidy by Government in respect of their contribution. I wish to inform the hon. Member that section 15 of the National Pensions Act makes provision for self-employed to voluntarily contribute to the Fund and section 2 of the Third Schedule to the Act, already makes provision of a cross-subsidy of Rs50 to every Rs100 of contribution to the Fund, up to a ceiling of Rs560 in respect of self-employed.

The hon. Member also raised the issue of BIP. I would like to take this opportunity, once more, to explain the mechanism for the determination of a claim for BIP as I believe some confusion still persists over this matter in spite of explanations that have been given on many occasions. A person must be at least 60% disabled for a minimum period of twelve months in order to be entitled to this pension. I would like, here, to point out that the cut-off point of 60% is on the lower side, compared to international practice which is up to 70% and also, a contributive pension. Therefore, we cannot envisage a reduction in this cut-off point. This pension is made on a universal basis; it's not a contributive one. In case a person does not qualify because the degree of permanent incapacity is lower than 60%, it is open to that person to claim Social Aid, which is paid in cases where the percentage of disability exceeds up to 30%.

A claimant who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Medical Board can also lodge appeal to the Medical Appeal Tribunal. I have also requested that cases going to the *Fonds de Solidarité Nationale*- the *FSN* - should also be given fast track consideration as far as possible so as not to cause any delay to persons with severe illnesses and disabilities.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development announced at paragraphs 243 and 249, measures relating to measures related to payments of contribution by Government to National Pensions Fund. This is a new measure. The measure announced in respect of those categories of workers who are drawing a monthly

salary of up to Rs3,000, would not only assist in bringing them in the formal sector, but would also enable them to earn a contributory pension along with their Basic Pension after retirement. In addition, it will add another 4% to their remuneration, which will amount to Rs120 over and above their monthly salary of Rs3,000. To ease of this process, Government will provide employers the option of submitting returns as well as yearly payment in respect of those categories of employees to the MRA which will then credit the amount with the relevant details to the National Pensions Fund. Employers may also use our decentralised local offices to submit their yearly returns and effect their monthly contributions to the NPF through the existing four modes of contribution collection, namely cash payment at the counter in Port Louis, direct credit into bank through standing orders, cheques payments by post office or electronic transfer through the Mauritius Network System.

I would also like to comment on paragraphs 292 and 293 which relate to the use of employees' contribution to the National Savings Fund as payment of private health insurance. Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a choice; it's only a choice for any employee to decide to have a private health insurance. It's not a policy purposely tailored in favour of insurance companies, as mentioned by the Opposition.

A number of employees, both in the private sector as well as in the public sector, cannot benefit from any private medical care because of the high cost associated with medical insurance cover. They are happy today. They can opt for a medical insurance to cover their family. The policy announced in the Budget Speech relating to the possibility for employees to redirect their future monthly NSF contributions to an insurance company of their choice, will now provide the opportunity to all employees and their families to benefit from private medical care, if they wish so, over and above the public health service to all Mauritian citizens. So, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a question of supporting private insurance companies or the private sector. It is the employee that we are aiming at.

Some 300,000 employees of both the public and private sector may take advantage of this new measure. Future contribution made to the NSF as from January 2012 will be used for payment to the private health insurance scheme after a period of six months. The mechanism to be put into place for the implementation of this new policy will be very simple. Employees can

call at any of the local Social Security Office nearest to their place of residence with the required documents to be stipulated in the legislative provision.

The Ministry of Social Security will only act as a facilitator in that process and transfer the monthly contribution directly to the insurance company and all funds standing to the account of the employee prior to January 2012 will remain in the fund along with any unutilised contribution made after January 2012.

My Ministry will be working on a detailed sensitisation campaign to inform all employees of this new legal provision. In addition, information can be obtained in any of our 40 decentralised local offices around the country as well as our PRO's offices located at the NPF building in Port Louis and Rose Hill.

Mr Speaker, Sir, paragraphs 311 and 312 deal with the social register of Mauritius as a tool to maximise policy effectiveness in the fight against poverty in the application of the new housing schemes and crèches to vulnerable families.

Mauritius has an extensive social protection system, which is complex and spread across many Ministries with many small programmes. The system, as it currently stands, makes it difficult to monitor programmes and obtain a comprehensive picture of what the public sector is doing in the social protection field. The different Ministries work in the same communities at times and often with the same families which makes it difficult to create synergy for investment in social protection.

So, to strengthen existing programmes and to ensure that they better address priority risks and vulnerabilities, Government has announced some time back that it is coming up with a project for the setting up of a social register for Mauritius. So, I am pleased to inform the House that the first phase of the project is almost completed and the second phase relating to data collection will start as from the beginning of 2012.

The Social Register of Mauritius will be a large database of potential and actual beneficiaries of social programmes in Mauritius and will assist in managing social programmes in an integrated manner. It will also help to harmonise the criteria for the various social programmes run by different Government departments and organisations. The data that will be generated from the database will also enable the formulation of cyclical and structural poverty

reduction strategies. As announced in the Budget Speech, the two new schemes that will initially be set up using the SRM database are the housing schemes and the crèches.

I will now make a brief overview of the policies, programmes and schemes of my Ministry. The objectives are to show –

- (i) the continuity, consistency in the approach towards vulnerable groups and needy families;
- (ii) the consolidation of the Welfare State, and
- (iii) the concern of Government for the welfare, protection and security of the weakest in the years to come.

Our elders. M. le président, permettez-moi maintenant d'élaborer sur la politique de mon ministère par rapport aux personnes âgées. Il y a d'abord le fait d'un constat mondial que le vieillissement de la population causé principalement par la longévité de la vie et la baisse dans le taux de naissance. Sur une population de 1.2 millions, Maurice compte quelque 158,000 personnes âgées, ce qui représente plus ou moins 12.7% de la population. Toutes les indications confirment ce vieillissement de la population et que d'ici 2040, c'est à dire dans 30 ans, ce chiffre passera à 364,000 personnes âgées. Face à ce phénomène, il y a un choix à tous les niveaux des politiques nationales qui doivent être bien focalisées et orientées sur la promotion du bien-être des personnes âgées afin qu'elles puissent jouer un rôle significatif dans la société, les soutenir, les protéger moralement, socialement, économiquement, et de ne pas les laisser vivre dans l'isolement et la solitude mais dans la sérénité de la vie familiale.

En tant que gouvernement responsable, nous devons témoigner de notre reconnaissance envers les personnes âgées pour leur contribution exemplaire à l'édification de la nation mauricienne et au développement socio-économique du pays.

La publication du *National Policy on Ageing* en septembre 2008, sous mon impulsion lors de mon premier passage à ce ministère, devait apporter un changement de paradigme dans la philosophie et l'approche concernant le phénomène du vieillissement qui est basé sur la participation des personnes âgées au processus du développement inclusif; le concept de vieillissement actif et productif ; *active ageing and productive ageing*. La mise en place des structures d'accueil pour assurer le vieillissement dans la sérénité en termes d'apports de facilités de loisirs et de sports ; la protection des personnes âgées pour leur permettre de vivre

dans le cadre familial où le concept des relations intergénérationnelles est de mise, et la meilleure protection sociale et économique pour assurer aux personnes âgées leur indépendance économique.

Au sujet des structures d'accueil pour les personnes âgées avec un handicap sévère, je voudrais ici dire comment je suis heureuse qu'une dotation budgétaire de R 7 millions soit prévue pour les travaux d'agrandissement du Foyer Trochetia à Pointe aux Sables. Là, je dois préciser à la Chambre que ce projet de créer ce foyer a été réalisé grâce à une aide du gouvernement de Luxembourg et sur une intervention personnelle du Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, pendant sa deuxième visite en 1997 à Luxembourg. Ce foyer des personnes âgées avec handicaps sévères, offre à quelque 32 internes un service excellent dans un environnement des plus propices et agréables. L'entrée en opération de la nouvelle aile du centre pourra accommoder éventuellement près d'une cinquantaine d'internes.

Je parlerai encore du développement de l'espace de loisirs en faveur des personnes âgées. Là, je vois un effort considérable est fait dans le présent Budget pour l'aménagement de deux centres récréatifs et de loisirs; un à Pointe aux Piments et l'autre viendra après à Riambel. Une fois l'exercice d'évaluation et d'appel d'offres terminé, le projet à Pointe aux Piments va démarrer en 2012 et sera complété au début du premier trimestre de 2013.

As far as the disabilities sector is concerned, *M. le président*, in line with Government's disability inclusive strategy, the policy of my Ministry regarding the disability sector rests on the philosophy of "Valuing Persons with Disabilities". Look at their ability; don't just look at their disability. This is the backbone of the "National Policy on Action Plan on Disability" launched by my Ministry in 2008. The plan is a social contract between my Ministry and the disabled community, meant to value, to empower and to give dignity and respect to the disabled.

My Ministry is indeed mapping the sector. It is based on a comprehensive report that deals on issues pertaining to a more rationale inclusive education and training, economic and social empowerment, community-based services. Furthermore, it contains a host of innovative strategies ranging from training, employment, accessibility, culture, leisure and sports.

I need here to congratulate my colleague, the hon. Minister for Education, for his commitment to children with disabilities, in strengthening the special education needs policy of

his Ministry for an inclusive education programme for our children. I need also to mention the excellent work done at the preschool at Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund in Beau Bassin.

Mr Speaker: I am sorry to interrupt the hon. Minister. I will break for one hour and fifteen minutes for lunch.

At 1.01 p.m. the sitting was suspended

On resuming at 2.17 p.m. with Mr Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs Bappoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was just, before the lunch break, speaking about the disability sector and I was having a special mention to the excellent work which is being done at the Loïs Lagesse Trust Fund in Beau Bassin, where we have a preschool which enrolls children 3 to 5, children who are visually impaired, and there is indeed a very good job which is being done there. It is a joint venture avec *le Centre de La Ressource de l'île de la Réunion et Maurice pour la formation des professeurs venant du ministère de l'éducation. Le Centre de La Ressource nous aide aussi dans le suivi du programme.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our achievements under the Action Plan can be summed up as follows in terms of service benefits and allowances: new benefits have been introduced in respect of children with severe disabilities like those suffering from incontinence, bedridden and with children very severe disabilities and, as January 2012, all the above benefits will increase by 6.6%.

Persons with disabilities who are bedridden and are above 75 years benefit also from free domiciliary medical visits and, however, since last year these visits *à domicile* have also been extended to children with severe disabilities.

Since 2005, adults and children with disabilities have been benefiting also from free travelling in public buses and regarding children with disabilities who are attending especially schools and day-care centres or mainstream schools and who cannot travel by public means of transport alone, the bus fare of one accompanying parent is also refunded. In addition, since 2009, taxi fares for students with severe disabilities attending tertiary education at our universities, are also refunded to enable them to pursue their tertiary education. Presently, three students are benefiting from this measure and it involves a total Budget of Rs0.5 m. yearly.

A major thrust of my Ministry in the training of employment of persons with disabilities. Since 2005, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 550 persons have been trained in various skills and some 350 have been placed in employment. As from December 2010, some other 55 persons with

disabilities, mostly graduates, HSC and SC holders, have been recruited in various parastatals and private companies. Our training and employment program has benefited from strategic partnerships from the Training and Employment of Disabled Persons Board with other stakeholders such as MITD, SMEDA and MEF.

We are in the process of addressing other issues such as accessibility of duty free vehicles, parking facilities to parents for the purchase of adapted cars for their disabled children. My Ministry has discussed with the Ministry of Finance and MRA and it has been agreed to extend this facility to parents who have severely disabled children. Through this measure, blind and deaf persons will also be able to benefit under certain specified conditions.

In collaboration with the Electoral Commissioner's Office and the Electoral Supervisory Commission, my Ministry has made voting procedures more disabled-friendly. Funds are being provided by my Ministry to the Ministry of Education to set up ramps in a special room on the ground floor of each polling station and booths to the height of the wheelchairs are also being provided. As a result of the above, it is expected that in the forthcoming elections in Mauritius, persons with disabilities will be able to vote in better conditions and without undue hassle. The new measures were tested in Rodrigues recently for the last by-elections of the Regional Assembly and it proved to be excellent.

Database is very important for disability sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. A comprehensive database on disability is an indispensable tool for effective policy-making and the setting up of a database on disability is one of the main recommendations of the National Policy Paper and Action Plan launched in 2008 and, in this context, my Ministry, with the assistance of UNDP, has since been working on the setting up of that database which will be operational by the end of the year, that is, on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities which is on the 03 December. We are left with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In view of the above achievement, we have signed the Convention; we have ratified it in January 2010 and, as a result, we are now under international obligations to submit our first report to the UN Committee on the rights of persons with disabilities by early next year. So, my Ministry has enlisted the assistance of a consultant from the Leonard Cheshire Disability, London for the drafting of the National Report. This final report will be ready by February next year for submission to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

I would also like to mention a few of the main initiatives of the disability sector. Next year, we are going to set up an Advisory Task Force composed of different categories of disabled persons to advise the Ministry on disability issues as the motto of the DPO, that is, the Disabled Persons Organisation is: 'Nothing about us without us'. We are planning on the setting up of a rest care programme with a respite centre; promoting art and music for persons with disabilities; setting up a disability watch to provide greater protection and security to persons with disabilities; forging strategic alliances and partnerships with friendly countries like India, China, South Africa and others, and the setting up of a Women with Disabilities Forum as per the UN Convention.

The NGO sector is another main component of the Ministry for Social Security *parce que le secteur associatif, communément appelé le secteur des ONG, joue un rôle incontournable dans le développement social du pays. Je tiens ici à rendre un vibrant hommage à ces centaines d'hommes et de femmes qui se donnent corps et âme et leur temps à l'avancement social de la société mauricienne.*

We are privileged to have a strong and vibrant NGO sector which has always been supportive of national development efforts. Government is fully appreciative of the vital role of the NGOs and, in this context, the Government came up with two important instruments, that is, the CSR programme to help the NGOs and the Non-State Actors Unit set up by the Ministry of Finance with a Budgetary item in our Ministry. Many NGOs are benefiting from CSR to enable them to carry out their mission with more efficiency and serenity. Never before have there been so many funds available to NGOs for social projects. There are three institutions which cater for the needs of NGOs functioning under the aegis of my Ministry. We have the NGO Trust Fund, the Non-State Actors Unit and MACOSS.

The NGO Trust Fund has disbursed some seventeen million rupees as follows - for programme of Grant-in-Aid to NGOs; *Ad-hoc* financial assistance scholarship and capacity building programme.

The Non-State Actors Unit was set up in 2009 in collaboration with the UNDP with the general objective of promoting *du travail volontaire* in Mauritius. The Unit has registered some 200 volunteers and provided the following strategic training programs such as social leadership and youth, and voluntarism to secondary schools students, I mean, aiming at the youth.

MACOSS: umbrella organisation for NGOs has initiated this year the launching of the regional leadership for change programmes, connecting NGOs to CSR and sensitising the public on the ill-effect of alcohol. I am happy to say that MACOSS will soon have its headquarters at the Ebene Triangle thanks to the support of my Ministry and the Southern African Trust. This is a well cherished dream of NGOs which soon will be realised.

As it can be seen, the NGO sector is fully attuned to the imperative of social development by the side of Government and the private sector. It must be said that the Government/NGO/private sector/civil society partnership has hitherto evolved within the framework of an invisible and unwritten social contract which has so far worked very well. My Ministry is proposing to come up with a national NGO policy next year which will bring a paradigm shift in the NGO sector and the concept of social entrepreneurship will be embedded within the fabric of the national NGO policy. The concept of social entrepreneurship is an innovative concept which is fast gaining grounds in many developed economies and social entrepreneurship enables NGOs to break the circle of dependency and move towards sustainability. Through this approach, NGOs can set long-term goals and strategies to effectively manage their programs towards beneficiaries.

I am pleased here to say that the NGO Trust Fund will soon be signing a MoU with the Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India, Ahmedabad, with a view to creating the social entrepreneurship momentum in the Mauritian NGO sector. So it is felt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the new environment which is being created by Government for NGOs will enable them to rise to new heights, efficiency and professionalism.

Lastly, we have the Probation Juvenile and Life Plus Unit of the Ministry. The Probation and After-Care Service of my Ministry has been strengthened. More attendance centres will be set up to provide pro-social skills to probationers with the objective to enhance rehabilitation systems.

The first attendance centre which was set up in 2010 has already catered for 70 probationers. It is proposed to set up another two attendance centres in Curepipe and Pamplemousses. We have taken concrete action to the staffing problem of the Rehabilitation Centre (Girls). The RYC (Girls) was for years staffed mainly by prison officers. We have got the Budget, and staff has been recruited. Now it is staffed by one Chief Female Officer, two Principal Female Officers, two Senior Female Officers, six Female Officers and four Prison

Officers on secondment. The exercise for the selection of the seventh Female Officers is underway. As when the posts are filled, the four Prison Officers will be released back to their post at the Prisons Department. The Suicide Prevention Unit became 'Life Plus' in September 2010 and, in addition to carrying out awareness session on prevention suicide, it now lays emphasis on positive living by counselling people having stress and emotional problem. In addition to existing hotline No. 188 and counselling service, a chat online has been introduced on the website to enhance intervention. Prevention will be carried out accordingly to guidelines set up by the World Health Organisation and at the primary level of prevention, there are talks and seminars. At the secondary level, emphasis is laid on positive values and, at the tertiary level, myths and facts are unfolded and people know now to identify and to help suicidal persons.

M. le président, j'ai parlé tout au début de mon intervention sur le bilan, bilan je peux dire du régime 2000-2005 comme un bilan d'échec. Et aujourd'hui, avec un tel échec, l'opposition annonce déjà, M. le président, le *remake* de 2000-2005. Donc, des questions sont posées : *remake* de quoi ? *Remake* d'échec, *remake* de faillite économique, *remake* du déclin social, *remake* du chômage galopant, *remake* du recul en FDI.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: You won't start now, please!

Mrs Bappoo: *Remake* de supprimer la pension de retraite à nos aînés. Est-ce ça le *remake* ?

Donc, aujourd'hui, on essaie de berner la population, et parfois on diabolise même la population avec un *remake* fictif, où chaque semaine, depuis l'annonce faite, on est à la recherche de qui sera le *Leader* à être présenté comme le Premier ministre de cette alliance *remake*. Est-ce le fils ?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Bappoo: Est-ce le fils ? Est-ce le père? Est-ce l'oncle ? Je pense que la liste est très longue pour eux, mais...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ms Deerpalsing!

Mrs Bappoo:...quand même, M. le président, les élections générales arrivent en 2015, l'attente va être très, très longue. Mais les hommes et les femmes de ce pays ne sont pas des imbéciles, ils ne sont pas des dépôts fixes. *Facebook* donne déjà un avant-goût de ce fameux *remake*, de cette alliance *remake* qui va venir en 2015, où déjà on arrive à comprendre le sentiment qui règne dans le pays et surtout le sentiment des jeunes où beaucoup de questions ont été posées.

Donc, en revanche, le Budget 2012 est réaliste, c'est un Budget réalisable. Il imprime sa marque et souligne sa différence des Budgets des années 2001 à 2005. Sa vision : plus de justice sociale, aide aux plus démunis, objectif de meilleure croissance, que tout le monde soit *on board*. Son objectif c'est de démarquer les orientations de son prédécesseur qui pourtant a bénéficié d'un héritage économique très favorable de l'Alliance de l'Avenir en mai de l'année dernière.

Finalement, ce Budget contient d'importantes mesures pour socialiser davantage l'action économique dans un cadre remanié, dans lequel la petite enfance dans les crèches, les enfants dans les écoles, les femmes, les hommes, les jeunes, les sportifs, les entrepreneurs - petits, moyens - les retraités, les personnes âgées, les fonctionnaires, les employés du secteur informel, les groupes vulnérables auront leur part. Cela demande une planification et une vision. Au gouvernement, M. le président, nous visons la croissance, la résilience et non pas l'état d'urgence économique. L'histoire et les statistiques sont là pour prouver qu'on est très loin de cette situation de crise avant 2005.

It is good to remind the House about the state of the economy when we took power in 2005 –

1. *economic growth*: 2.3%. N'est-ce pas échec ! Aujourd'hui quand on est à 4-4.2 pour venir à 4, on nous dit avec échec ;
2. *unemployment*: 9.6% ;
3. *low business confidence and pessimism through the country*: pas de FDI, ralentissement complet.

Donc, le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, son able leadership succeeded to contain the decline, steer the economy, save the country from collapse. His Government has privileged a new development model that reconciles economic effervescence and social justice.

Luckily, as from 2006, we experience a decline in unemployment rate 7.2%; more employment created to the tune of 40,000-9,400 jobs *annuellement depuis 2006*; the surge of the FDI to more than Rs11.4 billion compared to Rs2.8 billion in 2004-2005...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mrs Bappoo:...increase in our export on GDP rose to peak 5.3% *during* the first terms compared to 2.3% in 2005.

Therefore, “The road to growth for greater good” is a relentless struggle. *Il n’y a pas de baguette magique à cela*. The key words to this struggle are vision, competence, discipline, perseverance, national solidarity and good governance. Still there are other tasks that we will have to pursue on our economic and social agenda to consolidate and modernise our economy and our country and to raise the standard of our people.

So, to conclude, I would say that this Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, articulates a clear vision for the future of our country. I am very sensitive to proposals that will enhance the quality of life of our people. Government has over the years stricken the right balance between economic growth, social justice and preservation of human values. Finally, when we cover the whole Budget Speech, we find, in fact, that the Budget is a socialist and progressive one. We are indeed far from the austerity measures. We clearly indicate that the whole package of Government economic and social policies has gone towards economic and social distribution for the benefit of the whole Mauritian population. This is our vision and this is our mission.

Pour la première fois, le discours du Budget est accompagné d’un *timetable* d’implémentation. Chaque ministère finalise déjà son plan d’implémentation.

Les réalisations des programmes énoncés dans le discours du Budget du ministre des finances doivent être visibles dans les prochains mois à venir, et la population va nous juger sur nos résultats ; résultats après résultats. Nous sommes élus pour servir la population, nous sommes élus pour servir notre pays et non pas pour enrichir notre famille d’abord.

Merci, M. le président.

(2.38 p.m.)

Mr D. Nagalingum (Second Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as Member of Parliament, we are constantly in touch with our constituents from all walks of life. Naturally, the talk of the town these days has been the Budget and its consequences. All of them have more or less the same problems and the same legitimate aspirations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in six years our country has known three Ministers of Finance. I won't venture myself in the circumstances surrounding this instability, but one can safely vouch that, in spite of all the turbulent economic crisis hitting the world there has been just business as usual. And as far as this Budget is concerned, I will abstain myself from any analysis from the economic and financial perspectives, leaving this rather to my good friend, Lee Kwong Wing, but hon. Members here will all agree with me that this Budget should have contained bold measures which would prepare the country and its people to face the urgent and thorny problems ahead. To my most humble and considered opinion, the main concerns that this Budget should have addressed are -

- (1) a sluggish and slower economic growth of around 4%, which is more unflattering in the present circumstances;
- (2) a drastic and constant fall in purchasing power; that's the nightmare of the population;
- (3) an inflation rate of around 7%; another tax as it increases our tax burden through TVA, and
- (4) a growing unemployment, which is around 8% presently.

As you see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is far from being a rosy picture. And any remedial measure calls for high-level commitment from the government. Are we there with this Budget? Has this Budget been convincing enough in the eyes of our people as far as solutions to address the issues I listed are concerned? I will simply say that the writings are on the wall.

Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Budget presentation is a political set piece, which has developed its own tradition over the years and which, at the same time, raises great expectations from various quarters and spheres, especially from those at the lowest rung of the ladder, and

quest of better days to come. Has this Budget met their expectations? *M. le président, force est de reconnaître qu'objectivement, on est très, très loin de ces attentes.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, just as everybody here, I owe my seat in this august Assembly to my electorate. We, parliamentarians from both sides of the House, have the same concerns, the same expectations, and we face the same *cri du cœur* of the people, the same hope from the people we meet or who come to us for a helping hand. Who can know better than us what they really want, what they really expect, and what is their feeling? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will agree with me that these people do not expect *le ciel à leurs pieds*. What they need basically is: to improve their living conditions, their priorities, therefore, revolve around job prospects and job security, cost of living and salaries, health care for themselves and their children; they all admit that their future does not seem bright. They are all suffering not only from an economic and social crisis, but also from a confidence crisis. They can hardly make both ends meet. In brief, they expect government to alleviate their burden generally, and particularly to alleviate poverty.

Parlant de la pauvreté, M. le président, je ne peux m'empêcher de faire allusion à cette déclaration à vous fendre le cœur, d'une mère de famille, diffusée à la radio le 17 octobre dernier dans le cadre de la Journée internationale de l'élimination de la pauvreté, à l'effet que sa fillette de six ans n'a jusqu'ici jamais pu se procurer de yaourts. Nous parlons là de l'île Maurice de 2011. M. le président, Dieu sait combien de ces poches de pauvreté il en existe à Maurice. Les gens s'appauvrissent davantage, et il est le devoir de tout gouvernement responsable et digne de ce nom de s'attaquer à ce problème épineux de pouvoir d'achat qui ronge des milliers de foyers mauriciens. Et c'est justement sur ce point que ce Budget pêche lamentablement.

M. le président, il n'est un secret pour personne que, de nos jours, lorsqu'un père de famille puise de ses salaires l'argent nécessaire pour payer ses factures des services publics, il ne lui reste pas grand-chose pour nourrir sa famille et pour arrondir ses fins de mois. Quoi de mieux qu'une tournée dans un supermarché pour constater de visu cette situation à la fois pénible et triste, lorsque vous voyez l'hésitation d'un père ou d'une mère de famille à se procurer d'une boîte de conserve ou de fromage. Les denrées de base sont en passe de devenir du luxe. J'espère que les honorables membres conviendront avec moi sur ce point. Le ministre des finances était lui-même à la tête du ministère de l'Intégration sociale. Il connaît, sans doute, un brin de cette

situation, tout comme il connaît les conséquences de ces misères noires au sein de certaines familles. Combien de jeunes sont poussés vers la drogue, la prostitution, la mendicité, en raison de la pauvreté ? Que propose ce Budget pour attaquer frontalement ce problème et à la racine ? Que propose ce Budget à ces Mauriciens qui ne mangent pas à leur faim ? Je ne vois pas grand-chose, M. le président.

Pas plus tard que samedi matin, M. le président, quelques jours à peine après le discours de l'honorable ministre des finances, un quotidien nous apprend que la consommation du riz a augmenté. Elle est de 1,500 tonnes. La tendance démontre que celle-ci a connu une hausse de 50% pour se situer à 3,000 tonnes. Cela veut dire, M. le président, que les gens n'arrivent plus à joindre les deux bouts. Où est la résilience annoncée par le ministre des Finances ? Le ministre a décidé, dans sa sagesse, d'abolir la *Capital Gains Tax* sur l'immobilier, la *Solidarity Tax* sur les dividendes ou la *Land Transfer Tax* dans le but de relancer l'investissement. Mais qu'en est-il du petit peuple ? M. le président, ce gouvernement aura à assumer ses responsabilités face à ces décisions qui visent à créer deux îles Maurice - une pour les riches et une pour les pauvres. C'est une réalité, et comme quelqu'un l'a si bien dit '*you can avoid reality, but you cannot avoid the consequences of avoiding reality.*'

When we talk about purchasing power and poverty, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot dissociate the fact that one of the solutions to these ever growing problems is obviously job creation. Let me humbly admit that the Budget reveals, to a certain extent, a sensitivity to job creation. But, taking into account past experiences and the many promises made in the previous Budgets, but which have never materialised, I do have sufficient ground to be sceptical with this respect. The Budget provides for the recruitment of 300 nursing officers and 800 policemen. We all know that there exists a serious shortage of manpower in these two vital sectors, and there is an urgent need to remediate this issue. I am happy that the Minister has decided to proceed with recruitment, but I will have to point out that this exercise, if ever it materialises - *connaissant la lenteur légendaire de certains* - will not suffice even to fill the existing vacancies. Anyway, *c'est un pas dans la bonne direction.*

But, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am thoroughly convinced that this Budget should have laid more emphasis on job creation and recruitment because, as opposed to the unemployed we had some 20 to 30 years back, we have today what I will call des *chômeurs intelligents*, people who have

completed university studies, holders of BSCs, MSCs, MBAs, who do not hold positions relevant to their qualification, or who simply do not have a job. The Sponsored Pre-Job Training Initiative is but a rebranding exercise. The 2000-2005 Government put in place such a scheme, a graduate scheme, with a view to caring for young degree holders who were unemployed. Calling it now – or putting it now under the umbrella of the Sponsored Pre-Job Training Initiative is simply old wine in a new bottle, providing only short-term solution. It does not provide a long-term and efficient solution to the problem. A Budget is an instrument of development and it calls for thinking out of the box with new ideas.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, does the Government hold a database of young graduates, from local and foreign universities, entering the labour market each year? Do we know how many of these graduates have to find a job relevant to their qualifications after their studies? Has a survey been carried out to identify the fields which attract more students and those which attract fewer students? What other hurdles to unemployment in a particular sector or of bottleneck in others? What is being done to channel our resources, our people towards more perspective sectors? These are some of the issues which must be dealt with urgently so as to be able, in the long-run, to provide a decent job to our youth.

Sponsored Pre-job Training Initiative is fine but, as it is said, it is better to teach someone to fish than to give him a fish. And such exercises will also help identifying whether we are on the right track by allowing foreigners to come and work in the ICT industry. To what extent do we lack expertise in this particular field? Government should be very cautious on this issue, not only because past experiences have stimulated the mushrooming of ghettos in certain parts of the country, but also to ensure that our people are served first. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our resources are our people. Our resources are the brains of our youth. It is the duty of one and all to see to it that they are fairly treated and nurtured.

Speaking on the youth, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I just cannot omit saying a few words on the 10-cent tax increase on the SMS and MMS. I just cannot find out the rationale behind this decision. It is public knowledge that SMS and MMS are widely and extensively used by our young people as a means of communication. Many of our youth use these services instead of making a call, as it is cheaper and they do not always have the means to afford a prepaid card any time. While they were expecting a decrease in the cost of Internet access, *ne voilà-t-il pas*

que le ministre a eu l'ingénieuse idée de leur imposer une taxe de 10 sous par message! And to add insult to injury, one Member in this House, in an attempt to justify this strange decision, to say the least, stated that SMS and MMS generate Rs700 m. and we, the Government, should make the most of it! Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I genuinely believe that we cannot adopt a commercial approach towards our youth and that this decision is really ill-advised. May I humbly request the Minister to revisit this idea and the sooner the better.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish now to say a few words on housing, particularly on the measures concerning the NHDC complex. I am happy to note that the requests of the Leader of the Opposition have been entertained. Hon. Members will recall that the Leader of the Opposition came forward with a PNQ on the NHDC complexes. After having received representations from around the country and after thorough analysis of the situation, he proposed on that occasion that a sum of Rs200 be contributed by the Government, on behalf of the NHDC households for the purpose of the setting-up of syndics. The proposal was turned down at the time. But better late than never, our voice has been heard. This is only the beginning of a long process to improve the existing situation prevailing in the NHDC complexes. I make an appeal to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the NHDC and the Local Authorities to work in close partnership so as to really bring in a new way of life for those living in these houses.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you can imagine the difficulties that these people are facing as far as water supply is concerned. The fact that they live on levels, à l'étage, makes their problem more difficult to cope with. The Government promised the installation of water pumps to relieve this problem but, till now, *rien n'a été fait*.

Talking about water, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure that most of us, if not all of us, are facing water supply problems these days. One may say that we are going through a drought period; but, we have drought every year, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. So, this cannot be the cause. It is rather a problem of mismanagement, of forecast and priority setting, due to which problem of water leakages, replacement of old pipes of more than 50 years in some places, among others, has been left unattended.

Aujourd'hui nous payons les frais d'un amateurisme qui n'a que trop duré, M. le président. Savez-vous, M. le président, que dans certains quartiers les enfants sont contraints de

s'absenter de l'école en raison du manque d'eau? Je proposerai donc que la fourniture d'eau par les camions citernes soit rendue plus fréquente en attendant que la situation se stabilise.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now move to the issue of Local Government. This is truly a subject which the Government a *traité avec une légèreté sans précédent* and has taken the population for a very long ride right from 2005.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you will recall that the Government in power from 2000-2005 came up with a new law, the Local Government Act 2003, with a view to bringing deep reforms in that area of Local Government. But, l'Alliance sociale came to power in 2005. And for reasons best known to them, the Local Government Act 2003 was repealed with a stroke of a pen against the promise of a new revolutionary law on Local Government very soon. Meanwhile, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, six long years have elapsed and, up to now, it is only the Bill that has taken shape. As the hon. Leader of the Opposition rightly stated, perhaps God knows when this Bill will be debatable in this august Assembly! What does the present Budget provide for this vital sector of democracy? Funds for the creation of a three new district councils - you got it right, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Three new district councils! We already made such a step in 2000-2005 but, we wanted to have municipalities all over the country. But, they found that the Local Government Act 2003 most inappropriate and they repealed it, as I have just said. The present Minister of Local Government then screamed over all rooftops that new towns would be created. Today, let alone towns, they somehow copied our idea, split the existing District Councils to create another three, bringing the figure to seven District Councils.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government is coming up with such a decision at a time, when existing District Councils have to be restructured, reorganised and revamped. *Le monde à l'envers, dirait l'autre!* This is known to one and all. But, what is provided in the Budget? Rs107 m. for the creation of three district councils, three other bodies with the same structures and powers as the existing ones! A mere exercise of promoting inefficiency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Rs107 m. when we all know that 80% of this Budget allocated to Local Government is absorbed in salaries. Is this what l'Alliance sociale Government or l'Alliance de l'Avenir promised the people? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it comes to managing the affairs of a country, when it comes to ensuring the prevailing of democratic principles or when it comes to the welfare of a nation, there is no worst sin than taking the people for a ride. This Government sold a dream to

the people and they will have to pay an exorbitant price for it. Report municipal council elections or come up with a new law, nothing will spare them from *une cinglante raclée* at the next municipal elections, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They know it more than us, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. That is why they are finding ways and means to delay these elections and to impose new provision which fits their game, such as the prohibition of Members of the National Assembly to stand as candidates at municipal council elections.

M. le président, la raison qui est proposée pour justifier cette démarche, c'est supposément pour faire de la place aux jeunes. Mais, permettre aux députés de briguer les suffrages aux élections municipales n'empêchera pas aux jeunes de se jeter dans l'arène. En même temps, permettez-moi de rafraîchir la mémoire de certains. Aux élections municipales de 2005, je crois que parmi les candidats de l'Alliance sociale il n'y avait qu'un seul député qui s'était porté candidat, en l'occurrence mon ami, l'honorable Reza Issack, un vieux jeune, je dirai. Les autres furent pour la plupart des jeunes, des nouveaux, des débutants. Mais quel est le résultat aujourd'hui? Une catastrophe généralisée pour dire le moins, dans les municipalités, M. le président. Donc, M. le président, lorsque je réfléchis sur la raison qu'avancent certaines personnes pour interdire aux députés de se porter candidats aux élections municipales, je ne peux m'empêcher de retourner aux Fables de la Fontaine où le renard, se retrouvant en situation d'échec, avance que les raisins sont trop verts. Bref, une raison qui ne convainc personne, sauf lui-même.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the precious time wasted *pour que la montagne accouche d'une souris*, other pressing issues have remained unaddressed. For example, the hawkers' problem, six years they have had to find solutions to these problems. *Le problème des marchands ambulants* have remained unattended, despite the *solution magique* they pretended to have. This problem will be strongly felt during the forthcoming festive period. What has been done up to now to resolve this problem, which is a pressing one in every town? Absolutely nothing! For this Government, it seems that the hawkers simply do not exist.

Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget makes absolutely no provision to improve the efficiency of services offered by local authorities. Not a single word on fire services, for example, our town and villages are undergoing rapid development. High buildings are being erupted in every nook and cranny of this country. Still, the Government did not deem it fit to

provide the fire services with additional funds, to improve its services and stands ready to meet the new needs of the development trend and urbanisation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with the setting up of such a body, that is, the Local Authorities Governance Unit and based on the lack of further information, I can simply infer that this initiative constitutes a bold example of reverse leapfrogging, as it goes radically against the worldwide trends of decentralisation of local governance. Nothing has been said about the scope of this unit, but I simply wish that it will not add to the list of grievances and become part of the problem instead of the solution.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at a time when we are talking of empowering local authorities, this Government is gradually pruning the powers of municipals and district councils. After the previous decision to confer the licence fees of some economic activities to the Tourism Authority, now the Government intends to confer the administration and management of the pension fund of local authorities to the SICOM and it is also contemplating to outsource tax collection to the MRA. And we call it empowering local authorities! *Comprenne qui pourra!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, being given the growing complexity of the functioning and responsibilities of local authorities, instead of trying to remove portfolios from these bodies, I shall suggest that the Government invests in capacity building, in local authorities, provide training to staff and hire new talents. It is only through such exercise that local authorities may become autonomous and efficient. Curtailing their assignments is surely not the solution.

To leave this chapter, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to the hon. Minister, to kindly arrange to ensure that our streets are kept safe and clean during the forthcoming festive period. We all know that during these periods, the roads and streets are crowded, even overcrowded, and it is of utmost importance that due consideration be given to the security and hygienic aspect of the situation. Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I shall appreciate if the hon. Minister could also pay a particular attention to refuse collection during these periods as many often we have witnessed that waste collection is more inadequate during the end of the year period.

M. le président, je n'ai pas donné une coloration politique à mon intervention car avant d'être politicien, je suis un patriote, j'aime mon pays, mais j'ai l'intime conviction que les

mesures budgétaires préconisées ne répondent nullement aux besoins de l'île Maurice, compte tenu des dangers auxquels notre société est confrontée et aux défis internationaux.

I hope, I am wrong, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We have been mandated to shape the future of our country for it belongs to the generation to come and the proper time to influence the character of a child is about a hundred years before he is born. So, it is time.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(3.09 p.m.)

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): M. le président, je voudrais, tout d'abord, féliciter l'honorable vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour le Budget qu'il a présenté à la nation mauricienne pour l'année 2012.

Comme l'honorable vice-Premier ministre l'a si bien dit, ce Budget est réalisable. Ce Budget, M. le président, est non seulement un outil monétaire fiscal pour assurer la relance économique, il est aussi une garantie pour la résilience économique face à la crise financière économique mondiale. M. le président, il s'agit là d'un Budget à visage humain. D'ailleurs, il a, à juste titre, été qualifié comme étant un Budget qui va essentiellement promouvoir le *feel good factor*. Dans la conjoncture économique actuelle, on ne peut dire mieux et on ne peut faire mieux. Finalement, M. le président ce Budget est un Budget qui rassure les investisseurs locaux et étrangers, tout en protégeant les plus vulnérables et les plus défavorisés. M. le président j'ai pris la peine d'écouter les membres de l'opposition, mais hélas, année après année, c'est le même refrain et la même rengaine qui résonne...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Obeegadoo, please!

Mr Aimée: ... la même mention d'une économie en état d'urgence. Suite à cette déclaration, M. le président, le peuple a tranché en notre faveur en 2005 et encore en 2010. Et tout cela à cause de notre engagement auprès de la population. Comme cette fameuse phrase si souvent utilisée, la voix du peuple c'est la voix de Dieu, mais pas celle de l'opposition.

M. le président qu'est-ce qui n'a pas été dit et qu'est-ce qui n'a pas été fait pour aboutir à la cassure de l'Alliance de l'Avenir avec notre partenaire d'hier ? Conclusion, M. le président, avec l'opposition tout est possible. Il est prêt à communier quelqu'un avec ou sans confession.

M. le président, l'orateur avant moi, l'honorable Nagalingum, normalement fait son travail comme tous les autres membres de cette auguste assemblée, mais à l'écouter on a l'impression que tout est peint en noir ; comme ils disent si souvent, *pays en bas la haut*. Il parle à un certain moment des familles qui vont dans des supermarchés. C'est vrai et, nous, nous sommes d'accord ici qu'il y a encore des gens qui ont besoin d'être soutenus. C'est vrai qu'il y a des gens qui n'ont pas su entrer dans le train économique, mais si l'honorable Nagalingum voit un peu le pays, lui qui roule dans sa belle Mercedes ...

(Interruptions)

Il va voir que sur nos routes actuellement

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, don't interrupt!

Mr Aimée: ... le nombre de voitures neuves qu'il y a dans ce pays. Donc, ceci dit, je crois que le pays avance quand même à un pas de géant.

(Interruptions)

Qu'ils me rendent un service

The Deputy Speaker: Please! Order, please!

Mr Aimée: J'ai écouté avec attention...

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Nagalingum: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I don't have a Mercedes, I only have a Toyota.

Mr Aimée: But then it is a car!

The Deputy Speaker: It is a point of clarification.

(Interruptions)

Hon. Minister, please address the Chair!

Mr Aimée: M. le président ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Aimée: Si l'honorable Nagalingum et toute l'opposition devaient nous donner des conseils, je dirais qu'il aurait fallu le faire en 2000-2005. Aujourd'hui, l'honorable Nagalingum parle de la misère, quelqu'un qui ne peut pas acheter un pot de yaourt ou un pot de beurre, mais Monsieur Nagalingum...

The Deputy Speaker: L'honorable!

Mr Aimée: Oui. M. le président, entre 2000-2005...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Aimée: Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement de 2000-2005 a fait?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, please!

Mr Aimée: Qu'est-ce qu'il a fait...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I want silence from both sides of the House, behind hon. Aimée and also on this left side, please!

Mr Aimée: Qu'est-ce que le gouvernement de 2000-2005 a fait, M. le président ? Au lieu d'aller voir la misère, d'aller voir le système de la NHDC, ils ont fait ce qu'on appelle l'IRS. Le *ghetto* en d'autre sens, c'est-à-dire, créer des endroits. Aujourd'hui, quand on voit cela, c'est comme si une partie de l'*apartheid* de l'Afrique du Sud est à Maurice. Et en plus de cela, M. le président ...

(Interruption)

The Deputy Speaker: Order !

Mr Aimée: Monsieur Nagalingum est bien au courant...

The Deputy Speaker: L'honorable Nagalingum !

Mr Aimée: L'honorable Nagalingum ! Il y a eu ce fameux *Illovo deal*. Au lieu d'aller voir les personnes qui sont dans le besoin, ceux qui n'ont pas de logement, ceux qui sont dans la misère, qu'est-ce qui a été fait ? Plus de six milliards de roupies ont été exemptées. Et comment ? Sans même s'intéresser à nos institutions comme le State Law Office. Ils ont pris un juge ailleurs pour les conseiller - maintenant ils viennent nous donner des leçons – à quatre heures du matin à la Clarisse House. M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, I am warning you!

Mr Aimée: Je ne vais pas me lamenter là-dessus, parce que je crois qu'il n'y a pas pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir, M. le président. Je ne vais même pas m'attarder sur le *Local Government Bill* mais, M. le président, avec votre permission, je vais quand même parler de l'implication financière du *Local Government Bill*.

The Deputy Speaker: We are debating on the Budget Speech today, not on the Local Government Bill.

Mr Aimée: Yes, we are debating on the Budget, but they are referring to the Local Government Bill, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I think I have got the right, as Minister of Local Government, to reply to them.

M. le président, le 20 juin 2010, deux ou trois mois après mon arrivée au parlement, j'ai commencé à travailler sur le *Local Government Bill* et j'ai écrit au ministère des Finances d'alors pour la première fois. La réponse est arrivée à mon bureau le 03 août 2010 pour me dire '*We can't entertain the Bill due to financial constraint*'. J'ai réécrit le 17 février 2011...

The Deputy Speaker: Just to remind the hon. Minister that he should not disclose whatever happened in another forum. He knows that. Communication between Ministers is another issue.

Mr Aimée: Yes, but the fact that...

The Deputy Speaker: I am just reminding the hon. Minister.

Mr Aimée: The fact that the hon. Member had discussed...

The Deputy Speaker: I am just reminding the Minister about the Standing Orders.

Mr Aimée: M. le président, le 17 février 2011, j'ai réécrit au ministre des Finances...

(Interruptions)

C'est pour vous dire, M. le président, qu'entre 2010 jusqu'au départ de l'ex-ministre des Finances tout récemment, je n'ai jamais obtenu le *financial clearance to go ahead*. M. le président *this is not Cabinet; this is correspondence between my Ministry and the Ministry of Finance*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, please! Let the hon. Minister make his point!

Mr Aimée: I have already made my point.

M. le président, le deuxième aspect concerne l'*upgrading of Agalega Airstrip*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking!

Mr Aimée: Je vois que tout le monde en a parlé ici, mais pas en ce qui concerne Agaléga et les Agaléens. M. le président, encore une fois, cela fait neuf mois qu'il y a eu des échanges de correspondance entre mon ministère et le ministère des Finances, et jusqu'au départ de l'ex-ministre je n'ai jamais obtenu de réponse. Par contre, il y a eu quelques correspondances, par exemple, au sujet de l'*airstrip in Agalega. The Ministry of Finance needs five options*; un *airstrip*, un aéroport en cinq options. La première option était d'une somme de R 217 millions; deuxième option: R 139 millions; troisième option: R 126 millions; quatrième option: R 102 millions et la cinquième option: R 87 millions.

M. le président, après avoir travaillé là-dessus pendant huit mois, le ministre des Finances arrive et me dit '*Now, you have to give me all details*' en ce qui concerne le prix du *resurfacing*, les intrants, etc. A un moment donné, j'ai cru que le ministre des Finances d'alors allait me demander combien de macadams, d'agrégats il y a dans un kilo tonne? Qu'est-ce qu'il a approuvé? Voilà ce qu'il a approuvé -

First option: the airstrip without floodlight; the airstrip without terminal building and control tower; the airport without fire station - using basic fire fighting equipments - '*Di sable! Di l'eau!*'

Deuxième option: *no fencing, buoys, access roads to the airport.*

Troisième option: encore une fois, *no fuel storage and tanker for petrol.* On aurait dit que l'avion de Maurice à Agaléga allait rouler avec de l'eau salée. *No solar powered airfield lighting.* Nous parlons ici de MID; tout le monde parle de MID, on va faire l'économie d'énergie, on va faire ceci et cela, et moi, j'arrive avec un projet de *solar panel* pour alimenter l'aéroport. '*No! I can't undertake!*' *No apron floodlighting, no terminal building, no basic firefighting facilities!*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please!

Mr Aimée: Quatrième option - je ne vais pas continuer à répéter tout ce que je viens de dire car c'est la même chose. Malgré tout cela, le ministre des finances a quitté le gouvernement sans avoir le *proper clearance*. Le nouveau ministre des finances est venu avec un nouveau

Budget pour l'*airstrip* et les 137 millions de roupies ont été données par lui et non pas par celui qui est parti.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the vice-Prime Minister has announced the abolition of the Municipal Tenant's Tax. This is a long-awaited proposal. In fact, it has often been argued that the tenant's tax is a form of double taxation. It is claimed to be unfair in the sense that tenants already pay other fees such as trade fees, and landlords pay general rates, which is a tax on the same property, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Furthermore, it is levied only in urban areas, not in rural areas, that is, not around the local authorities that are situated in the local area, that is, district councils.

The abolition of this tax will definitely give a boost to the tenancy market and will remove unfairness in the local taxation system while restoring equilibrium in the property market. Municipalities may rest assured that the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development will provide an appropriate compensation for this loss of revenue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development announced that the fee being collected on billboards will be raised to between Rs30,000 and Rs70,000 per annum. I welcome this increase in the fees on billboards. I understand that the fee will be collected by the MRA, and the local authorities which were previously collecting these fees will be compensated accordingly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as announced in the Budget Speech, Mauritius should live up to what is expected from a high-end tourism destination. The Tourism Authority will, therefore, undertake an island wide Cleaning and Embellishment Programme, which will include the control of littering. This is a very laudable enterprise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I am glad to announce that my own Ministry will actively participate in this national endeavour through its Field Services Unit, its Solid Waste Management Unit, and the local authorities.

Mr Deputy Speaker, pensioners constitute a vulnerable category of persons and former employees may sometimes find their income upon retirement reduced by more the half. Employees should, therefore, be given the insurance that their contribution is safely managed and that their pensions and pension rights are adequately safeguarded and guaranteed. For this reason, I welcome the announcement made that the pension funds of local authorities will be

transferred to and managed by SICOM, as is already the case for other statutory bodies. In fact, the new Local Government Bill which is before the House does make provision for this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to note that provision has been made in the Budget for the creation of the three new district councils. This will enable the implementation of one of the fundamental changes we intend to bring to the Local Government Act which purports, amongst others, to enhance service delivery by local authorities and, I must say here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is long overdue. Since the last 40 years, we have got several Local Government Bills that had passed through the House, but we are the one that will change this situation. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the Government sector, an office has been created called Office of Public Sector Governance under the jurisdiction of the Prime Minister's Office, which has a mandate to ensure that good governance and effectiveness are achieved in the public sector. I was pleased to hear the announcement of a similar unit being created over the local authorities and which will be called the Local Authority Governance Unit. I am sure that the Bill is in front of the House. It was in my opinion that the Bill is here to be circulated, ventilated and I am sure the hon. Member has not understood. I will ask him go ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No, you cannot say so!

Mr Aimée: The LAGU will definitely provide the *encadrement nécessaire*...

The Deputy Speaker: No, you are not going on the Bill!

Mr Aimée: Sorry!

The Deputy Speaker: I remind you again. You are not going on the Bill!

Mr Aimée: ...to the local authority for them to perform effectively and efficiently. I will ensure that the LAGU is set into place very soon with the appropriate human and other resources. The difference, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last year for the Budget, it was only two hours before the Budget announcement that we learnt what we have in the Budget provisions. This year, there have been consultations among Members and Ministers, consultations in the Ministries with civil servants. The LAGU will be under the responsibility of my Ministry and

will be chaired by one officer of my ministry. There is nothing between the Minister of Finance and this particular Committee.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the last announcement upon which I would wish to comment on, and which I support unreservedly, is the doubling of composting capacity at La Chaumière. According to terms of a previous agreement signed in October 2009, Government undertook to supply 90,000 tonnes of municipal solid waste to a private company to produce compost at absolutely no cost to Government. The operation has started and is reported to be performing well.

The Deputy Speaker: Order, hon. Mrs Labelle! Calm down!

(Interruptions)

Mr Aimée: The company has stated that with its installed capacity it can handle the double amount of waste presently reaching the company and has made a request that it be supplied the double amount of waste. Government has agreed to this proposal and this will, incidentally, extend the life of Mare Chicose landfill. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will again come to the cost saving aspect of this decision a little bit later during my speech.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me for a few minutes to turn to the local government sector only to inform the House that the vision here is very much in line with that of the Budget speech, that is, to ensure sustainable development while, at the same time, protect the most vulnerable groups.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Agalega is a small island situated 1000 km away from the shore of Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

Riez bien! Celui qui rit le premier, rira le dernier!

I have myself been the Chairman of the OIDC and I have travelled a few times to the island. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, few will imagine how life may be difficult on a lonely island far from friends and relatives and far from the facilities of modern Mauritius. For this reason, in order to alleviate the daily hardships of life in Agalega, we need to show compassion to the Agaleans, to care for them and to show in acts and deeds that we really care.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am improving significantly the air access to Agalega by refurbishing the airstrip. This project ought to have taken place this year itself, but the procedures, especially those dealing with procurement, have delayed its execution. I am pleased to announce to the House that the time limit for the submission of bids is the end of November this year, and I expect that the Board of OIDC will award the contract by early 2012...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Navarre-Marie, please!

Mr Aimée: ...so that the work may be completed well before the end of 2012. The upgrading of the airstrip will definitely improve the well-being of the Agaleans. Today, only the Dornier can undertake flights to Agalega and, in view of the current state of the airstrip, flights are being restricted in view of the current state of the airstrip. With the newly built airstrip, larger planes, including the ATR 72, will also be capable of flying to the island.

Furthermore, to improve safety during landing and take-off of planes at the airstrip, a provision of Rs17 m. has been made for the acquisition of a fire fighting and rescue vehicle.

Some may argue that spending Rs137m. on the airstrip to benefit only 300 residents may be out of place. But, as a caring Government, we will spare no effort to come to the rescue of the most vulnerable groups even if they live a thousand miles away.

Mr Deputy Sir, the airstrip in Agalega is not the only major project being undertaken to benefit the Agaleans. The House will remember that, under my chairmanship, the OIDC has constructed a Refugee Centre on the *Ile du Nord* to offer security and safety to the inhabitants in case of tsunamis and sea level rise. But there are also people living in *Ile du Sud* who need to be offered the same facilities. I am, therefore, making provision for the construction of another refugee centre on *Ile du Sud*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with Government policy, the Food Security Project aims at encouraging the inhabitants of Agalega to improve the agriculture on the island, so that they can be prepared to face problems of food supply. The Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security through its Agricultural Research Extension Unit (AREU), has provided assistance in terms of training, equipment, materials, plants, seeds and project monitoring.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as part of its statutory body obligation to provide accommodation facilities to the employees of the Corporation working on Agalega, the O IDC has an ongoing programme to increase the number of houses on the island. I have, therefore, made provision for the construction of three duplex houses every year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, solar energy would be used to provide basic electricity to individual households. The project aims to provide ten houses with such a system each year. The use of solar energy would help the Corporation to reduce the consumption of petroleum products, which run generator units. This reduction would help to ease the strain on the Budget of the Corporation. M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, please don't disturb the Minister. He is being disturbed.

Mr Aimée: We can continue my dear.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, aller à la mer en famille ou avec des amis est un loisir sain, accessible à tous, et très prisé des Mauriciens. Encore faut-il que les plages soient propres et adéquatement équipées d'infrastructures de base.

In terms of the Beach Authority Act, the Authority has a mandate to manage public beaches and provide amenities for the enjoyment of the public. As part of an ongoing exercise, the Authority has undertaken the following activities in the year 2011 –

- (i) the provision of basic facilities and amenities, such as toilet blocks, bins, fire place on public beaches;
- (ii) infrastructural development, including the provision of lighting and contribution to CCTV surveillance system and parking facilities;
- (iii) upgrading, landscaping and embellishment works on public beaches;
- (iv) organising sensitisation campaigns at regular intervals for better protection and preservation of our beaches. The Pereybere Beach Resource Centre is fully

contributing to attain such an objective with the collaboration of various stakeholders, such as schools and NGOs.

It is a fact that such development is contributing to achieving government objectives set with other stakeholders in the tourism sector by creating potentially attractive sites for the enjoyment of all the people, including the tourists who have nowadays become regular users of public beaches.

Due to limited financial resources, the Authority had up to now provided only basic amenities and undertaken minor embellishment work on public beaches.

However, in line with government policy to provide efforts in the control and management of public beaches, to democratise access to public beaches and to enhance security measures, the Beach Authority will focus on certain strategic policies and objectives, as follows

—

- (i) prepare a strategic plan that would provide and strengthen the legal and institutional framework of the Authority, so as to face new challenges and opportunities relevant to the overall development of the public beaches, and
- (ii) take measures for the protection, conservation, preservation and restoration of our beaches faced with the threat of climate change effects - sea rise or erosion - as it's in the MID vision.

Here, I welcome the provision being made by the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the restoration of some of our beaches which have been severely affected by erosion.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance announced in his speech that government would double the quantity of municipal solid waste being supplied for conversion into compost; in other words, quantity of waste to be supplied to the composting company will increase from about 90,000 tons a year to about 180,000 tons a year.

In effect, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are now moving away from the concept of nation of seeing waste as an unwanted material, which can only be landfilled at a very high cost. Instead, we are now viewing waste as an economic resource that can be used productively and be reintroduced into economic cycle.

This being said, we are now considering that the best strategy for waste disposal is not to go for more and more land filling or incineration projects, but rather to opt for waste recycling with composting as central element, being given the highly organic nature of our solid waste. Compost is a soil conditioner with no harmful effect on environment and, more importantly, it will help reduce the cost of transportation to landfilling.

In addition to the doubling of the quantity of the municipal solid waste being supplied to the existing composting plant, we will also invite proposals, possibly on a PPP basis, for the construction of two additional composting plants, one at Forbach Hill, Cottage, with a capacity of 130,000 tons yearly, and a second one at la Martinière, with a capacity of 20,000 tons yearly.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the years, we have been experiencing a constant increase in the demand for products and also changes in types of products being put on the market. These have direct impact on the waste situation. Waste volumes continue to grow, and the absolute amount of waste going into landfill will increase, unless there is a change in our strategy. The potential for waste prevention and recycling has so far not been fully tapped.

Landfilling in the future will have a negligible role, and will cater only for contingency situation and catering for the disposal of residual waste, which cannot be prevented or otherwise treated and where the primary focus is on prevention, recovery and recycling.

We have, therefore, set as target to divert, at least, 80% of the waste generated from land filling to composting and recycling by 2015, thus resulting in a massive saving of about Rs300 m. a year for government in terms of transportation costs and reduced operation of the Mare Chicose landfill. This is in line with the global initiative of green economies, which is an objective of the UN Conference on sustainable development, and is expected to create additional jobs and ensure sustainable development.

The opportunities for greening the waste sector come from three inter-related sources -

- (i) growth of waste market, driven by demand for waste services and recycled products;
- (ii) increasing scarcity of natural resource and the consequent rise in commodity prices, which influence the demand for recycled product, and
- (iii) emergence of new waste management technologies.

The increasing global scarcity of natural resources presents the waste management sector not only with new challenges, but also offers new opportunities for the development of innovative and efficient recovery. With this backdrop, I am advocating the wastes need to be seen as resources and these being re-circulated as far as possible, and that our society to be turned into a resource efficient one with less waste needing to be disposed of.

I am convinced that, with the coming into operation of the centralised composting facilities at La Chaumière, combined with sustainable waste awareness campaigns to sensitise the population at large on the need to minimise waste generation, to re-use and recycle waste, our target of 80% reduction of refuse being disposed at the landfill within our reach.

We also have as objective to be a regional leader in the field, as we have already acquired significant know-how. In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was indeed pleased to hear from a delegation of US Environment Protection Agency, which visited Mauritius recently, that we have one of the best waste disposal systems in this part of the world, and our sanitary landfill complies to the best international norms.

Nevertheless, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are many challenges that face the primary providers of waste services, namely the local authorities. Among others, greater efficiency of fiscal mechanisms, a clear strategy to improve operating effectiveness and efficiencies, financial sustainability of waste service delivery, and boosting of the local revenues. We have already started working in these areas, and the priority area being considered is improvement in waste collection effectiveness and efficiency.

In this respect, my officers, together with the representatives of the Office of Public Sector Governance (OPSG) and of the local authorities, are meeting regularly to define the modalities for putting in place a more effective and efficient waste collection system.

With regard to hazardous waste, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my Ministry has commissioned a study from the University of Mauritius, which is being financed through a grant from the Africa Institute, a Basel Convention Regional Centre, to conduct a nationwide inventory of hazardous wastes to determine the quantities and categories of wastes being generated. The findings and recommendations of the study report, which is expected to be concluded by the end of this year, will, hopefully enable my Ministry to determine the most appropriate strategies for hazardous waste management, including storage, treatment and disposal to be considered.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, few people care about the existence of the Fire Service, until, unfortunately, there is a fire outbreak and they have to call the Fire Department. On the other hand, the Fire Department, and its devoted fire-fighters care very much for their fellow countrymen. They constantly train themselves, upgrade their knowledge and skills, and take enormous risks to be able to combat fires and disasters of ever-changing nature. Year after year, old equipment is replaced and every effort is made to modernise. For example, five new water tenders costing in all Rs60 m. were delivered and commissioned three months ago. A new turntable ladder, costing Rs40 m., has been ordered from Germany and will be delivered in early 2012. Again, in 2012, three semi urban vehicles, nine sets of stabilizing equipment, 50 sets of breathing apparatus will be purchased.

In fact, as I mentioned in the last year's Budget, it is difficult for our fire fighters to reach buildings after six, seven storeys. We are faced with buildings in Mauritius which are more than 20 storeys, which is quite a risk. Actually in the local authority, we are looking towards buildings on construction to have staircase, apart from the normal path being used in the high building sector.

New Fire Stations will be constructed in various locations of the country to reduce the response and intervention time. The contract for the new Station in Tamarin has already been awarded and works will start soon. This new Station will benefit all inhabitants and economic operators, including hotels, restaurants, supermarkets, industrial and commercial enterprises from Le Morne to Petite Rivière, including Flic en Flac and the surrounding areas. A new Fire Station will be constructed next year at Rose Belle. Tender documents are being prepared and tenders are expected to be invited by the beginning of this year. All these measures, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, aim at bringing the services nearby to the users and to the population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the need for infrastructure development is one of the great global challenges of our time. In fact, there is probably no bigger challenge for the public policy worldwide. Failure to invest means failure to grow and develop other social and economic fabric we all have a stake in this.

In June 2008, Government has set up the Local Infrastructure Fund (LIF) with the objective to fund key infrastructure projects of the local authorities and building a modern Mauritius. This Fund has been a '*ballon d'oxygène*', Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for the

development of local projects aiming at improving the quality of life of the local community at large.

The LIF initiated some 150 projects with a Budget of Rs1.3 billion, out of which several major projects have been completed over the last three years. Many of these infrastructures are already being utilised by the public today.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to first enumerate some of the projects which are already operational -

- markets fairs at Rose Belle, Surinam and Pailles;
- renovation of Vacoas and Curepipe Market Fairs;
- foodcourts at Quatre Bornes Fair and Pont de Paris at SSR Street, Port Louis;
- multipurpose complexes at Residence Vallijee, St. Pierre, Terre Rouge, Mare d'Albert, Glen Park and Sodnac;
- sport amenities - football ground at Ebene; Multipurpose Complex at Paillotte; lighting of football grounds at St. Martin, La Gaulette, Petite Rivière Noire, Case Noyale, Petite Rivière; fencing of Highlands football ground; tennis court at Plaisance and Tartan Track at Sir Gaëtan Duval Stadium, and
- La Chaumière Transfer Station.

During the current financial year, up to date, the LIF has completed some 50 projects, the major ones being –

- upgrading of the Telfair Garden at Souillac;
- multipurpose complexes at Bon Accueil and Glen Park;
- foodcourt at Newton Avenue, Quatre Bornes;
- gymnasium at Curepipe;
- football ground at Highlands;
- village halls at *Morcellement* St. André and Old Grand Port;
- lighting of football grounds at *Résidence* Kennedy, *Résidence* St. Jean, Grand Rivière Noire, Baie du Cap, Tamarin, Bambous, and
- fencing of Bigara cemetery.

By the end of this financial year, other major projects will be completed, which include –

- Abercrombie and Flacq market fairs;

- multipurpose complexes at Vacoas, Pamplémousses, Rivière des Créoles, Souillac and Cascavelle;
- football ground at Henrietta ;
- *École de Boxe* at Plaisance, and
- village halls at Camp diable and Petit Bel Air.

In the financial year 2012, several major projects, which have been initiated this year, will hopefully be completed, and these include construction of new Market Fair at Rivière des Anguilles, for which tenders have already been invited, upgrading of social complex at Mont Roches and construction of a social hall at Chebel.

All these projects have one thing in common: they will contribute to the economic growth of the country and improve the lives of our people. They will hopefully be an inspiration for new infrastructural projects in this country.

To conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not a surprise to me and to the Members of this side of the House that the Budget 2012 is widely applauded by various sectors of the population and by all stakeholders of the social, economic and financial sectors. It is applauded precisely because it is the result of months of careful negotiations and discussions that our colleague, the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, has had with the nation at large.

The Budget 2012 est une prouesse, car il est un équilibre remarquable entre l'impératif du développement d'une part, et de la protection des défavorisés et des plus vulnérables d'autre part.

M. le président, j'ai quand même un petit souhait à faire à tous les membres de cette Chambre en disant –

« Quand un homme vous élève,
c'est certainement à la hauteur de ses mains,
mais quand Dieu vous élève,
c'est sans limite. »

Merci, M. le président.

(4.03 p.m.)

Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal): M. le président, je tiens à mon tour à féliciter le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances qui nous a présenté le vendredi 4 novembre dernier le Budget pour l'exercice 2012.

Pour son baptême de feu au ministère des Finances, le vice-premier ministre a assuré et il a réussi son pari. Nous constatons que la récente mutation du vice-premier ministre aux finances n'a pas dépaycé l'honorable Xavier Luc Duval. D'ailleurs, les finances c'est bien son domaine.

Le premier Budget déposé par l'honorable Duval à l'Assemblée nationale confirme que le gouvernement se tourne définitivement vers l'avenir au-delà de la crise, tout en nous permettant de faire face aux défis qui nous sont posés dans l'immédiat.

Le Budget 2012 repose sur trois axes -

- (i) la protection de l'emploi ;
- (ii) l'accroissement de l'investissement, et
- (iii) la création de la richesse, ceci avec comme toile de fond une architecture économique mondiale en pleine mutation avec -
 - l'essor des économies émergentes telles que la Chine, le Brésil, etc.;
 - la contraction économique de l'Europe, et
 - l'émergence de l'Afrique qui absorbe environ 15% de nos exportations.

Cela explique pourquoi le Budget offre non seulement un allègement de la pression fiscale, mais il est aussi résolument orienté vers l'Asie et l'Afrique.

M. le président, on sait que la croissance future dépend des investissements actuels. Ce Budget répond aux enjeux pressants de notre société, et le gouvernement poursuit les efforts déjà entrepris pour consolider une vraie relance de l'investissement.

M. le président, on ne peut pas attirer l'investissement, qu'il soit local ou étranger, sans qu'il y ait de stabilité sociale. C'est pour cela que le Budget 2012 accorde une attention particulière sur le combat contre la pauvreté et l'intégration de toutes les composantes de la nation mauricienne dans le train du développement économique.

M. le président, pour la toute première fois, un gouvernement présente un Budget pour soulager et faciliter considérablement les plus démunis de notre société, et cela en période de crise financière internationale dramatique.

C'est en effet un Budget social extraordinaire, qui permet d'accroître l'effort pour aider les familles à mieux vivre, en leur apportant des ressources et en les aidant à faire face à leurs difficultés sociales et financières.

Oui, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam souhaite...

(Interruptions)

Évidemment !

... réduire les inégalités profondes qui existent entre les familles riches et les familles pauvres de notre pays. Le Premier ministre veut d'une île Maurice pour tous.

Je voudrais partager avec les membres de la Chambre les paroles de sagesse d'un illustre personnage, en la personne de Mahatma Gandhi, un homme d'exception qui a influencé nos vies par la portée humaine de ses propos et par le choix de son existence. Ses paroles sont une source d'espoir. Je cite -

“ La démocratie devrait assurer aux plus faibles les mêmes opportunités qu'aux plus forts ”.

Notre Premier ministre a qualifié le Budget, je cite -

“ C'est un Budget de solidarité. ”

En effet, ce Budget de solidarité vient accompagner et soulager les personnes en grande difficulté avec des mesures concrètes.

M. le président, la pauvreté à Maurice est une réalité et non une fiction, et cet après-midi j'ai choisi de démontrer qu'à travers le Budget 2012, le gouvernement Mauricien veut prouver avec force et détermination son engagement national et sincère de poursuivre la lutte contre la pauvreté.

Je vous invite donc à faire un tour d'horizon de ce développement social qu'apporte le Budget 2012.

Malgré les difficultés économiques et l'imprévisibilité par rapport au futur, nous avons pu consolider nos atouts sociaux. L'État maintient toujours les subsides d'une valeur de R 1.2 milliards sur le riz de base, la farine et le gaz ménager. Ce filet de protection assure en effet la sécurité alimentaire de tout un chacun. Sans qu'on s'en rende compte, les prix du riz de base et

de la farine sont restés inchangés malgré la hausse des prix des denrées alimentaires sur le marché mondial.

M. le président, on ne cesse de le répéter : notre pays ne dispose d'aucune ressource naturelle. Notre seule ressource se compose d'hommes et de femmes qui forment notre nation. Donc, la force de notre République est dans ses ressources humaines, et c'est donc primordial d'assurer la cohésion et le bien-être de cette ressource. Le bien-être de cette ressource, M. le président, commence avec une attention particulière aux enfants défavorisés.

La solidarité avec les enfants pauvres - les crèches ne sont, malheureusement, pas accessibles à toutes les couches de la population. Nous nous réjouissons que les services de crèches accueillent 2,000 enfants pauvres. Je souhaite très sincèrement que les enfants handicapés y trouvent également leur place. Cette nouvelle initiative permettra aux mères de famille de prendre de l'emploi.

Le Budget 2012 prévoit la création de six nouveaux abris pour les enfants délaissés ou victimes d'abus. Pour les quelque 3,000 enfants nécessitant une éducation spécialisée, les *grants-in-aid* pour les écoles offrant ces services spécialisés augmentent de 25%. Désormais, la subvention accordée au premier cycle scolaire, c'est-à-dire le pré-primaire, sera étendue et applicable dès l'âge de 3 ans. Cette nouvelle mesure profiterait à 16,000 enfants Mauriciens.

M. le président, depuis des années, le gouvernement, les élus, les parents, les enseignants sont confrontés aux problèmes de l'échec scolaire et recherchent des méthodes et des dispositifs susceptibles d'en limiter les effets. Dans ce Budget, M. le président, il y a de la bonne volonté de la part du gouvernement de venir en aide aux écoliers dans leur parcours scolaire, en proposant un accompagnement scolaire et éducatif avec en plus un repas à travers le *Summer School Programme*, afin d'offrir aux élèves en difficulté des chances de réussite.

Cette démarche, M. le président, participe à l'égalité des chances. Cette nouvelle formule de soutien scolaire va favoriser l'intégration des élèves les plus défavorisés.

Sur les 45,000 chômeurs comptabilisés à Maurice, M. le président, 10,000 ne sont pas titulaire du CPE et 20,000 ne passent pas la *Form II* ou la *Form III*. Le Budget 2012 vient jeter les bases pour que la scolarité et la formation à un niveau élevé soient accessibles à toutes les couches de la population. L'inclusion sociale passe par un accès équitable aux ressources du pays, que ce soit l'éducation, la formation, les services publics etc.

300 établissements scolaires recevront chacun R 500,000 pour assurer leur rénovation. Cette nouvelle démarche permettra à ces établissements de faire profiter de leurs infrastructures sportives, entre autres, aux habitants de la région en dehors des heures de classe, afin d'assurer l'épanouissement des jeunes car il faut un bon équilibre entre les cours et les loisirs.

Il est clair que ce Budget propose particulièrement de doter notre jeunesse de meilleures armes pour affronter l'avenir.

La solidarité pour un logement - le gouvernement souhaiterait qu'aucun Mauricien n'occupe un logement insalubre et malsain. L'Etat veut assurer un logement décent à chaque Mauricien et met tout en œuvre pour réduire le nombre des mal-logés. Il s'est, donc, fixé pour objectif d'agir afin que les plus défavorisés trouvent à se loger dignement et durablement.

Quelque 2,000 familles vivant dans les maisons dites ex-CHA devraient recevoir des terres gratuitement ; l'accès à la propriété va être facilité pour les familles gagnant moins de R 10,000 par mois. Elles ne devraient payer que le tiers de la valeur totale du logement, les deux tiers étant financés par le gouvernement à travers le CSR. Pour ce faire, un fonds de R 1.5 milliards sera créé.

Les 44 NHDC à travers l'île seront dotés d'un syndic fonctionnel que l'Etat financera. De plus, le gouvernement réalisera à ses frais des travaux d'amélioration du système d'évacuation des eaux usées et d'étanchéité dans certains complexes. Tout cela démontre une vraie lutte contre l'exclusion.

La solidarité aux soins - avoir un membre de la famille souffrant d'une maladie grave ne pouvant être opéré à Maurice reste un vrai combat. En effet, depuis 1999, l'Etat accorde un soutien financier d'un montant de R 200,000 pour ces cas. Le gouvernement ne reste pas insensible devant les véritables souffrances des familles à faibles revenus pour leur traitement à l'étranger et, dans un élan de sympathie et de profonde estime, cette aide financière a plus que doublé passant de R 200,000 à R 500,000.

Aussi la somme allouée à la réhabilitation des alcooliques et des toxicomanes augmente de 70% pour passer à R 50 millions.

La solidarité pour le sport - M. le président, le sport doit être considéré dans notre pays comme un facteur majeur d'insertion au même titre que le travail, la famille, la culture et les loisirs.

M. le président, en matière de sport, dans la réalité, la grande majorité de nos sportifs de haut niveau vivent dans des conditions matérielles et financières très difficiles. Il ne serait que justice de réparer cette situation, sachant que plusieurs d'entre eux ont porté très haut les valeurs du sport Mauricien sur la scène internationale.

Le gouvernement est, donc, heureux de soutenir ces athlètes ; il est fier de reconnaître leurs sacrifices, d'encourager leur réussite et de faciliter leur intégration sur le marché du travail.

C'est pourquoi, à travers le Budget 2012, l'Etat s'engage à offrir six bourses d'études à l'étranger aux meilleurs sportifs et aux plus talentueux. Cela permettra d'augmenter la pépinière d'athlètes de haut niveau dans notre pays. Ainsi, l'île Maurice sera également plus compétitive sur la scène sportive internationale. Cette nouvelle a été bien accueillie dans le monde sportif. En effet, cette décision est forte, car elle pourra favoriser l'intégration sociale de nos athlètes.

De plus, certains de nos athlètes ne parviennent pas à concilier activité professionnelle à temps plein et performances sportives selon leur calendrier de compétitions et d'entraînements. Aujourd'hui, l'Etat s'engage donc à rétablir cette situation qui touche plusieurs milliers de sportifs en dotant les entreprises d'*incentives* à travers le *CSR Fund*. Cette mesure encouragerait le recrutement d'athlètes professionnels au sein des entreprises.

La solidarité dans le transport - dans son précédent mandat, le gouvernement du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam a fait beaucoup d'effort en accordant la gratuité des transports en commun aux étudiants ainsi qu'aux seniors. Cela a énormément soulagé des milliers de familles.

Depuis le passage à la gratuité, soit six ans et demi de cela, nos seniors se déplacent à leur convenance. Le transport gratuit aux étudiants et aux personnes âgées placent Maurice comme un exemple à suivre pour d'autres pays. M. le président, l'abolition de la taxe sur les mobylettes et les motocyclettes de moins de 125cc donne l'opportunité à ceux qui ne peuvent s'offrir une voiture d'avoir un autre moyen de déplacement.

M. le président, je ne pourrais faire l'impasse sur ma circonscription.

(Interruptions)

Plusieurs travaux ont été complétés dans Vacoas/Floréal, dont la construction de deux murs de soutènement, communément appelés *retaining walls* en anglais, afin de préserver les routes et chemins des éboulements et glissement de terrains à Pont Vantard, Henrietta et Perrier, Glen Park. Il va sans dire que cela a nécessité de gros investissements.

Actuellement, d'autres travaux sont en cours, dont la reconstruction du Pont La Vanille à Réunion qui comprend l'élargissement et le nivellement du pont. Les travaux d'éclairage du terrain de foot à Mangalkhan sont quasiment achevés, alors que ceux de Résidence l'Oiseau démarreront sous peu. L'aménagement des trottoirs et de drains ainsi que le ré-asphaltage des chaussées mineures et majeures progressent. Des travaux seront sous peu entrepris à Camp la Savanne ; les autorités concernés ont déjà validé le *survey*, et sont actuellement au *design stage*.

M. le président, à l'Assemblée nationale, le rôle de l'opposition est d'assurer la vigilance tout en exerçant objectivement leur droit de critique. Une fois du plus, dans le cadre des débats budgétaires, pour ne rien charger, fidèle à leurs habitudes légendaires, l'opposition ne cesse de parler d'incohérence, de fadeur, de manque d'ambition et de vision du Budget 2012.

(Interruptions)

Ils disent qu'il s'agit d'un Budget pro-capitaliste, et j'en passe. M. le président, l'opposition nous ressasse le même discours tous les ans mais, en réalité, elle n'a rien à en redire. Au lieu d'élever la voix, l'opposition ferait mieux de trouver de meilleurs arguments, s'il y en a évidemment! Les dirigeants de l'opposition ont eux aussi détenu les rênes du pouvoir à un certain moment ; ils n'ont rien fait de concret pour soulager le petit peuple.

(Interruptions)

Peut-être qu'ils étaient à court d'idées?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Anquetil: L'opposition ferait mieux de commencer par balayer devant sa porte.

(Interruptions)

M. le président, l'île Maurice a acquis son indépendance en 1968 et, durant ces 43 ans d'indépendance, le Parti travailliste a dirigé notre pays pendant 34 ans, soit 80 pour cent de la vie indépendante du pays. Le Parti travailliste a ses empreintes dans chaque développement de notre

pays. Oui, M. le président, pendant ces 34 ans au pouvoir, le Parti travailliste a grandement contribué à façonner notre pays, et le travail abattu est tout à fait remarquable -

- (a) Premièrement, l'éducation gratuite pour tous les jeunes Mauriciens, la création de l'Université de Maurice, la gratuité des transports en commun, et maintenant l'objectif d'avoir un diplômé universitaire au sein de chaque famille à travers des institutions tertiaires qui seront implantées dans toute l'île, dont une à Rodrigues. Jugez-en vous-même, M. le président!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Anquetil:

- (b) Deuxièmement, l'injection des investissements de plusieurs milliards dans notre réseau routier et notre aéroport.
- (c) Troisièmement, un combat herculéen contre la pauvreté afin de créer l'équilibre social, et un partage équitable de richesses et des ressources.

M. le président, ce pays a besoin du Parti travailliste.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order!

Ms Anquetil: Dans ce Budget, l'innovation inattendue...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking!

Ms Anquetil: Dans ce Budget, l'innovation inattendue demeure la démarche du vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances d'établir un calendrier bien défini pour l'implémentation des mesures dans chaque ministère respectif. Je salue très bas son courage dans cette initiative.

(Interruptions)

Pour conclure, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Anquetil: Pour conclure, M. le président, l'histoire retiendra que c'est Navinchandra Ramgoolam, Premier ministre de la République de l'île Maurice qui a créé en 2010 un ministère de l'Intégration sociale dans notre République. Il s'agit en effet d'un ministère qui s'occupe non seulement des personnes défavorisées de notre société, mais également une institution qui vise à créer une société équilibrée. Un an après, l'histoire retiendra à nouveau que c'est toujours le gouvernement du Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam qui dépose un Budget pour l'exercice 2012 avec un volet social sans précédent.

Je voudrais également rappeler à la Chambre que lors de son premier mandat en tant que Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam avait créé le ministère des TIC. Aujourd'hui, 15 ans après, le secteur des technologies informatiques emploie environ 15,000 personnes et contribue à la hauteur de 6.4% de notre produit intérieur brut.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Ms Anquetil: Je souhaite que dans un délai plus restreint le ministère de l'Intégration sociale fasse de l'île Maurice une nation où la pauvreté sera réduite considérablement.

M. le président, un pays n'est puissant que par les hommes et les femmes qui le composent. Le Parti travailliste et le Parti Mauricien Social Démocrate invitent tous les Mauriciens et Mauriciennes à continuer à travailler ensemble pour bâtir la seule île Maurice ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let her conclude! Let her conclude, please!

Ms Anquetil: ...que nous aimons: moderne, performante, compétitive, conquérante, tolérante, accueillante, à l'aise dans la République, et ouverte sur le monde.

Pour terminer, je voudrais partager une autre citation orientale qui dit, je cite -

«Ne craignez pas d'avancer lentement, craignez seulement de rester sur place.»

Ce Budget prépare notre 'Avenir' à tous.

Merci pour votre attention.

At 4.29 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 5.07 p.m. with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

PNQ – MR A. K. R. – POLICE CELL - DEATH

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, following the PNQ of the hon. Leader of Opposition this morning, I wish to bring the following additional information to the attention of the House.

First, I refer to the request made to me by the hon. Leader of the Opposition to ascertain why in the provisional charge, the date of larceny of the wristwatch had been stated to be May 2011, whereas Mrs M. F. B. had stated in a statement on 17 July that the larceny had been committed on the same day, that is, on 17 July.

I have looked into the matter, Mr Speaker, Sir, and I have been informed that on 25 July 2011, accused Mr J. D. L. B. made a statement at Piton CID and stated at one point, and I quote -

“Asterla moi mo ena pou mo dire ki c'est qui vrai moi même ki fine coquin sa montre la. Mais ce n'est pas le 17 juillet sa l'année la sa. Fini gagne à pe près deux mois, jour et date mo pas rappel ki mo fine coquin sa montre la depis so l'armoire.”

That is what he stated.

Then the police went back to Mrs M. F. B, and she made a statement on 02 August 2011 and stated *inter alia*, and I quote –

“Moi mo éna pou dire ki li possible li fine coquin sa dans mois Mai parce qui la dernière fois mo ti servi et trouve montre la li ti en Avril 2011, le 17 juillet 2011 qui mo fine remarqué ki montre la fine perdi.”

So, this explains why in the provisional charge puts the date of the larceny as May 2011.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to the enquiry, I should like to state, as I started this morning, all the necessary procedures were followed. I am informed by the Commissioner of Police that a Deputy Commissioner of Police in the person of DCP Seerungen attended to the case and had the responsibility to supervise the enquiry. He was assisted by Superintendent Reekoye, who is responsible for CID operations.

Mr Speaker, Sir, second, the names of the Magistrates of the Pamplemousses District Court are as follows -

- Her Honour Mrs Cala-Panglose, the sitting Magistrate on 25 July 2011, was taken up and not available to hear the provisional charge against the accused Mr A. K. R, and
- the accused then appeared the following day, that is, 26 July 2011, before His Honour Mr Kevin Moorghen, the sitting Magistrate, and was remanded to police cell until 02 August 2011.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

(5.10 p.m.)

Mr G. Lesjongard (Second Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue): M. le président, nous avons tous pu apprécier le talent théâtral de la précédente oratrice, l’honorable Anquetil, qui a voulu défendre le premier Budget du leader du PMSD, l’honorable Xavier Luc Duval.

M. le président, en guise d’introduction, permettez-moi de dire qu’un Budget ne doit pas être uniquement un exercice comptable qui sert à rééquilibrer les recettes et les dépenses de l’Etat. Au contraire, un Budget doit être un instrument important, préférentiel, privilégié entre les mains du grand argentier, qui lui donne les moyens nécessaires de réaliser, de construire, de consolider notre économie et notre société.

Est-ce que le présent Budget présenté à la nation le quatre novembre va dans ce sens ? Est-ce qu'on peut dire qu'on a les moyens nécessaires, M. le président, de construire une société mauricienne plus juste, plus solidaire et plus fraternelle ? Mais, il faut admettre aussi que tout Budget doit donner les moyens nécessaires aux opérateurs économiques de notre pays, qu'ils soient petits, moyens ou grands, sans distinction aucune, et quel que soit le secteur - secteur de l'agriculture, la pêche, le tourisme, le textile ou d'autres secteurs - car il leur faut des moyens essentiels pour pouvoir produire des choses telles que la main-d'œuvre, les infrastructures nécessaires, les utilités comme l'eau et l'électricité. Et tout Budget, M. le président, comme je l'ai dit, doit pouvoir créer l'environnement nécessaire, afin de donner les moyens adéquats pour au moins satisfaire *what we call the basic needs of our population*; un logement décent, des services nécessaires.

Mais, que constatons-nous ? L'actuel Budget du grand argentier nous a fait comprendre certaines choses. Nous avons été gratifiés d'un Budget dans la plus pure et dure philosophie du PMSD. Tout pour le grand capital, un semblant de mesures pour les plus démunis de notre société, car chez le PMSD, M. le président, pour les plus démunis de notre société, on a toujours fait semblant, et rien de rien pour la classe moyenne. On a l'impression que le ministre des finances s'est acharné sur cette classe moyenne, car il ne faut pas oublier que lorsqu'il faut serrer la ceinture c'est toujours la classe moyenne qui le fait, et c'est toujours la classe moyenne qui paie les frais.

It is most unfair that none of the policies or measures in this present Budget targets the middle income earners. We have seen in the Budget generous tax policies towards the corporate sector. They've got the lion share, Mr Speaker, Sir. The measures for the poor are not ambitious at all. But, let's get back to basics, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Je ne suis ni économiste, ni comptable ; je ne suis qu'un ingénieur, M. le président, et cela me permet de prendre du recul pour pouvoir analyser ce Budget avec une certaine logique. Je l'ai mentionné au commencement ; allons commencer par là, c'est-à-dire, l'équilibre entre les recettes et les dépenses de l'Etat. Pour monsieur tout le monde, quand on parle de recettes, c'est toujours la taxe ; la taxe sur le revenu, la taxe payée par les contribuables. On constate que dans le Budget de 2012, les revenus se chiffrent à 76,8 milliards de roupies, et les recettes à 76,1 milliards de roupies. Quand on parle des revenus de l'Etat, il est intéressant de constater, M. le

président, que ces derniers temps - et c'est vérifiable à partir du rapport de la *Mauritius Revenue Authority* - une taxe a considérablement augmenté, *that is, tax on gambling, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

From 2005-2006, it has increased from Rs993 m. to reach a value of Rs1.5 billion in 2008 and 2009; almost an increase of 35% over a period of four years. What is interesting is that betting taxes grew at a rate of 28%. M. le président, on le dit assez souvent aujourd'hui que, petit à petit, nous sommes en train de devenir une nation *zougader*, et il faudrait souligner que lorsqu'on avait voté la loi autorisant les jeux de hasard à Maurice, il était prévu qu'on ait un observatoire des jeux. Mais, malheureusement, tel n'est pas le cas aujourd'hui, M. le président, et personne ne peut venir nous dire l'argent dépensé par chaque ménage ou par chaque père ou mère de famille dans les jeux du hasard, M. le président.

Concernant les dépenses de l'Etat - j'ai mentionné les chiffres tout à l'heure - il est intéressant de noter - pour comprendre exactement quand on vote un Budget et qu'au courant de l'année les dépenses se font - qu'on a une institution qui vérifie ces dépenses, et le dernier rapport de l'audit fait des commentaires cinglants en ce qu'il s'agit des dépenses encourues au courant de l'année, et il y a des recommandations. Il ne faudrait pas qu'on les prenne à la légère. Ces recommandations, M. le président, ont été aussi, je pense, mentionnées par l'honorable Reza Issack, et je pense que nous, en tant que parlementaires, il est important qu'on essaye de bien comprendre ce que le Directeur de l'Audit veut nous faire passer comme message, parce qu'on a des responsabilités très précises en tant que parlementaires.

Concernant le *Public Accounts Committee*, M. le président, qui est nommé à travers les *Standing Orders* du parlement, il a ces commentaires à faire.

And I quote -

“The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is an emanation of the legislature. It is recognised as the most powerful accountability mechanisms available to Parliament. The PAC examines audit reports, summons government officials to answer to audit queries, develops its recommendations and tables its report in Parliament for legislative debate, adoption and further action.”

Et il vient faire deux recommandations très précises. La première, c'est que *the proceedings of the PAC be open to members of the public*, et je pense qu'il faudrait amender les *Standing*

Orders pour que cela soit possible. La deuxième, M. le président, est beaucoup plus intéressante. Cela concerne les *parastatal bodies and local authorities*, and he states that -

“It is recommended that the mandate of PAC be extended to parastatal bodies and local authorities.”

Et je pense qu’il a raison. Après tout ce qu’on a vu ces derniers temps, M. le président, je pense que le Directeur de l’Audit a parfaitement raison en faisant ces deux recommandations, car il ne faut pas oublier qu’on est en train de parler de l’argent du contribuable.

When we talk of taxpayers’ money, Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the House on three specific matters.

The first one is with regard to the hedging losses, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have lost some Rs4.7 billion. Maybe, when we look at the figure, we do not imagine what amount of money it is, Mr Speaker, Sir. I made a very simple calculation just for Members of this House to understand how much money it is. With that money, Mr Speaker, Sir, we could have built some 10,000 small houses for our population. 10,000! Do you know the number of children in our country who could have graduated at the University? 47,000, Mr Speaker, Sir!

There was a reply by the Minister of Education with regard to a promise made during the electoral campaign, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning laptops to be given to students of Higher School Certificate. In his reply; he stated that because they were not able to give the laptops -

“A proposal for the funding of the project estimated to cost about Rs420 m. was made to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development in November 2010, but funds could not be made available in the context of the last Budget exercise due to Budgetary constraints and numerous other school items.”

Let us get to the Budgetary constraints, Mr Speaker, Sir. Just a simple calculation! If you take Rs4.7 billion and you divide it by Rs420 m., do you know what figure we get? For 100 years we would have been able to give laptops to the students of the Higher School Certificate in this country, Mr Speaker, Sir. So, these are the three cases where we have been able to understand what the Director of Audit has stated in his Report - that we should be responsible and accountable when we have the responsibility of taxpayers’ money. I will not go into the

details of those things that I have mentioned, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we know how they did not - some of the officers - even get the authorisation to go ahead, for example, in the case of the hedging.

Another case, Mr Speaker, Sir, where again taxpayers' money was used and questions have been raised in this House. It concerns the acquisition of two engines for a project that has been undertaken by the CEB. The hon. Leader of the Opposition had put a question and we had the reply -

“The project was estimated at Rs1.2 billion and at the end of the project, it cost some Rs1.7 billion, that is, an additional Rs500 m. had to be paid.

The Central Procurement Board did advise not to proceed with that procurement. But, based on emergency, the CEB said that they had to go ahead. We have been provided with two replies; one dated 26 May 2009, whereby it was stated that the CEB has resorted to emergency procurement under section 21 of the Public Procurement Act 2006 after consultations with the Procurement Policy Office and the State Law Office. Then, we have a reply again on 07 August 2010, a year later, where it is stated this time -

“Now, given that the CPB was of a different opinion and had decided not to convey its approval, it has advised for a rebid exercise; the CEB resorted to emergency procedures as any further delay would have caused disastrous consequences to the economy. However, as the CPB later approved the award after obtaining the opinion of the consultant, the emergency procedures initiated by the CEB were purely stopped.”

So, on the basis of an emergency acquisition, we went against the advice of the CPB, ordered, and then later we understood that it was not necessary that we should have gone on an emergency procedure. So, because of that, Mr Speaker, Sir, again, we had to pay some Rs500 m. more.

Then, we have the recent case, and I won't go into details, concerning the Betamax contract. So, these are three cases, Mr Speaker, Sir, where we are using taxpayers' money and where those officers concerned have not been responsible at all. They have not followed the procedures, the procedures have not been transparent at all and, at the end of the day, none of them is accountable. This cannot be the system, Mr Speaker, Sir, because we are talking not of

millions but billions of rupees. *Ces abus, M. le président, démontrent exactement un peu quelle est la situation valeur du jour.*

There is another case, Mr Speaker, Sir, which concerns works that have been carried out for sewerage purposes in the region of Baie du Tombeau. Again, this issue has been raised here, and I quote from the Report, Mr Speaker, Sir, where a contract worth Rs464.1 m. was allocated and the amount was revised to Rs750 m., the reason being because of variation of works which amounted to Rs185.1 m. It seems, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is in the habit now of people who quote for tenders to do so for a certain amount of money and then they make their profit with variations. Why, Mr Speaker, Sir? Just listen to the remarks made by the Director. He said that in February 2010, the Central Procurement Board gave approval for a revised contract amount of Rs600.3 m. only. This represented approval of variations of Rs139 m. or 30% of original contract value. As per the legislation, Mr Speaker, Sir, variation works should not exceed 30%. In this case, it has exceeded 30% and the Director continued by saying: at the same time, the CPB emphasised that the remaining variations works were not in compliance with Public Procurement Act 2006. And the payment was made in total contradiction with the Public Procurement Act. This is illegal, Mr Speaker, Sir. I put a question in this House and I was told that a Fact-Finding Committee had been initiated, but until now nobody knows what has happened to that Fact-Finding Committee.

J'ai écouté avec attention l'honorable Anquetil juste avant moi, et elle a fait part à cette Chambre des réalisations dans le secteur de la technologie informatique, M. le président. Nous avons mis sur pied ce secteur. Nous l'avons mis sur pied ! Tout le monde le sait parce qu'à un certain moment, certains de l'autre côté de la Chambre comparaient la Cybercité à un éléphant blanc. On avait dit que nous avions construit des bâtiments et que ces bâtiments sont vides. Quelle fierté, aujourd'hui, M. le président, de voir nos enfants aller travailler, et en grand nombre !

Mr Speaker: Je pense que la paternité dans ce cas précis est partagée.

Mr Lesjongard: Il faut faire un test de paternité à ce moment, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Non, j'ai bien dit partagé.

(Interruptions)

Allez-y! Order, now! Carry on now!

Mr Lesjongard: Allons ailleurs, M. le président ! Quittons Ebène et allons à Terre Rouge. Les projets annoncés en grande pompe. 500 arpents donnés à des investisseurs ! Et quand on avait posé des questions ici, vous savez comment on nous avait traités, M. le président.

M. le président, permettez-moi de partager un peu d'humour avec vous. On nous avait dit que c'est un projet unique. Je pense qu'on est l'unique pays au monde où on a fait construire un Champs Élysée pour les lièvres.

(Interruptions)

Vous savez pourquoi je vous dis cela. C'est vide ! Il n'y a que des routes et des routes à quatre voies, s'il vous plaît, dans certains endroits, éclairées. Il ne nous reste qu'à mettre des *speed cameras* de peur que les lièvres ne fassent des excès de vitesse sur ces routes-là, M. le président! Et pourtant - et là c'est du sérieux - on avait fait partir 51 planteurs qui gagnaient leur vie tranquillement, M. le président. Ils étaient là depuis des années et je me rappelle de la question qui avait été posée. L'honorable ministre de l'époque, le Dr. A. Boolell, avait répondu, *and I quote -*

"Mr Speaker, Sir, let me inform the House that this is unprecedented; Rs17 billion, 7,500 jobs will be created, a turnover of Rs200 m., Mr Speaker, Sir, and Mauritius has now become the gateway. We will put Mauritius on the map to capture market access."

We are going to capture lièvres, M. le président!

(Interruptions)

"We are going to attract investment. We are going to wage war against poverty."

Yes, it could have been a good project, but up to now it is not. Four years down the lane! This is not all, Mr Speaker, Sir. The Director of Audit also has some comments on Jin Fei. He talks of the contract that was awarded to cater for the offsite sewerage works for Jin Fei. He gives the description of the project and he says that the project did cost some Rs97 m. But what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir? The project was completed, but then there was nobody there. A meeting was organised and in that meeting it was stated that the Jin Fei development would only

generate effluents after two years to three years with the result that the pumping station will not operate. Then, it was decided to close the contract apart from completion of certain civil works and all the equipment will be dry-installed. This is not all. What was the impact? We had to pay payment of loss of profits to the contractors worth Rs4.1 m. and the technical impact on the project, Mr Speaker Sir, all the equipment that have been installed there, it is most likely that such a condition will adversely affect that. We know the operation and the life of the equipment, but the warranty period would have been over, Mr Speaker, Sir. The warranty period is for one year. We have installed equipment there and they are going to be used only after three years. We would have lost the warranty period and there is also this cost for reimplementing of the project, that is, once it would become operational, we would have to go through the same tendering procedure and allocate a new contract for that, Mr Speaker, Sir. What a waste of money! What a waste of money, Mr Speaker, Sir, for a project worth like they said so many billions of rupees.

Et comme ça, il y a eu d'autres projets. Other projects that were mentioned in this House by the Leader of the Opposition in his intervention which we believe in, but we want to know what has happened. Government talked of the Land-Based Oceanic Industry and we know the benefits of that industry. We have said that we can produce renewable energy, health care products, pharmaceutical products, sea weed or pearl culture, thalassotherapy, desalinated mineral water, but we haven't heard of that project for months now. Not a single word in the Budget presented by the hon. Minister of Finance.

The last information we had was that a Memorandum of Understanding was signed, that the lead partner had been appointed or recruited, but then there was nothing after that. We know that there is a police case, but we don't know, as at to date, where the project is.

There are also other projects, for example, the Ethanol project which, for years, has been announced, Mr Speaker, Sir. Since 2006, this has been mentioned in the Budget. In the Budget of 2006, at paragraph 123, under the heading 'Accelerated Action Plan for the sugar sector', we mentioned that in the MAAS Action Plan, there was going to be a wide array of measures in favour of ethanol. Again, in 2007/2008, mention was made and, in 2009, again, we mentioned this time 35% stake in the cane industry to be secured for the planters, labourers and artisans of the sugar industry and again, in the Budget, we hear the same thing, Mr Speaker, Sir.

When we talk of a difficult situation that our country is facing these days and about growth like it has been mentioned in the Budget Speech, we should look into sectors that could really bring growth, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why we make a plea to Government, especially with regard to the Land-Based Oceanic Industry, that we should activate that project. This is the way forward, Mr Speaker, Sir, especially when we are going to need energy in this country.

M. le président, dans le discours du Budget, on parle d'accorder beaucoup d'aide à nos opérateurs économiques. On parle aussi en cette période de crise qu'il faut, like they have said in previous Budgets, Mr Speaker, Sir, save jobs, protect jobs, give those who require money to be able to move ahead. I really don't understand Government because we have had the information in this House. Whenever we put questions, Mr Speaker, Sir, we have information, and from this information we use our mind and try to see why things are this way with this Government. For example, when we talk of stimulus package or ERCP, we come to two cases where people have been given money for them to save jobs, and in one specific case the person has taken the money and everybody has lost his job. That is the case of Infinity BPO, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is unacceptable, Mr Speaker, Sir. Some 358 people lost their jobs and the guy is still around. We all know les frasques de cette personne-là, M. le président. On that issue - hon. Ms Deerpalsing is not around - she raised a point. We were told that procedures had to be followed. We were told that there were set criteria before money could be given to those companies because, after all, it is taxpayers' money. On that committee, there were top guys from the private sector, from the Ministry of Finance, and they approved all that.

In a question, hon. Ms Deerpalsing, and I quote, said: "The Committee which was supposed to monitor that the money that was being disbursed is going effectively to save jobs has obviously failed lamentably in its work." Is the hon. Minister of Finance envisaging putting some kind of enquiry into the works of that Committee? Is that Committee going to be legally held responsible for the failure? Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir! *Ce n'est pas possible, M. le président. La population qui travaille dur fait des efforts extraordinaires, et on gaspille leur argent de cette façon.*

There are two other cases. One is RS Fashion. We all know about that, and I was surprised when I went through the list to see another case, that is, Floreal Diamond Cutting Ltd.

(Interruptions)

Tout le monde connaît le nom !

Mr Speaker, Sir, when we are dealing with public funds, with taxpayers' money, we should bear in mind that this is not our money. Mr Speaker, Sir, when we go to paragraph 26 of the Budget, the hon. Minister of Finance has given facilities to the big cats. He says at paragraph 14: Growth for the Greater Good, Mr Speaker, Sir. At paragraph 33, at some point in time, we said that the growth is around 4.2% and we expect a growth of 4%. It cannot be a growth of 4%, Mr Speaker, Sir. We go down from 4.2% to 4%; I would not call that a growth, Mr Speaker, Sir. But it is very paradoxical what has been said in his Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At some point in time, we are saying that BOI is doing an excellent job; we are going to give money to the BOI. Some Rs500 m. have been earmarked for road shows outside this country. Then, what do we say at paragraph 78? Government is going to recruit two roving ambassadors. I wish that they rove outside this country, Mr Speaker, Sir, and never come to our country. What is the point in saying that BOI, which is the investment arm of Government, goes outside and looks for investors through our road shows and, on the other hand, we have to recruit roving ambassadors? Is it again jobs for the boys, Mr Speaker, Sir?

Now, let me deal with three different sectors, two of which I consider to be very important. The first one deals with food security. The second one is the MID. When we talk of food security, Mr Speaker, Sir, *il y a une remarque cinglante de M. Jean Cyril Monty qui était le vice-président du Food Security Fund Committee, ce qui veut dire qu'il a été recruté par le gouvernement. Il vient dire dans un article de presse que la sécurité alimentaire n'est pas vraiment une priorité pour le gouvernement et il dit pourquoi : parce que le Budget alloué n'est que 0.2% du Budget national ; et le ministre vient nous dire qu'il a augmenté le Budget de 50%, c'est-à-dire pour sortir de R 100 millions à R 150 millions.* Dans cette augmentation de cinquante millions de roupies, vingt deux millions sont réservés pour les rodriguais. On a eu des commentaires des planteurs, des pêcheurs qui ne sont pas du tout satisfaits du Budget. Monsieur Sunghoon de la *Small Planters Association* vient dire clairement que les mesures pour les petits planteurs ne sont pas suffisantes et c'est de même pour le VAT *refund*.

(Interruptions)

Nous avons aussi les commentaires de la communauté des pêcheurs qui juge caduc les mesures annoncées par l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. Those two communities, Mr Speaker, Sir, are going through difficult times. Mr Speaker, Sir,

what are we telling the fishermen? We tell them that they should not fish in the lagoon, but to go and fish in the high seas. When we look at the figures given by the Central Statistics Office, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will be surprised to note how catch in the high seas has decreased over the years. In 2001, catch in the high seas was 6,711 tonnes. We reached a peak in 2004 - 7,000 tonnes, and then it started decreasing. The figures for 2010 are 2,882 tonnes, that is, we decreased from 7,000 tonnes to 2,882 tonnes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Now, with regard to food security, Mr Speaker, Sir, I understand why hon. Duval gave only Rs50 m. to that Fund, because when you go again through the report of the Director of Audit, he says that, in 2008/2009, in the Budget Speech, a provision of Rs1 billion was made for the setting up of the Food Security Fund. Three years went down, and this is what he had to say after three years -

“Except for the seed potato and onion purchase schemes for which some Rs9 million had been disbursed in June 2009, no other expenditure was incurred in the first year of operation of the Fund. Therefore, a major part of the amount Budgeted to be spent for that period had remained unutilised.”

Et cela quand on est en train de parler d'une crise alimentaire que le pays a à faire face; when we have a look at importation of food, let's say over the past year, Mr Speaker Sir. That's not all. What he says later is that -

“Most of the projects which were scheduled to start in the financial year 2009-10 where Rs555 million were Budgeted to be spent, did not take off in that particular financial year. Expenses met by the FSF during that period totalled some Rs68 million.”

This is what had to be done. Government decided that the Food Security Fund had to be restructured and all projects previously financed from the FSF were met from the Budget of the Ministry of Agro Industry and Food Security.

“A total amount of some Rs983 million was thus transferred to the Consolidated Fund (...)”
What is the point of earmarking huge amounts of money to be spent for the benefit of the population and not spending the money, Mr Speaker, Sir?

I'll end up on this issue by saying something that the community of breeders have been saying. Whether they are cattle breeders or pig breeders they find a lot of problems to get food for their animals and we were told in a reply that the Livestock Feed Factory where we were producing foods for the animals was no more economical and had to be closed down. We understand that, but then the problem is that food on the market is very expensive. They used to pay, I think, some Rs3,900, but on the local market, when it is sold by private manufacturers, they have to pay some Rs10,000. So, it is money to be spent by those breeders, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Then when you have a look again, Mr Speaker, Sir, with regard to the closure of that Livestock Feed Factory you will be surprised, very much surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir. I'll give you the reason why you will be surprised. The Director of Audit states that since the closure of that factory, there are some nine workers who are still drawing their salary every month and doing nothing, Mr Speaker, Sir. The total monthly salary is around Rs116,000 and almost a million per year. The Minister comes to this House and states that we have to close down the factory because it is no more economical to run that factory, and you don't close the factory, you allow workers to be there being idle and drawing their salary every month. This is not correct, Mr Speaker, Sir. That is why I wanted to raise that issue because I had attended a meeting of those breeders and they made their point, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think certain decisions when we take we have to see that they go all the way through because news go around. They know what's happening and they were saying Government closed down the factory, we have to go and buy food for our animals at Rs10,000 when we know all the equipment are there, they haven't been shifted and all the workers are still there in that factory, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Let me go to two other subjects, Mr Speaker, Sir. One concerns electricity and the other one the water problem. I won't be long on the electricity subject, but I'll take some time regarding the water sector. Electricity, Mr Speaker Sir, I have said that - *zigzague de la part du gouvernement*.

Le gouvernement avait annoncé sa politique énergétique en 2007 et avait publié un document. Le document fut modifié par la suite avec une situation de compromis et cette situation de compromis c'est la base, c'est-à-dire, qu'à partir de là, les industries sucrières allaient produire de l'électricité et il y aurait aussi deux autres projets: le projet de Pointe aux Caves, c'est-à-dire, les cents mégawatts de la centrale charbon de CT Power et vingt mégawatts

de la centrale de *waste to energy*, c'est à dire, Gamma-Cowenta. Dans cette situation de compromis, on n'a rien réalisé jusqu'à maintenant. Qu'est-ce qu'on a dû faire? On a dû demander au CEB de retirer du tiroir de vieux projets qui étaient nécessaires quand même, parce que les machines se faisaient vieilles et il fallait les remplacer mais, en fin de compte, M. le président, on se retrouve avec une situation qui risque d'être catastrophique, pas maintenant, mais peut être l'année prochaine et ça le ministre l'a signalé au parlement. Il a dit qu'il y a des possibilités qu'on évite de faire de la maintenance sur les machines en début de l'année prochaine, afin d'éviter qu'on ait des délestages de puissance en début d'année. Ce que propose le ministre - et je pense que les officiers n'ont pas dit au ministre les choses comme il devait le lui dire, qu'afin d'éviter ces problèmes de maintenance en début de l'année prochaine, nous allons essayer de faire le maximum de maintenance cette année-ci, mais ce n'est pas possible, M. le président.

Prenons un exemple. Nous achetons une voiture et du moment qu'on met cette voiture sur la route, l'agence nous dit : "Roulez tant de kilomètres et puis retournez pour faire de la maintenance." C'est-à-dire il vous faut rouler ces kilomètres avant de faire cette maintenance. On ne le fait pas avant. *That's what you said*: "On ne le fait pas avant." What we are being told is that in order to have sufficient capacity in 2012, we are going to do some sort of pre-maintenance that has to be done in 2011. You cannot do pre-maintenance, Mr Speaker, Sir. You have to do the maintenance when it is due; otherwise no. This is one aspect of the problem.

Then, there are other problems. There are still old machines which are operating now, but when the Minister replied - and I think he was given that information again - he said: "We are not operating these machines at 100%. We are operating it at very low percentage so that we do not go into problem." But then, there is a term that we call efficiency. The lower the efficiency is the higher we are producing electricity, that is, the cost of production is high with the low efficiency. So, we are not producing electricity at an optimum value. We are making consumers of this country paying higher prices for the electricity which is being produced, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Alors, c'est pourquoi très souvent on critique, par exemple, au niveau du recrutement. Il y a eu le recrutement du *General Manager*. Nous avons des gens capables, M. le président. Moi, j'ai travaillé au CEB, et je le sais. But then, as I said earlier, we still go into that logic of jobs for the boys. Où est la méritocratie, M. le président ? Quel signal qu'on envoie à nos enfants ? Quel signal qu'on envoie aux jeunes de ce pays, M. le président? When we recruited the former

General Manager, it was the same procedure. Again now, it is the same procedure. The hon. Minister, when he replied to a question I had put in this House stated that for the recruitment of the General Manager, he would be going through an international advertisement; and this has not been the case, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Water problem, Mr Speaker, Sir. I think somebody has put the finger exactly where it should have been with regard to the water problem. I raised it last year, and I am going to raise it again this year for people to understand...

(Interruptions)

Le problème – *la pli pé tomber, OK.*

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Lesjongard: I'll go to the figures again, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 2010, the amount of rainfall we had in this country was 3,368 million metre cube of water. Out of that 3,368 million metre cube of water, 2,021 went as surface runoff water and could not be collected - it goes directly to the sea. Then, 1,010 go as evapo-aspiration; it is evaporated. Do you know how much water do we collect out of a total of 3,368 million metre cube of water? 337 million metre cube, just 10% of the water that we have, Mr Speaker, Sir. And that is not all.

Out of that 337 million metre cube of water, 50% is lost in our pipes. So, out of 3,368 million metre cube of rainfall, only 150 million metre cube go to our consumers, Mr Speaker, Sir. This is the situation. What should be done? Replace those pipes, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have a loan from the European Investment Bank to replace the pipes worth Rs1.7 billion. Back in 2007, we used only almost 5% of that loan and that loan was cancelled, Mr Speaker, Sir, the reason being that we were unable to implement the project in time.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Lesjongard: Then, in every Budget, every year, money is given to the CWA to implement projects to replace the pipes in a very critical situation. Let us take, for example, in 2010 and 2011. Last year, Government gave as grant Rs110 m. to the CWA for the renewal of old and inefficient pipes island-wide. Do you know how much they spent? Zero! In 2011, they were given a grant for the replacement of pipes at Camp Fouquereaux, Alma, Camp Thorel. The

grant was Rs112 m. Do you know how much was spent? Rs30 m. Not only grant, they were given loans, Mr Speaker, Sir. In 2010, they were given Rs383 m. loan. Nothing has been spent, but money has been earmarked: Rs90 m. for the rehabilitation of the pipe treatment plant and Rs80 m. for the replacement of pipes at Mont Ida.

When you hear of the sufferings of people all around the country, Mr Speaker, Sir, from north to south, east, west and when you see what is being done to alleviate their problems, you are shocked. True it is, we are going through difficult times with regard to rainfall. But what is being done? Fortunately, like we say, we had a Government between 2000/2005 to build the Midlands dam.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr Lesjongard: You see simple measures in the Budget, Mr Speaker, Sir, where we could have given fiscal incentives to people in this country, for example, for rain water harvesting. We did not even get an indication in the Budget with regard to water tanks. We had a measure where people were given facilities to purchase water tanks, and until today nobody knows how many water tanks have been delivered, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Concerning desalination, why wasn't it mentioned in the Budget? What we heard was that facilities are given to people, and they are going to pay electricity at a lesser price. This is not what we want to hear, Mr Speaker, Sir.

The CWA has embarked on a project to purchase water from private entities, Mr Speaker, Sir. In such a catastrophic situation, some decisions have been taken, namely linking Mare Longue to Mare aux Vacoas. But why did we have to do that? Why did we have to spend Rs68 m.? What is the problem with the Mare aux Vacoas reservoir? Questions have been put by the Leader of the Opposition. I myself have put questions to know why we do not have enough water in Mare aux Vacoas. What is the problem there? Rainfall can be a problem. But I remember having said that land has been allocated there to people there to cultivate. Waterways and rivulets have been blocked. Now, we understand that the Ministry is going to commission a study to find out whether these are the problems linked to Mare aux Vacoas, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I will end up with SMEs, Mr Speaker, Sir. We always hear that SMEs represent the backbone of the economy; they represent 37% of the GDP; they employ some 250,000 people. *On entend cela à chaque fois.* New measures have been mentioned, and before that also measures have been mentioned for the SMEs. I went on a radio programme, and I had with me the former CEO of SMEDA and the President of the Small and Medium Enterprises Federation. We all agree that *le problème n'est pas l'accès aux finances, mais la disponibilité de cet argent, parce que même si ce sont des banques privées, il leur faudra une garantie pour avoir ces emprunts, M. le président.*

For example, at paragraph 192, it is stated that new overdrafts and bank loans as well as renewal of existing facilities will be made at the rate of 8.5 percent, and some Rs3 billion will be made available in the next three years. But what we are not told is that, back in 2004/2005, DBM was giving loans at 6% and 3% interest rate, Mr Speaker, Sir. And it was through a Budget presented by hon. Rama Sithanen that it was increased, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Again, it is the same thing with regard to industrial space. Every year, we hear that government is going to build industrial space for the SMEs. Nine were going to be built and, until now, I know they have built two and not yet delivered to the SMEs, because they want to look after the big cats.

I will come now, Mr Speaker, Sir, with an important issue where government is saying that it will be disinvesting in some commercial and industrial assets. *Je n'arrive pas à comprendre. Je prends un cas ...*

(Interruptions)

For the casinos! You are saying that it is working at a loss. But what about the Belle Mare Tourist Village? It has not even been inaugurated. You don't even know the performance of that tourist village. I remember they had said at that time 'we are going to build five tourist villages all around the island and the first one is going to be at Belle Mare. And all those who have passed there have seen. It is completed. And now government wants to disinvest in that village. I think we have a problem with this government as far as our local professionals or companies are concerned. Government tends to strongly believe in the capacity of foreigners, those who come from outside, for example, Singapore, with regard to the water problem.

I went on the net, and I read an article where somebody from the Singapore Water Board was looking for help because they have water problems also in their country.

(Interruptions)

They buy water from Malaysia, and they have water problems. Again, government wants to disinvest also in the Albion Fisheries Research Centre.

(Interruptions)

Yes, but the centre is manned by foreigners. There are Japanese people there. You should know that; you are the Minister of Fisheries. That item with regard to Public Procurement Act, whereby SMEs would benefit, has also been announced earlier.

M. le président, on arrive à un point dans le pays avec ce gouvernement, où la matière grise du pays est en train de quitter le pays; qu'ils soient jeunes ou âgés, ils partent. Ils partent pour des raisons qui sont fondamentales. Premièrement, la méritocratie. Petit à petit, cette méritocratie disparaît dans le pays. Deuxièmement, parce qu'ils prennent conscience que si vous n'êtes pas avec ce gouvernement, c'est préférable de ne pas rester au pays, de ne pas venir partager sa connaissance et investir son argent dans le pays. On en vient à une situation où on se dit si l'on peut faire confiance à nos frères et nos sœurs de ce pays, M. le président.

I remember a former Prime Minister said -

“People of this country have made this country become what it is today.”

From our forefathers, Mr Speaker, Sir, until today, we have worked hard, we have sent our children to schools, universities, so that they come and work for their country. Most of the children of this country today want to go and study abroad, and if you ask them whether they want to come back when they finish their studies, they will tell you ‘no’. And those who are here, as I said, are looking for chances to leave the country. That is why I think not only previous Budgets but more this Budget, as I said, *qui favorise le grand capital, qui fait semblant d'aider les démunis de notre société et qui a oublié complètement la classe moyenne dans notre pays, ne va pas dans le sens qu'il faut, afin qu'on ait une nation qui va prospérer et un pays où il va faire bon vivre.*

M. le président, merci beaucoup.

(6.20 p.m.)

Mr P. Assirvaden (First Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): M. le président, permettez-moi d'abord de féliciter le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances pour ce budget présenté à la nation il y a quelque temps de cela. Permettez-moi, M. le président, de féliciter aussi, et surtout, le Premier ministre ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No murmuring, please! There is no need to murmur.

Mr Assirvaden: ...pour sa conviction, son *commitment* dans la présentation de ce budget. J'ai suivi un peu l'exemple de l'honorable Bhagwan, j'ai fait un tour dans ma circonscription pour tâter le pouls, voir ici et là quelles sont les réactions par rapport au budget. Dites-vous bien, M. le président, que les gens sont non seulement soulagés, ils se sont sentis plus légers, mais ils se disent merci d'avoir eu un gouvernement Travailleiste et PMSD dans les moments aussi difficiles que nous vivons actuellement.

(Interruptions)

Le budget, M. le président, a été salué non seulement par la population - sauf quelques frustrés ici et là - mais a été salué par beaucoup d'acteurs au niveau de l'économie et du développement de ce pays. Personnellement, M. le président, je me réjouis d'abord et surtout de la composante sociale de ce budget et la volonté clairement affichée de s'occuper des plus faibles de notre société. Les acquis sociaux sont davantage consolidés par l'engagement, entre autres, dans la construction de nouveaux logements afin d'aider les plus pauvres de notre pays. L'effort que nous faisons à travers ce budget, M. le président, aide à combler un fossé déjà existant dans l'inégalité entre enfants riches et enfants pauvres de ce pays. C'est tant mieux pour une société plus juste et plus humaine.

J'ai pris la peine, M. le président, d'écouter attentivement les membres de 'l'opposition légitime'. Je viendrais un peu plus tard avec celle 'd'illégitime'. J'ai pris la peine d'écouter et je me suis posé la question: est-ce-que certains membres de l'opposition ont une mémoire sélective, défaillante ? Les membres de l'opposition ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Lormus Bundhoo, please! Your vocabulary is not needed by him!

Mr Assirvaden: Les membres de l'opposition, à l'instar du *Leader* de l'opposition, à l'instar de l'honorable Bhagwan, à l'instar de l'honorable Lesjongard, étaient scandalisés qu'en 2011 on puisse recruter un *general manager* du CEB directement par le *Board*, comme si cela ne s'est jamais passé dans ce pays.

Permettez-moi, M. le président, de leur rafraîchir la mémoire. En 2003, le gouvernement MSM/MMM fit venir du Canada, comme *general manager* du CEB, Mme Donna LeClair, avec un salaire - tenez-vous bien - de 10,000 USD par mois. Payée en euros, honorable Bhagwan!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order! What '*pa, pa, pa*'?

Mr Assirvaden: 10,000 USD par mois ! Campement payé ! Jardinier payé ! Et on parle de '*job for the boys*'?

(Interruptions)

Vous parlez de '*bonanza*', de '*maja karo*'? Mme Donna LeClair, pire ! Elle se fait rembourser – tenez-vous bien – son coupon de *parking* de R 50!

(Interruptions)

Et, aujourd'hui, on vient nous pointer du doigt pour nous dire que c'est '*job for the boys*' !

(Interruptions)

Je n'ai rien de personnel contre Monsieur Ravin Dajee, parachuté de la STC au CEB. Y a-t-il eu appel de candidatures? Zéro ! Et, aujourd'hui, on vient nous pointer du doigt pour nous dire que des gens touchent R 200,000, R 300,000 par mois ! Monsieur Jean-Mée Desveaux siégeait sur 17 *boards* dans ce pays, et il gagnait un salaire de R 350,000 par mois! M. le président, on parlait de votre salaire et de notre salaire la semaine dernière! Aujourd'hui, on oublie tout !

L'honorable Lesjongard a parlé de *taxpayers' money* pour la station de Victoria comme si dans ce pays il n'y a jamais eu de variation sur des projets. Il parlait de Fort Victoria sortant de R 1.1 milliards, R 1.5 ou R 1.6 milliards. En 2003, le projet initial de la station St Louis était de R 900 millions. *At the end of the day*, on a payé R 1.2 milliards – R 300 millions *taxpayers' money*! N'est-ce pas le *taxpayers' money*? En 2007, j'étais encore le *Chairman* du CEB, on avait eu un problème à Dumat substation.

(Interruptions)

Je viendrai plus tard sur les globes pour vous éclairer un peu ! En 2007, la moitié du pays s'est retrouvé dans le noir – l'honorable Dr. Kasenally est au courant de cela. La moitié du pays s'était retrouvé dans le noir un beau jour ; nous avons un problème à la sous-station du Dumat, où des transmetteurs explosaient - autours de R 100 millions d'achat. Au niveau du *Board*, on se posait la question pour savoir d'où on avait acheté ces transmetteurs. Il n'y avait ni contrat, ni reçu, ni adresse de fournisseur. On a appris après, à travers un technicien, que l'achat avait été fait à travers un contact de M. Jean-Mée Desveaux en Afrique du Sud!

(Interruptions)

Vous parlez de *taxpayers' money*! La *SIT* ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Mr Assirvaden: Vous parliez de salaire princier! Mrs Jeetun ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Assirvaden: Avant d'être recrutée à la *SIT*, Mme Jeetun, l'ancienne CEO de la *SIT*, était journaliste au *Business Magazine*. Elle touchait un salaire de R 350,000 par mois. Elle avait aussi *a special monthly rent allowance*. Elle n'est pas une étrangère, elle n'est pas une *foreigner*! Mme Jeetun, au temps du MMM/MSM, en 2003, pouvait se *permettre the free use of a company*

credit card locally and abroad! Mme Jeetun, en 2003, comme CEO de la SIT, avait une armada de quatre secrétaires - je me demande combien de secrétaires les ministres ont!

(Interruptions)

Mme Jeetun avait un *special cook - employed under the set-up of a full-fledged kitchen, especially for her - to prepare hot breakfast and lunch for her!*

(Interruptions)

M. le président, si le ridicule tuait, depuis longtemps une bonne partie de cette Chambre aurait été vide. ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Assirvaden: M. le président, la situation que nous vivons est sans précédent. Nul dans ces circonstances aujourd'hui n'est assuré de tenir la vérité. La visibilité de cette crise est quasiment nulle. Cette nouvelle crise qui frappe à notre porte, nous ne savons pas quand elle se terminera. Entretemps, nous devons continuer à soutenir l'activité. Nous devons continuer à garantir la stabilité de notre système économique et social. Nous avons la responsabilité, M. le président, de protéger nos concitoyens les plus fragiles, les plus faibles car ce sont eux d'abord qui souffrent le plus. Nous devons tout faire, et nous le faisons avec ce budget pour éviter que les victimes de cette nouvelle crise ne deviennent des exclus que nous ne pourrions plus ensuite réinsérer dans l'économie et dans la société.

L'exclusion, M. le président, c'est ce que la crise peut engendrer de plus grave. Relâcher notre rigueur et nos efforts pour conjurer ce danger au prétexte que la crise est ailleurs serait irresponsable. L'idée selon laquelle nous pourrions nous en sortir en laissant une partie des Mauriciens sur le bord du chemin est une idée injuste et fautive. L'idée selon laquelle - parce que la crise serait soi-disant ailleurs - nous ne devrions plus nous préoccuper de ces conséquences sociales et humaines est une idée dangereuse. Bref, M. le président, je veux dire que, pour atteindre l'égalité, il faut savoir donner plus à ceux qui ont moins. Nous le faisons avec ce budget. Il faut savoir compenser les handicaps de ceux auxquels la vie a donné d'emblée moins

de chance de réussir qu'aux autres. Justement, M. le président, nous le faisons encore une fois avec ce budget.

Mais, en écoutant, M. le président, certains membres de cette auguste assemblée, certaines personnes analysent dans ce pays. On se pose la question : si nous vivons en isolation dans ce monde, peut-on ignorer ce qui se passe ailleurs ? Peut-on ignorer ce qui se passe en Grèce ? J'ai écouté attentivement le *Leader* de l'opposition l'autre jour. Il n'était pas d'accord qu'on puisse prendre en comparaison ce qui se passe en Grèce. Est-ce qu'on n'est pas tributaire de ce qui se passe en Europe ? Est-ce que l'économie mauricienne n'est pas tributaire d'autres marchés ? La Grèce est en faillite. L'Italie est au bord du gouffre. L'Irlande, des licenciements massifs. La France vient de présenter un budget d'austérité, la hausse de la TVA. Est-ce qu'on peut ignorer cela ? M. le président, on ne peut ignorer que dans des moments d'austérité, c'est d'abord et avant tout les acquis sociaux qui sautent. De par le monde, nous constatons comment les salariés, les travailleurs perdent de jour en jour leur acquis, leurs privilèges et leurs droits au nom de l'austérité de la rigueur. Ici, M. le président, ce budget présenté par l'honorable vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances, par l'honorable Premier ministre, a un mélange de soutien aux plus démunis et des mesures pour relancer l'emploi, l'investissement et les PME. Cela prouve, s'il en fallait, que nous sommes responsables et que nous avons du cœur. Que nous dit l'opposition, M. le président ? Qu'on ne devrait pas aider ceux qui ont besoin de nous dans les moments difficiles que nous vivons aujourd'hui, M. le président. On se permet de rendre le quotidien des gens de la NHDC un peu plus vivable. Nous investissons dans le quotidien des enfants pauvres de ce pays. 50,000 personnes et près de 6,000 familles vont pouvoir bénéficier de ce budget. Je lisais, l'autre jour, le Président de la Commission économique du MMM. Il disait : 'Je félicite le gouvernement pour les mesures concernant les maisons de la CHA'. Ce ne sont pas les membres du Parti travailliste qui félicitent le gouvernement, mais le Président de la Commission économique du MMM. Il va encore plus loin. Il vient dire que, pendant 22 ans, personne ne s'est soucié des gens de la CHA, y compris ses propres amis. C'est ce que nous faisons.

R 500,000 pour ceux qui ne peuvent pas se faire opérer à l'île Maurice. Ce n'est pas du cœur ! Ce n'est pas penser aux plus faibles de notre société ! C'est noble ! C'est sacré ! Et vous nous critiquez en disant qu'on a mis de l'argent et que R 500,000 ne seront pas suffisantes. Qui avait commencé les R 200,000 en 1999 ? Le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam ! Aujourd'hui, j'entends

l'opposition, peut-être pour essayer de nous voler un peu cette réussite, ce succès, nous dire que c'est bien - je crois que c'était l'honorable Nagalingum – qu'on puisse mettre de l'argent dans les appartements de la NHDC. C'est bien ! Mais entre 2000 et 2005, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait? Les appartements de la NHDC ne datent pas hier, mais de plusieurs années.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Assirvaden: Les maisons de la CHA datent de plus de 25 ans. Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait de 2000 à 2005 ? R 500,000 par école pour améliorer la vie de nos enfants ! Ce n'est pas du cœur que nous mettons dans ce que nous faisons. Nous mettons sur le même pied d'égalité ceux qui peuvent se payer des écoles privées où les conditions sont bonnes, où ils vivent dans des conditions superbes, et les enfants les plus pauvres, les plus démunis de ce pays, pour pouvoir eux aussi goûter au bonheur d'être dans un environnement prospère. Nous pensons quand même ; le gouvernement Travilliste/PMSD ...

Mr Speaker: Hon. Quirin, can you please keep quiet?

Mr Assirvaden: ... dans des moments difficiles, dans des crises que nous vivons actuellement, a pensé aux plus faibles de ce pays. Nous avons même pensé, M. le président, à nos prisons. Tout le monde parle du surpeuplement de nos prisons. Merci, M. le ministre, on arrive avec les bracelets.

Mr Speaker: Hon. Aimée, can you keep quiet? Don't provoke me!

Mr Assirvaden: On a pensé à faire venir 1,800 bracelets pour pouvoir donner un peu d'oxygène à nos prisons, pour pouvoir permettre à ceux qui ne peuvent pas se payer une caution d'avoir ce bracelet. Cela permettra peut-être à certains, M. le président, de ne pas appeler Apollo, les ambulances, et de se servir de ce bracelet. Nous avons pensé à cela aussi, M. le président.

M. le président, je serais incomplet si je ne faisais pas référence à ce qui s'est passé dans le courant de l'année. Le gouvernement est élu en 2010 avec l'honorable Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Nous avons vécu une trahison, jamais peut-être vécu parmi les cassures qu'il y a eues dans ce pays. Il y a eu beaucoup de cassures. Il y a eu beaucoup de divergences d'opinion dans le passé et dans la vie politique mauricienne. Des cassures au niveau des divergences économiques, des orientations politiques, des cassures dans la cohésion du

gouvernement mais, ô grand jamais, dans ce pays, nous n'avons eu une cassure sur la corruption. Jamais un partenaire du gouvernement n'a quitté le gouvernement en essayant d'imposer à un Premier ministre d'intervenir dans des institutions. Et ici, je dirai que nos anciens partenaires payent déjà un prix fort, et ils le payeront encore bien plus à l'avenir. Jamais dans l'histoire du pays, un ministre a injustement vendu son Premier ministre. Jamais un ministre nommé par un Premier ministre, avec tous les pouvoirs et avec un gros ministère, ne vend son propre Premier ministre derrière son dos, injustement. Il le paye chèrement et il le payera pour beaucoup de temps encore. Avec le MSM au gouvernement, M. le président - et je terminerai là-dessus au niveau de la politique - on était dans l'embarras. On s'étouffait, on était mal à l'aise quand le *Leader* du MSM, à un moment, commençait à attaquer la vie familiale de l'ancien Président de la République. On était mal à l'aise, mais on avait pris un engagement. Mais après avoir démissionné pour soutenir un ministre arrêtée par les institutions, on s'est dit : trop, c'est trop, et ce pays, cette population sera toujours reconnaissante envers le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam pour n'avoir pas cédé à ce moment précis.

M. le président, malheureusement certains membres de la Chambre ou des observateurs donnent l'impression d'oublier que nous vivons une grande sécheresse dans ce pays. C'est vrai, il faut le dire, depuis plusieurs années, on souffre de cela et, aujourd'hui, des mesures sont prises par le gouvernement, par le Premier ministre, par le Deputy Prime Minister, pour essayer de conscientiser la population à l'idée que des jours difficiles sont devant nous. Mais, M. le président, sur ce sujet, M. le président, je ne ferai pas de la politique. Je me pose encore la question : nous avons des milliers et des milliers de mètres cubes d'eau traitée qui sont déversés dans la mer tous les jours. Ces milliers de mètres cubes d'eau peuvent servir encore, je le dis bien, à l'irrigation dans ce pays. Ces milliers et milliers de mètres cubes d'eau peuvent servir encore à certaines industries dans le pays. Il faudra imposer. Je suis scandalisé des fois, M. le président, quand, du côté de Médine, je vois que l'irrigation continue de plus belle. Il faudra peut-être légiférer. Je me pose la question : qu'en est-il des *water boreholes*, les droits sur l'eau, *water rights* ? Pour vous dire, M. le président, que le gouvernement fait ce qu'il faut, conscientise la population mais, c'est vrai aussi, que nous vivons une sécheresse jamais vécue dans ce pays.

En ce qui concerne le secteur énergétique, M. le président, depuis en 2005, j'entends les membres de l'opposition dire à chaque conférence de presse, à chaque *meeting* public, à chaque occasion, que nous allons avoir un *blackout* l'année prochaine.

En 2005 : l'année de tous les dangers ; puis 2006/2007/2008, et là, j'ai encore vu le *Leader* de L'opposition dire : 2011-2012 va être l'année de tous les dangers. Il n'y a pas de danger. Il faut cesser de faire peur aux gens. Il faut cesser de faire peur aux investisseurs. Voyons les faits ! En 2011, M. le président - quelques chiffres - nous avons des capacités installées dans ce pays autour de 526 Mégawatts. La pointe en demande tourne autour de 414 Mégawatts. Où est le *blackout*? Nous avons plus de 100 Mégawatts de *spinning reserve*, comme on dit dans le jargon.

En 2012, avec les quatre moteurs de Victoria, nous serons à 580 Mégawatts, avec une pointe en demande de 430 Mégawatts et 151 Mégawatts en réserve. Où est le *blackout* ? Il faudra cesser de faire peur aux gens. En 2013, nous serons en 576 Mégawatts avec une réserve de 126 Mégawatts. Il faudra cesser de faire peur, c'est la vérité. La croissance, M. le président, se stabilise au niveau de la demande. Nous avons au niveau de ce pays, M. le président, quatre ou cinq façons de produire l'énergie. Il faut être réaliste dans ce domaine, il faut parler des chiffres et le langage de la vérité dans ce domaine. On a le *hydro* autour de 25 Mégawatts qui est saturé. J'entends des gens ici et là comparer l'île Maurice à l'île de la Réunion. On n'a pas les chutes de l'île de la Réunion, on est saturé en *hydro*.

Nous avons le vent. Le ministère, le CEB est en négociation pour un parc à Curepipe Point autour de douze ou treize Mégawatts et avec Aerowatt pour un parc de 18 Mégawatts à Plaine des Roches. Donc, nous faisons le maximum. En photovoltaïque, nous avons un potentiel de plus de 100 Mégawatts qui est là, qui demande à être exploité, et on est dans la bonne direction. *An expression of interest* pour 10 Mégawatts a été lancé, un *request for proposal* est sur le point d'être lancé pour les 10 Mégawatts qui nous permettra d'aller dans la première phase des installations dans le pays.

En ce qui concerne la géothermie, le potentiel est là, et ensuite nous avons le fameux débat de *base load* et de *semi-base load*, l'énergie en continu, le charbon ou l'huile lourde. Je crois que dans ce secteur, M. le président, il nous faut ce bouquet énergétique mauricien et, l'autre jour, l'honorable Lesjongard, à travers les questions parlementaires, et le *Leader* de l'opposition étaient plus ou moins - je dis bien plus ou moins - scandalisés. Comment le CEB a

pu lancer un *expression of interest* pour le LNG? Mais on n'est pas la seule utilité à le faire au niveau mondial. EDF Réunion vient de lancer un *expression of interest* pour le LNG. Eskom en Afrique du Sud le fait. Au Mozambique, on le fait. Ils sont prévoyants. C'est important de dire que les machines de Fort George à partir de 2012 auront plus de 20 ans, il faudra penser à les changer. Les centrales de Fuel et de Beau Champ auront l'année prochaine plus de 30 ans. Il faudra chercher d'autres opportunités, et c'est ce que nous faisons. Je ne vois pas pourquoi on doit être scandalisé à l'idée d'avoir un *expression of interest* pour ces choses-là.

Le MID prend forme, M. le président, peu importe ce que certaines personnes peuvent dire, peu importe que certains observateurs trouvent que c'est vide, que c'est au niveau des slogans. Qu'est-ce que nous avons ? J'ai dit qu'on a le Curepipe Point, 12 Mégawatts, et Plaine des Roches, 18 Mégawatts. On a un *expression of interest* en PV de 10 Mégawatts. On a le *landfill gas* à Mare Chicose où le gaz méthane est brûlé autour de deux à trois Mégawatts. C'est l'énergie renouvelable.

Concernant le *Small Independant Power Producers*, on fait comme l'île de la Réunion, 2 Mégawatts pour autour d'une centaine de petits producteurs. On veut démocratiser ce secteur et c'est intéressant et encourageant. Et ici, M. le président, je me permettrai d'avoir *a humble request* au ministre des Finances et au Deputy Prime Minister, l'honorable Dr. Rashid Beebeejaun. Nous avons commencé avec le SIPP à la hauteur de 2 Mégawatts, avec un 'CAP' de 50 kilowatts - nous parlons en kilowatts. C'est petit. Je pense sincèrement que nous avons la possibilité d'aller au delà de 5 MW. Le 1 MW proposé par le ministère des Finances est très encourageant, mais je pense sincèrement et je souhaite sincèrement qu'on dépasse ce cap pour élargir ce parc de petits producteurs d'énergie autour de 7 MW.

M. le président, je l'ai dit l'année dernière, et je le redis encore une fois : il n'y a pas d'énergie renouvelable sans la maîtrise de la demande de l'énergie. Les deux vont de pair, l'énergie renouvelable et la maîtrise de la demande de l'énergie ; le mégawatt utilisé, et le megawatt, celui qui n'est pas utilisé. Il nous faut continuer sur cette lancée dans le temps, et je le dis, le CEB, à ce niveau, est, à mon avis, trop silencieux. Il faut aller un peu plus vite. La campagne de conscientisation dans nos écoles, la campagne de conscientisation dans nos collèges pour la maîtrise de la demande de l'énergie ; le livret 'comment économiser l'énergie' est distribué dans 350,000 foyers, la vente des ampoules, l'*Energy Efficiency Bill*, régler les appareils électroniques ont été dans le passé la campagne pour la maîtrise de la demande de

l'énergie qui nous a fait économiser plus de 15 MW, et je pense sincèrement qu'il nous faut recommencer dans cette direction. A ce moment seulement, M. le président, nous pourrons avoir notre bouquet énergétique où nous aurons, comme l'a dit le Premier ministre, 65% à 70% d'énergie renouvelable et 35% d'énergie conventionnelle.

M. le président, nous disposons ainsi, aujourd'hui, d'un premier portefeuille de six à sept projets représentant une capacité de plusieurs mégawatts, soit environ plus de R 6 milliards d'investissement. La plupart des projets dans le cadre du MID, dans le cadre de notre transition, concerne le solaire à concentration, l'éolienne, le solaire photovoltaïque et d'autres. Mais, permettez-moi de le dire, il nous faut aller un peu plus vite, car nous perdons un peu trop de temps dans la bureaucratie. Il faut aller un peu plus vite. On peut le faire, M. le président, et les résultats ne peuvent être quantifiés facilement, et ces initiatives ne donneront des résultats que dans les moyens et long termes.

M. le président, pour conclure, je disais l'année dernière et je le dirai encore une fois ici, que nous devons préparer les bases pour nos enfants et nos petits enfants pour une île Maurice de 2025 à 2030. La responsabilité de préparer l'avenir de ce pays repose sur nos épaules. Je suis convaincu dans cette auguste Assemblée, au-delà de nos différences économiques et politiques, certains d'entre nous ont à cœur l'intérêt de ce pays. L'éradication de la pauvreté d'ici 2015, résister à la crise, protéger notre environnement, gagner la bataille de l'énergie renouvelable, gagner la bataille pour la gestion de nos déchets seront, à mon avis, M. le président, les grands défis que nous aurons à relever. L'avenir de nos enfants et de nos petits enfants se décide aujourd'hui. Nous sommes, malheureusement, M. le président, la seule génération qui pourra influencer sur les décisions pour assurer notre futur. Cette génération à venir ne pourra que subir les effets de nos mauvaises décisions. C'est pour dire, M. le président, combien la responsabilité qui repose sur nos épaules est de taille. Je n'ai pas de doute que nous avons au sein de notre équipe - l'équipe du Parti travailliste et du PMSD avec notre Premier ministre - les compétences voulues, des hommes et des femmes capables d'amener l'île Maurice de demain à bon port.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

(6.54 p.m.)

Mrs L. Ribot (Third Member for Stanley & Rose Hill): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to join my colleagues who have expressed themselves before me and express disappointment and surprise at the Budget and, more particularly, at one specific aspect. Not once, Mr Speaker, Sir, has the word violence been present in this Budget, and God knows that this is one of the main problems our country has had to face for years now and one of the consequences of the *mal-être* felt by the Mauritians these days.

M. le président, nous lisons tous les journaux, nous écoutons la radio, nous regardons la télé, et que voyons-nous? Agression et viol de jeunes enfants. Viol d'une petite fille par son beau-père, par son grand père, par ses cousins ou par ses voisins. Récemment, dans la semaine écoulée, le viol d'une petite fille de neuf ans par son propre frère de douze ans. Nous voyons aussi des enfants maltraités ou négligés par leurs parents ; des attouchements sexuels au niveau de la famille et au niveau de l'école ; des enfants vendus ou forcés à la prostitution ou à la mendicité, et je pourrais continuer la liste pendant des heures, M. le président.

At present, Mr Speaker, Sir, the personnel of the Child Development Unit consists of 3 Senior Family Welfare and Protection Officers, 4 psychologists, 21 Field Officers and 25 Assistants. For long now, each and everyone has been screaming from all the rooftops that this personnel is far from being enough. About 8 years ago, hon. Minister Sheila Bappoo declared herself that a report of an expert foreign consultant had recommended the employment of 40 Field Officers. It was eight years ago. And, at that time, the number of children referred to by the CDU was far from being what it is today.

I would like to make it clear from the very start, Mr Speaker, Sir, that I am not pointing an accusing finger at the officers of the CDU as such, but it is a secret to no one that the lack of resources at the CDU does cause a lot of problems.

The Ombudsperson, in her report 2011, writes -

“The Head had been repeating this for years and no one responded.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, to point out the shortcomings of the CDU, allow me to refer to the case of the young Joannick Martin who was a victim of sexual abuse ...

(Interruptions)

I think what I'm saying is serious enough for the hon. Members to listen.

... and was killed in a most atrocious way. She was clearly at risk with her mother, as she had been victim of sexual abuse earlier on and was known to the CDU, which nonetheless decided to leave her with her mother.

The Ombudsperson writes that the investigation revealed that officers acting in the field did not have proper training and had no guidelines to refer to. There was no proper monitoring of the case.

The investigation into the case Joannick Martin revealed that when the young girl first spoke of having been sexually abused, the team responsible for that district was taken up in other cases and that, by the time they actually came to attend the case, it was too late. Moreover, due to their lack of diligence, the interview of the girl by the psychologist did not take place soon after and the declaration was given almost one month later and, in the meantime, the perpetrator couldn't be arrested and the girl and other children continued to be at risk. Mr Speaker, Sir, I repeat that I am not accusing the officers of the CDU, but I brought that sad case back to our memory to show the consequences of the shortage of staff at the CDU. Hon. Mrs Bappoo herself complained that she could not cope with such a skeleton staff. Now, Mr Speaker, Sir, what do we see in the Budget Speech 2012? We read in paragraph 302, on page 50 –

“And we must attend to children who are abused.”

So far so good. Then it goes on –

“Government is recruiting 20 – I repeat – 20 additional support officers to reinforce the National Children's Council and the Child Development Unit to follow up more effectively on such cases.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, 20 additional officers who will be shared between the NCC and the CDU. Is that not an insult to our children? What an insult when we look at a few figures! The number of children referred to the CDU in 2009 was about 5,000. In 2010, about 6,000, and the number referred to CDU as to date is 4,500.

Twenty additional officers, Mr Speaker, Sir, is what we can call '*une goutte d'eau dans l'océan*'. *Et encore un océan secoué par des tempêtes*. Forty officers in all will then deal with

5,000 to 6,000 cases! That would make a ratio of one to about 140 cases. Is it humanly possible to ask each of these officers to deal with about 140 cases? Mr Speaker, Sir, owing to the increase in the number of cases referred to the CDU, it is not 20 additional officers who should be needed, but we should aim at a total of, at least, 100 officers.

The hon. Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare herself acknowledged the complex task of the CDU which ranges from family therapy, child therapy, parent education, emergency sheltering, and intervention to calls from doctors and police, etc. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is most surprising to see the hon. Minister expressing her gratitude when her Ministry is being granted 20 additional officers. I quote -

“The forthcoming recruitment of 20 officers to help in child protection is most welcome. I must here thank again the hon. Minister of Finance.”

No, Mr Speaker, Sir, 20 additional officers will not, as the hon. Minister believes, undoubtedly help to rationalise the service delivery of CDU. May I also express my surprise at the over joy of hon. Mrs Bappoo this morning, congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance for what she called “his praiseworthy decision” of giving 20 additional officers to the CDU and the NCC.

Hon. Mrs Bappoo - I didn't disturb the Minister when she was talking, thank you – also said this morning that ‘*ces enfants sont innocents*’. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are innocent. Is it because they are innocent that five of them, having been removed from their family owing to neglect, were sent to hospital - yes to hospital - by the time the CDU would come and take them to a shelter?

The greater insult, Mr Speaker, Sir, is when we see that the proposed implementation date limit of the recruitment of those 20 additional support officers is March 2012. It's as if there is no urgency at all and that we can take our time at leisure. Do we need five long months to recruit and train 20 officers?

Adding insult to injury, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Estimates of Supplementary Expenditure show on page 4 that there has been an under spending of more than Rs50m. at the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare. Out of the sum of over Rs80m. voted for that Ministry, only a sum of Rs40m. has been spent. So, there was enough money already

voted in 2010 for the protection of children and women against abuse, but it was not spent for that purpose. How can we not be shocked when we heard the hon. Bappoo, again this very morning, say that two babies were seen to be sleeping in the same cradle? We are in 2011. Can we imagine, Mr Speaker, Sir, two babies in the same cradle? Mr Speaker, Sir, is this Government saving money on the head of our children and women?

On pourrait nous dire que le budget a prévu six new children shelters and a Victim Assistance Scheme for child victims and victims of sexual offences. But, these, Mr Speaker, Sir, even if they are welcome, are but curative measures. What we need and need most urgently is preventive measures!

Qu'en est-il des campagnes d'éducation et de sensibilisation depuis le plus jeune âge, depuis l'école? Qu'en est-il de la formation de ces officiers de la NCC et la CDU? Qu'en est-il du *follow-up* et des *refresher courses* pour ces officiers? Qu'en est-il d'un nombre additionnel de psychologues et *counsellors* attachés à ce département? Qu'en est-il de rendre le *Community Child Protection Programme* plus efficace et d'avoir plus d'équipes pour chaque *Family Support Bureau*, afin qu'elles puissent travailler *around the clock*?

Ces mesures ont d'ailleurs été recommandées par *l'Ombudsperson for Children* dans son dernier rapport.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now like to point another reason of my disappointment. Not once in the Budget has the problem of domestic violence been addressed. The figures speak for themselves; more than 2,000 cases are reported every year and the barbarity of the cases often leaves us speechless. We know that according to a social research carried out by the University of Mauritius together with the Mauritius Research Council last year, domestic violence was said to cost to the State the sum of Rs1.4 billion per year. Yet, nothing about the setting up of more Family Support Units, nothing about more shelters for battered women, nothing about wider sensitisation campaigns, nothing about the psychological support of victims and perpetrators, nothing about revisiting the Protection Act which has been proved not to protect anyone anymore.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister Finance wrote in his Budget Speech 'Health is wealth. Health is also happiness'. We can, but agree with him, *une évidence même*. However, Mr Speaker, Sir, when we have a look at the health of the Mauritian women, we can conclude that

she is neither wealthy nor happy. M. le président, la Mauricienne est au top du hit parade des maladies. Le cancer du sein et du col de l'utérus font des ravages. Nous avons eu des détails alarmants du ministre de la Santé en réponse à une PQ. Le lupus, les maladies psychiatriques, l'obésité guettent la femme plus que l'homme.

Le taux d'alcoolisme et le risque du syndrome d'alcoolisation fœtale font peur. Même des maladies respiratoires, M. le président, semblent attaquer la femme plus que l'homme. L'ostéoporose appelée *the silent killer or the silent thief* menace trois femmes sur cinq. Ne serait-ce pas dû au prix excessif des produits laitiers ? Nous savons que le manque de calcium est une des causes de l'ostéoporose, et là, M. le président, j'aimerais exprimer le petit espoir ou désespoir que les pauvres avaient que les aliments de base allaient baisser.

M. le président, qui peut se payer de nos jours un paquet de fromage à soixante roupies à monter ? Une livre de lait à soixante roupies à monter ? Un yaourt à quatorze roupies ? Sûrement pas la vieille qui touche une pension de vieillesse de R 3,146 et à qui on donnera une compensation de R 204 au lieu de R 330. Une parenthèse pour partager avec vous ce qu'a dit une vieille de ma circonscription après la lecture du budget. Elle s'est exclamée 'Le ministre croit-il que nous allons manger des pneus de voiture et boire du shampoing ou des parfums ?' Et on peut sentir là toute la souffrance de cette vieille.

Coming back to health, Mr Speaker, Sir, we can read in paragraph 299 of the 2010-2015 Government Programme that -

'Government will set up an Institute for Women's Health to cater for the specific health and medical needs of women with state-of-the-art technology.'

C'était dans le programme du gouvernement 2010-2015. In the Budget Speech last year, the then Minister of Finance wrote in paragraph 113 that the Government was at the stage of carrying out, I quote –

'a study for the setting up of an Institute for Women's Health'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not a single word about that Institute for Women's Health in the Budget this year. Where has it gone? Has it vanished in the air? And that total absence of consideration for women's health is in acute contradiction with what the Minister of Finance has described in

paragraph 280 as “deepening our commitment to take our country to a modern, cutting health care system.”

Je voudrais maintenant, M. le président, rejoindre mes collègues et parler brièvement de cette taxe honteuse de 10 sous sur les SMS. I beg to disagree with hon. Reza Issack, who opined that that tax is a participative one. Through it, he said, we were being made to *contribuer à la solidarité et à alléger la pauvreté*. He added that that tax would help to *responsabiliser les jeunes*. No, Mr Speaker, Sir. That 20% tax on SMS is but a shame! Adding a 20% tax on SMS at a time the country is living a technological era is out of place and *un très mauvais signal à nos jeunes*.

True it is that it is mostly the young who are SMS enthusiasts, but the old people also use the SMS not only to communicate, Mr Speaker, Sir, but also as a means of security.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we just have to look at the comments of young people on Facebook regarding that 20% tax on SMS to understand how angry and disappointed they are! After my colleague, hon. Nagalingum, I would also like to reiterate my total disagreement to the argument of the hon. Minister of Information and Communication Technology to justify that 20% tax. Unfortunately, he's not here. He said -

‘The State currently generates Rs700 m. from SMS and more than a billion of SMS are sent every year. We should make the most out of it.’

And I fully agree, Mr Speaker, Sir, with those who call that attitude “mere opportunism.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like to make an appeal to the hon. Minister of Finance. It is a fact, as hon. Mrs Martin said, government alone, without the help of NGOs and the support of civil society, cannot handle effectively the sensitive problem of gender-based violence and violence against the children. So, let us screen the NGOs and empower the really dedicated ones. Let us give them more means, so that they can help us in return. But, for God sake, let's get rid of the *pigeons voyageurs*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I could choose to speak about my constituency, No. 19, under many headings: scarce water supply, the derelict state of the marketplace, lack of coordination among different authorities concerning sewage works, the extent of drugs and prostitution, the inactivity of youth clubs and women's centres, the lack of leisure at large, the irregularity of the

scavenging services, the under utilisation of the Rose Hill Stadium, especially the synthetic track which has cost us millions. *Mais je pourrais être taxée, M. le président, de pessimiste ou de tout peindre en noir, comme nous a accusés l'honorable Aimée ce matin.* So, Mr Speaker, Sir, I have chosen to speak about one specific problem, which is causing a lot of hardship to the inhabitants. It is the problem of traffic congestion.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the roundabout of Vandermeersch Street is a real bottleneck. My colleague, hon. Bhagwan, has raised this question more than once in this House, but to no avail. Mr Speaker, Sir, just going through this roundabout can take up to 45 minutes to one hour. “Time is money” goes the saying. I will just ask the authorities to seriously and urgently look into the matter, so as to find a solution.

Another scourge of the town of Rose Hill is the Place Margeot. Mr Speaker, Sir, this square has been built since 1985/1986, and it is a secret to no one that it is simply outdated today. There have been a lot of accidents; it causes lots of traffic jam. In reply to a PQ put by my colleague, hon. Dr. Sorefan, on 19 April 2011, the hon. Minister replied that -

‘A site of more than three hectares has been earmarked for a proposed traffic centre at Ebene along with the Vandermeersch-Trianon link road, opposite Ebene SSS girls, behind CEB (Rose Hill Office). A preliminary design has been prepared by the Traffic Management and Road Safety Unit, and necessary action will be taken for provision of funds for implementation of the project in due course.’

I am just setting the question, Mr Speaker, Sir. When is this “due course?”

This traffic centre would be for buses serving the Eastern side of the country, which would, of course, result in the smooth flow of traffic in the centre of Rose Hill. Nothing has been done yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, to go in that direction. I would like to ask the authorities to address the issue seriously. With these two requests concerning my Constituency No. 19, I thank the Members of this House for their kind of attention.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At 7.20 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 8.39 p.m. with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Mr M. Peetumber (First member for Rivière des Anguilles & Souillac): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to start with, I would like to rebut a few points canvassed by both hon. Lesjongard and hon. Mrs Ribot before I proceed with my intervention on the Budget Speech.

Hon. Lesjongard, during the course of his intervention, dwelt at length on the water problem that is afflicting Mauritius at the moment. He talked about the storage problem, the leakage problem, problems connected with the water pipes, which must be more than 60, 70 years old.

He talked about the storage problem, the leakage problem, problems connected with the water pipes which must be more than 60, 70 years old. He has also talked about the construction of dams in the country. While he was highlighting these points, one would get the feeling that the MMM had never been in Government or that if they had been in Government it was none of their priorities to tackle the water problems in Mauritius.

(Interruptions)

He was tempted to absolve himself completely of this responsibility of tackling the water problem when he was in Government between 2000 and 2005. I would like to remind him - because at one point in time he tried to usurp the Midlands Dam Project which was a project that was implemented between the years 1995 and 2000 by a Labour Government. I would like to refresh his memory regarding the Bagatelle Dam, which is in the process of being implemented to the tune of Rs3.5 billion and, once again, it bears the stamp of the *Alliance de l'Avenir* government.

In addition to that, we have got a very acute water problem in the south of the country and we have provided for that as well, because the preliminary works are being carried out and, probably next year, the Rivière des Anguilles Dam will be constructed to the tune of Rs3.5 billion. The linking of Mare Longue to Mare aux Vacoas is again an achievement of the present Government. So, when it comes to finding solutions to problems afflicting the population, afflicting the country, it is always the Labour Government, it is always the Labour/PMSD Government that should find ways and means to sort out problems afflicting the population.

He was talking about the wastage of public funds. As this was his main preoccupation, he dwelt lengthily on this issue: I would like to remind the House that the wastage of public

funds is not a new phenomenon. It is not a phenomenon proper to this Government. The Director of Audit underscores a number of problems, similar problems year in year out. These problems were also there between 2000 and 2005. Perhaps a few points just to remind them of some of the abuses that took place during that point in time: who would forget the record number of advisers recruited in different Ministries of the Government ...

(Interruptions)

Une centaine? 278 advisers were attached to the different Ministries! Taxpayers' money!

(Interruptions)

They were talking about jobs for the boys!

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Peetumber: I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When the Members of the Opposition were intervening, I remained quiet; I listened to them. This is what I expect from them now.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, let the hon. Member intervene!

(Interruptions)

Hon. Assirvaden, please! Set the example, please!

Mr Peetumber: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I must be allowed to develop all my points in all serenity and without being disturbed by any Member of the Opposition party, because I was listening to them very carefully, very attentively, without any interruption on my part.

As I was saying, it was a record number of advisers posted at the different Ministries – 278 advisers all paid from public funds. So many of them were there that there was a place to accommodate them in the Ministries!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody! Hon. Aimée! Please!

Mr Peetumber: Worse! People didn't know what were the duties and responsibilities of these advisers! The advisers themselves didn't know what were their duties and responsibilities. This was the abuse.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, at the SIDS Conference, which spanned over two/three days, cost Rs2 billion. And just for one item, for the purchase of the limousines, the State disbursed Rs600/Rs700 m.! Just for the purchase of limousines! When the Conference was over, they didn't know what to do with the cars. This is what is called wastage! This was an abuse on the part of the then Government, on the part of the Ministers, on the part of the decision makers at that point in time!

I would also like to remind the House that on one very small item in the context of the SIDS Conference, just for the purchase of flowers for two or three days Rs12 m was spent. Can you imagine that?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Peetumber: Can any sensible man reconcile himself to this astronomical amount of Rs12 m. just for the purchase of flowers for two days?

(Interruptions)

Hon. Mrs Ribot was talking about domestic violence, of insufficient shelters, insufficient number of officers attached to the Ministry. I think she didn't listen to hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing the other day: that Mauritius is not an El Dorado where you have got unlimited funds, plenty of money and then when you express the desire for something, funds are always available and can be dished out. Of course, the needs are there, the demands are there, but there are Budgetary constraints, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, please! Hon. Varma!

Mr Peetumber: In Mauritius, we don't have any natural resources. There is no gold, there is no copper, there is no petrol, and as such we have got a fund problem.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier, please!

Mr Peetumber: It is good to remind the House – unfortunately the hon. Member is not present – that the Domestic Violence (Amendment) Act was proclaimed in October 2011. I am sure that the means put at the disposal of the Ministry will help the Minister and the officials attached to do a more effective work at the grassroots level.

I must also be thankful to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance to have granted funds which had been denied earlier. With the funds that have been granted this year, I am sure the Ministry, the Minister, the officials will be able to do a very beautiful job at the grassroots level.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am on the same wave of length as the Minister of Education and Human Resources, hon. Dr. Vasant Bunwaree, who qualified the Budget Speech presented to the House and to the nation on 04 November 2011 by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, as *coup d'essai, coup de maître*.

This Budget has the merit of addressing issues pertaining to people from all strata of the Mauritian society, namely children, women and youth seeking employment, the homeless, the sick, the olds, the small planters, fishers, animal breeders, the informal workers, the business community, the SMEs, one and all, in fact.

In a nutshell, this Budget is for everyone, for every section of the Mauritian community, it is for the entire nation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, unlike the false perception that some hon. Members want to create by taking this Budget issue on an ethnic plane for cheap political mileage. So, I place on record my heartiest congratulations to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the innovative and responsible Budget Speech he has presented to the House and to the nation. The commendable measures he has proposed in his Budget Speech coupled by his characteristic humility have struck a chord in the hearts of the people who have reacted so positively to the 2012 Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when it comes to empowering the poor and the less fortunate, there is no Government that can possibly match a Labour/PMSD Government's track record. Accordingly, this Budget contains a series of measures in favour of people at the lowest rungs of the social ladder. First and foremost, I commend the extraordinary measure that the vice-Prime

Minister and Minister of Finance has announced in paragraph 260 of the Budget Speech. Government will contribute Rs2,400 per housing unit annually to set up a functional syndic.

It must, however, be acknowledged that in the absence of an operative syndic, people in the housing estates are living in hellish conditions, with poor hygiene, deplorable wastewater disposal systems, unhealthy environment, compounded by a nauseating smell permeating the atmosphere around, hence jeopardising the health of children and elderly people mainly. This exceptional measure will significantly improve the quality of life and Government deserves applause for it. The setting up...

(Interruptions)

I am sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to go through my speech in all serenity without being disturbed...

The Deputy Speaker: Of course, of course!

Mr Peetumber: ...by anyone from the other side, because I maintained a pin drop silence when the Members of the Opposition were intervening on the Budget. So, this is the same I expect from them.

The Deputy Speaker: Definitely, if there is any problem, I'll take care. Don't you worry!

Mr Peetumber: I think they are disturbing me. They are preventing me from concentrating on my speech.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I urge all Members not to disturb the hon. Member while he is intervening, please.

(Interruptions)

Mr Peetumber: *Mo pane déranger zotte moi.*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: And no cross-talking.

Mr Peetumber: *Mo pane déranger personne moi.*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Barbier, please! Hon. Ameer Meea! The hon. Member may continue.

Mr Peetumber: The setting up of the Housing Development Trust mentioned in paragraph 263 of the Budget Speech is another milestone in Government's Social Programme to run to the rescue of families earning less than Rs10,000 a month. Government will build for their benefit, houses that will cost around Rs900,000, but the families will pay only Rs300,000, only a third of the total cost of the House, one third will be borne by the Trust and the final third by Government. The housing problem, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is a universal problem; it is an acute problem in Mauritius as well. Such measures coupled by the Government subsidized loans extended by the Mauritius Housing Company for housing purposes, the Casting of the Slabs Scheme at the NHDC are some of the numerous measures taken by Government to come to grips with the housing problems in Mauritius. The granting of lands on which stand the houses of 2,000 families free of charge is an unprecedented measure by a caring Government to empower poor people.

Paragraph 282 of the Budget Speech contains yet another measure that will make history in the annals of public health in Mauritius. Increasing the grant under the Overseas Treatment Scheme from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000 is yet another evidence that this Government can go to any length when it comes to helping poor people from the lower strata of our society.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition stated, during the course of his intervention on the Budget Speech, that he had expressed appreciation for at least two measures announced by the Minister of Finance. The hon. Leader of the Opposition rarely appreciates any measure taken by Government. Surprisingly enough in this case, he had found two commendable measures. Fair and fine! One was the substantial increase that was announced in the grant regarding treatment overseas from Rs200,000 to Rs500,000, measure that was initiated way back in 1999, he said. What he forgot to mention was that in 1999, there was a Labour Government that was in place and the measure that he likes so much today was, in fact, a Labour Government decision. However, he deplored that it was after such a long time that the increase was granted, decision was implemented in 1999 and today we are in 2011, after 12 years that one Government has deemed it wise to increase the amount under the scheme. He was perfectly right. It was after 12

years that the amount has been revised. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the irony of the situation is that the hon. Leader of the Opposition was himself Minister of Finance from 2000/2003 and, as Minister of Finance, he could have initiated this measure, but he did not. Worse! He became Prime Minister in 2003 and, once again, he did not deem it wise at that point in time to increase the amount, but at least he had the intellectual honesty to applaud the good decision taken by the Government.

I'll probably fail in my duty if I do not dwell upon the measures proposed by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance in the education sector. It is a common knowledge that the most revolutionary measure ever taken by any Government in post-independence Mauritius was the granting of free secondary and tertiary education by the first Prime Minister of the country, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, way back in 1977. This has provided over the years, probably the most powerful means to fight exclusion and empower the poor, followed by the decision of the current Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, in 2005 to grant free transport to all students attending primary and secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions.

Paragraph 305 of the Budget Speech highlights an innovative measure in our primary schools. The institution of a Summer School Programme...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Peetumber: ...targeting the schools where low pass rate at the CPE is less than 50%. Generally, such schools are situated in deprived areas of the country and most ZEP schools will be concerned by this measure. Already an improvement has been observed in the ZEP schools, the rate of absenteeism has gone down, the academic performance of these schools has slightly improved. I have got no doubt whatsoever that the Summer School Programme will further help to improve the situation in those schools. I hope that this project will be implemented in a very professional manner and I wish it turns out to be a thumping success in the interest of those students who generally emerge from deprived social milieus where their families are already riddled with all kinds of problems - one more acute than the other.

The stakeholders in the public schools will certainly realise what an excellent step is proposed in paragraph 307 of the Budget Speech. They often express concern over the

deplorable conditions of the school gate, the toilet blocks, the school library, the school playgrounds or the class furniture if it is not the school building itself which earlier could not be upgraded or renovated for want of funds. By providing Rs500,000 to each and every Government school annually, the Minister of Finance has resolved the situation which has often been the cause of a ‘malaise’ among the stakeholders.

The Finance Minister has corrected an anomaly in the system of education by announcing in paragraph 306 the extension of the pre-vocational education programme from 3 years to 4 years up to the age of 16.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I come to the political aspect of my intervention. A few people are talking of a “remake of 2000” referring to a remake or a sequel of the MMM/MSM alliance which was at the helm of power between 2000 and 2005 - supposedly to salvage the country from disaster and prevent the country from going *à la dérive*. As far as I know, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, remakes or sequels are generally made of highly successful initial versions. Hollywood has produced sequels of blockbusters like Terminator, Transformers and Rambo. Bollywood has enacted the remakes of cult movies like Don, Devdas and the like. But it is the first time ever that ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Peetumber: ... I have heard of the remake of a disaster that was the MMM/MSM alliance between 2000 and 2005. By all benchmarks, that alliance was a flop, as it failed to deliver. The facts and figures...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Peetumber: ... bear the testimony to that, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The MMM/MSM Government created between 2000-2005, 20,000 jobs while the *l’Alliance sociale* Government created more than 40,000 jobs between 2005-2010. The difference is glaring. Is the country *à la dérive* when the unemployment rate stands at 7.8% or was it *à la dérive* when unemployment rate was as high as 9.6% when the MMM/MSM were at the helm?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No need for any comments, please!

Mr Peetumber: Growth was at the rate of 2.2% in 2005 when they were ousted from power. At present, despite the very difficult international context, the economic indicators show a growth rate of 4.2% which is almost twice as high.

Is the country on the brim of disaster now when the growth rate is 4.2% ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Sayed-Hossen, please!

Mr Peetumber: ...or was it on the edge of the precipice in 2005 with a mere 2% growth?

Besides, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the FDI averaged around Rs2 billion between 2000 and 2005 and since 2005, the *l'Alliance sociale* Government took the average to around Rs8.4 billion, more than 4 times higher. The public sector debt amounted to 70% in 2005 and we have reduced it to 54.2%. The net international reserves have been boosted from Rs56.3 billion in 2005 to Rs106.6 billion as at September 2011, which represents 40.9 weeks of imports cover.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after taking cognizance of the facts and figures, we do not entertain any doubts in our minds that the country was in tatters when the MMM and the MSM were at the helm of power.

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Peetumber: And this was conceded by a person no less than the former Prime Minister himself that the country was in an *état d'urgence économique* and that there was a *crise sans précédent* in the country. And if the confession was from one of the main protagonists of the regime that ruled the country between 2000 and 2005, then we are left with no doubts in our minds as to when precisely the country was in bad shape. We cannot afford to be *plus royaliste que le roi*.

Way back in 2005, we had inherited a country that was in shreds and tatters; the economic indicators were in the red; there was an atmosphere of doom and gloom that hovered around, public confidence was at its lowest ebb, there was no ray of hope among the youth. In a nutshell, the country was really *à la dérive* with several skeletons found in the MMM/MSM Government's cupboard, namely at the STC, the BPML, the Swami Vivekananda Conference Centre and so on.

The Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, and his team rolled up their sleeves and worked the hardest they could to rehabilitate the economy and reconstruct the country by imposing bold decisions and sacrifices. The results are for everyone to see and appreciate how the l'*Alliance sociale* Government has transformed the country in the lapse of five years, drifting the country from a state of economic stagnation to a state of economic resilience which can withstand the external shocks fairly well.

The l'*Alliance sociale* Government initiated measures to solve the thorniest problems afflicting the people of Port Louis. I said the other day that the MMM have been representing Port Louis for more than 35 years and people have identified four main problems afflicting people in Port Louis and none of them has been addressed by the MMM when they were in Government.

The l'*Alliance sociale* Government initiated measures to solve the thorniest problems afflicting the people of Port Louis. Firstly, the reconstruction of the Dr. Jeetoo Hospital to the tune of Rs2 billion; secondly, tackling the road congestion problem by constructing the Ring Road, the Harbour Bridge, by expanding the motorway from Pailles to Caudan. In fact, the country has become a construction site from North to South, from East to West with mega road projects being implemented. A few examples are the Triolet bypass, the Goodlands bypass, the widening of the motorway between Pailles and Caudan, the construction of the Phoenix/Beaux Songes Link Road, the Terre Rouge/Verdun Link road, the modernisation and expansion of the airport, the upgrading works at the Port and several others.

With the major changes that are taking place in other sectors of the economy: the Agro Industry, the Local Government, the ICT, the health sector, the energy sector, we can safely say that the country is in good hands, being steered by the able and effective leadership of the hon. Prime Minister.

People should not trust the Opposition if they want to have an unbiased view of good governance in the running of the country. Nor can the Government in place claim that Mauritius is the best governed country in the world - this is also bound to be biased.

But when reputed international organisations come forward with independent assessments of governance in the country, one is bound to wake up and take notice.

Let us see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what different renowned and independent international organisations have to say about Mauritius and the way it is being governed since 2005.

The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance quoted three examples at paragraph 83 of his Budget Speech, where the performance of Mauritius in the African continent emerged out of the lot.

There are at least five other recent instances where Mauritius stands head and shoulders above the other African countries, among which are the 2011 Index of Economic Freedom, the Human Development Index 2011, the Democracy Index 2010 by the Economic Intelligence Unit and the Environmental Performance Index 2010 determined by the World Economic Forum. So, it is not difficult to understand that Mauritius continues to demonstrate political maturity, economic vigour, economic robustness and vibrancy which are certainly not the fruits of hazard but rather the result of good governance in the running of the country.

The 2012 Budget aims at further strengthening the overall global position of Mauritius. Concrete measures are being proposed to further improve our competitiveness and business climate by creating a joint public-private sector platform to steer the process. We cannot and should not take comfort on our success. We cannot rest upon our laurels but rather, we should revigorate and re-dynamise our efforts to be not only the best in Africa, but to be part of the top league of countries. Mauritius has meticulously built its success on the strength of strong leadership, *clairvoyance*, social partnership and social equity. This country offers unlimited opportunities for everybody to succeed and the 2012 Budget's caption "Growth for the Greater Good" embodies the vision of this Government. All these show, beyond any penumbra of doubt, that this Government means business and does not spare any effort to promote public weal and ensure the happiness of one and all.

The Mauritian population *est un peuple admirable* which can make the difference between mediocrity and excellence, which can discern the chaff from the grain, which can discriminate between the fake and the authentic. When the time is ripe, it will give its verdict just the way it did in 2005.

Thank you very much.

(9.13 p.m)

Mr A. Hossen (Third Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): M. le président, la présentation du budget est un événement attendu par toute la population, par tous les secteurs, tous les acteurs économiques du pays, et cette année, à l'occasion de la présentation du budget 2012, cela n'a pas été une exception. Tous les acteurs économiques, que ce soit au niveau du secteur manufacturier, au niveau du secteur commercial, les travailleurs sociaux, les ONG, les syndicats des différents secteurs sont intervenus dans le cadre des débats autour du budget 2012.

Je voudrais remercier les membres de la presse écrite et parlée puisque la couverture qui est toujours accordée au contenu de ce budget est amplement reportée à travers nos différents médias. C'est un élément indispensable pour la bonne santé de notre démocratie, M. le président.

D'emblée, je voudrais féliciter l'honorable *vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance* pour le fonds et la forme de sa présentation du budget 2012, M. le président. Il est extrêmement important, lorsque nous sommes confrontés au niveau international et au niveau local à une situation économique des plus difficiles, de veiller à ce que la présentation du budget soit effectuée d'une façon claire et accessible à tout un chacun. Qu'on soit directeur de compagnie ou travailleur manuel, on est concerné par ce budget 2012. Donc, je félicite le vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances puisqu'à travers les nombreuses consultations que nous avons en tant que députés membres de cette Assemblée, à travers les différents programmes au niveau des radios privées et publiques, au niveau des médias, nous sommes interpellés sur le contenu de ce budget 2012. C'est un budget qui est destiné à la population. C'est un budget réaliste et réalisable, M. le président.

Je disais, tout à l'heure, que la présentation de ce budget se faisait dans des conditions des plus défavorables au niveau international comme au niveau local. Au niveau international, au niveau de nos marchés traditionnels, que ce soit nos marchés d'exportations ou du tourisme, chaque semaine apporte son lot de mesures drastiques, draconiennes - suppression de l'emploi, M. le président, réduction des salaires, fermetures d'entreprises, associés à cela, le tsunami Japonais et la crise au niveau de la zone euro n'arrangent pas les choses. C'est une situation internationale des plus défavorables.

Lorsque notre petite île Maurice, M. le président, a à faire face à une telle situation, il est du devoir de tout un chacun, il est du devoir de chaque patriote, que l'on soit de ce côté ou de l'autre côté de cette Chambre, quelque soit le rôle qu'on est appelé à assumer au niveau de la société civile, il est de notre devoir patriotique de resserrer les rangs et de veiller à ce qu'on puisse réunir toutes les conditions favorables pour que le pays puisse faire face à de telles situations qui est hors de notre contrôle puisque ce sont des situations économiques difficiles qui sont importées.

Pourtant, il y a à peine plus d'une année, à travers un exercice démocratique, les élections générales, le peuple a placé sa confiance dans une équipe gouvernementale. Au sein de cette équipe gouvernementale notre Premier ministre a fait preuve d'une générosité vis-à-vis d'un de nos partenaires. On leur a confié des responsabilités, et pas des moindres, M. le président, on leur a confié la responsabilité des finances, on leur a confié celle du ministère de la Santé, on leur a confié la responsabilité du ministère de la Sécurité Sociale, on leur a confié, M. le président, la responsabilité du ministère du Commerce et de l'Industrie, du ministère du secteur Publique, M. le président. C'était un engagement que nous autres, du côté de cette Chambre, sous le *leadership* de notre Premier ministre, avons pris sur la base d'un programme électoral en mai 2010 et qui a été plébiscité par le peuple, par la petite île Maurice, M. le président, un contrat de cinq ans pour mettre en exercice un programme gouvernemental. Tourner le dos, pas au gouvernement, à travers votre démission, c'est tourner le dos au petit peuple de l'île Maurice, c'est un acte antipatriotique, un acte de haute trahison, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

La confiance placée en vous, pas par le Premier ministre, ou par ceux qui se retrouvent au sein du gouvernement, mais cette confiance qui avait été placée en vous par la population mauricienne, vous avez déçu cette population et tôt ou tard vous aurez des comptes à rendre, M. le président.

Mais ce qui étonne et ce qui choque, M. le président, depuis les dernières élections de Mai 2010, pendant plus d'une année, celui qui occupait le portefeuille du ministre des Finances a été harcelé systématiquement, à chaque occasion qui a été donnée. L'opposition officielle du

MMM a fait son travail d'opposition. Elle a harcelé le ministre des Finances à travers toutes sortes de menaces, à travers toutes sortes d'injures, mais après la démission ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, you should not use such words.

Mr Hossen: A travers différents propos tenus vis-à-vis du ministère des Finances d'alors, pendant plus d'une année, cela a été le cas. On a été témoins de cela. La presse, la population toute entière a été témoin de la politique de l'opposition officielle du MMM. Ce que je ne comprends pas et la question que la population se pose aujourd'hui, M. le président, est celle-ci : est-ce qu'il y avait une sincérité dans votre démarche pendant plus d'une année, de par votre comportement vis-à-vis de l'ex-ministre des Finances, puisqu'en moins d'une semaine, après la démission, le retrait du MSM, le *Leader* de l'opposition et le *Leader* du MSM se sont retrouvés dans l'intimité d'une chambre d'hôtel cinq étoiles. Ce n'est pas important de savoir *whether the room was equipped with a twin bed or a double bed*. Cela n'est pas la question! La question que la population se pose ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Hossen: ... la population ...

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I rise on a point of order. I refer to Standing Order 42 where it is said that it shall be out of order to use unbecoming words or expressions or to use offensive language and I do not understand how this reference to twin bed or single bed could be appropriate in a Parliamentary debate.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please don't make provocative remarks and try to refrain what you want to say.

Mr Hossen: M. le président, je continue. Je disais que la question que se pose la population aujourd'hui est : est-ce que pendant plus d'une année, l'attitude de l'opposition officielle du MMM a été ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Hossen: ... sincère et crédible ou c'était tout simplement une sorte de mascarade? Je souhaite de tout cœur - puisque après avoir partagé, M. le président - pendant plus de vingt ans ...

The Deputy Speaker: Please address the Chair!

Mr Hossen: ... les valeurs fondamentales, M. le président ...

The Deputy Speaker: Adressez-vous à moi! Hon. Member address me!

Mr Hossen: M. le président, je disais, pendant plus de vingt ans après avoir partagé, avoir vécu les valeurs réelles du militantisme, ce n'est pas cela qu'on attendait du MMM de 2011!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry no need for you to step in.

(Interruptions)

Order! I want complete silence, please.

Mr Hossen: Je parlais, M. le président, de la trahison du MSM vis-à-vis de leur engagement pris avec la population. Je souhaite de tout cœur que le MMM ne soit pas complice de cette trahison, M. le président !

Mesures réalistes et réalisables; s'il y a eu une phrase que je retiens dans le Budget 2012, M. le président, c'est celle-ci: *'only growth will foster the well-being of the population'*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Mrs Labelle, please!

Mr Hossen: Il s'agit, M. le président, de la création ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, you are back; please!

Mr Hossen: Je disais, M. le président, qu'il s'agit de la création de la richesse et notre Premier ministre le dit et le redit à maintes reprises; le but ultime, c'est d'augmenter le gâteau

national. Augmenter le gâteau national pour faire quoi? Afin d'assurer une meilleure distribution de ce gâteau national. Augmenter la richesse du pays afin de créer l'emploi au niveau de ce pays. Afin de pouvoir, M. le président, assurer un avenir meilleur aux jeunes et aux enfants de ce pays. Quelles sont ces mesures? Attirer l'investissement, c'est enlever les obstacles. Enlever les handicaps.

Le monde aujourd'hui, M. le président, est un village global. Si nous essayons, nous, à l'île Maurice d'attirer les investissements de l'étranger, les autres pays ont emprunté la même voie, ils nous emboitent le pas, M. le président. Il faut veiller, s'il y a *hurdles*, s'il y a des obstacles, des handicaps lourds qui empêchent qu'on puisse attirer pleinement les investissements, il faut avant tout enlever ces obstacles. D'où l'abolition des différentes taxes, M. le président. L'abolition de la *Capital Gains Tax*; l'abolition du *Land Transfer Tax*; l'abolition de la *Registration Duty* sur les biens fonciers, M. le président, et tout cela pour attirer les FDI. Ensuite, donner des motivations, des *incentives* additionnels pour que d'autres investisseurs étrangers puissent investir au niveau de l'immobilier à Maurice et cela va inévitablement faire démarrer encore plus, encore mieux notre secteur de construction. Mention a été faite comme une des mesures de fructifier nos atouts ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, please!

Mr Hossen: ...de privilégier la privatisation, accélérer certains secteurs de l'état qui ne sont pas rentables et profitables et tout cela va dans la direction de la création de la richesse.

Lorsqu'on encourage les investissements, il faut en parallèle, M. le président, veiller à ce qu'il y ait des demandes, qu'on puisse écouler, vendre ses services, vendre ses produits. D'où l'investissement, M. le président, au niveau des ressources à être consacrées à la promotion de nos produits et de nos services à l'étranger. Il faudrait que nous puissions ...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Bundhoo and hon. Baloomoody please, we have no problem if you want to have a chat outside!

Mr Hossen: Je disais qu'il faudrait que nous puissions positionner notre île Maurice d'une façon favorable, par rapport à des nouveaux marchés émergents. Nous sommes privilégiés de par notre situation géographique, qui nous positionne comme un potentiel grenier du marché africain. Le *Leader* de l'Opposition, à juste raison, lors de son intervention, a mentionné la

croissance au niveau de certains états africains, il faudrait qu'on puisse saisir cette nouvelle opportunité, M. le président. D'où la proposition au niveau du budget, que de veiller à ce qu'on puisse instituer deux *roving ambassadors*, pour profiter de la potentialité au niveau des marchés émergent sur le continent africain.

Et, là j'ouvre une parenthèse, suite à l'intervention qui a été faite, M. le président, par mon collègue l'honorable Ameer Meea, dans le cadre de la démarche de notre pays pour l'ouverture d'une ambassade en Arabie Saoudite. Je voudrais rappeler à la Chambre, M. le président, que c'est un engagement qui a été pris par le gouvernement. Je voudrais rassurer toute la population que nous allons persévérer dans cet engagement, dans cette voie, M. le président. C'est une question d'échanges bilatéraux et ce n'est pas une démarche qui se fait unilatéralement. Les pourparlers ont déjà été entamés avec les autorités concernées en Arabie Saoudite. Ce qui a freiné un peu la démarche, il est vrai, il y a eu des éléments complètement indépendants de notre volonté; le problème du printemps arabe a été un des éléments qui a chamboulé un peu toute la planification.

Il y a eu aussi le fait que le royaume a été affligé par le décès d'un proche du Roi en Arabie Saoudite, M. le président. Mais, je voudrais, d'une façon claire et nette, ne pas faire de cette question d'ouverture d'ambassade une question de politique de bas étage. Nous avons un protocole au niveau des échanges bilatéraux à respecter, et nous sommes confiants que l'engagement qu'a pris notre Premier ministre, l'engagement qu'a pris ce gouvernement sera un engagement qui va être honoré. Il faudra laisser le temps faire son œuvre, laisser la diplomatie faire son œuvre et, à coup sûr, on sera à bon port au niveau de notre démarche. Créer la richesse et encourager l'investissement consiste, M. le président, à préparer l'avenir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon Baloomoody, please!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue!

Mr Hossen: Créer la richesse et encourager l'investissement consiste à préparer l'avenir, et l'avenir c'est nos jeunes ; l'avenir c'est nos enfants. Ce budget, M. le président, est un budget de ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, hon. Member on the left side!

Mr Uteem: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in order to avoid any diplomatic incident, I would ask the hon. Member to withdraw what he said about the king of Saudi Arabia who is very much alive and kicking!

(Interruptions)

Mr Hossen: J'ai mentionné quelque chose qui a affligé le royaume, M. le président. Un proche du roi ...

The Deputy Speaker: Vous avez clarifié, et c'est la fin de cette polémique...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, silence now! Order ! Continue!

Mr Hossen: Créer la richesse, M. le président, c'est encourager...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order now! Is it finished now? It's okay, hon. Baloomoody? Anything else? Hon. Henry, please!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Now, I want complete silence. Silence now! It is over now. We have been here since long, and I want silence, so that we can finish our job in a good atmosphere, please. Hon. Hossen!

Mr Hossen: Merci, M. le président...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: It's no joke!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, I am warning you!

Mr Hossen: Créer la richesse, M. le président, et encourager l'investissement consiste à préparer l'avenir, et l'avenir c'est les enfants de ce pays ; l'avenir c'est la jeunesse de ce pays. Il y a toute une panoplie de mesures allant dans cette direction, M. le président, qui fait de ce budget - comme l'a si bien mentionné l'honorable Nita Deerpalsing - non seulement un budget à chances égales, mais un budget de nouvelles opportunités. Jamais dans les annales, on a consacré autant d'attention, autant de ressources à la formation de notre jeunesse, M. le président.

Le *Sponsored Pre-Job Training Institute* est un exemple en lui-même. C'est la toute première fois qu'on conçoit une telle idée, un tel principe, M. le président, et tous les éléments sont réunis pour accompagner le jeune au niveau de cette formation. On ne s'arrête pas au niveau de la formation de l'entreprise. On a fait un pas au niveau de nos sportifs, M. le président. C'est pour cela qu'on a étendu le *Trust Fund for Excellence in Sports* à d'autres bénéficiaires. S'il y a un secteur qui a contribué énormément *to the tune of 37%* de notre PIB, représentant R 120 milliards et employant 250,000 personnes ; c'est le secteur des petites et moyennes entreprises. Un secteur qui est devenu un véritable moteur de notre croissance économique. Et comment ne pas s'attarder, comment ne pas veiller à ce que des conditions des plus favorables soient accordées à ce secteur de petites et moyennes entreprises, M. le président ? Notre Budget n'est pas passé à côté de la plaque, mais bien au contraire, M. le président.

Accorder de nouveaux découverts, permettre que nos petites et moyennes entreprises puissent bénéficier d'un taux préférentiel de 8.5%, d'un *grant* de R 20,000 par mois à tout nouvel entrepreneur pour qu'il puisse monter son entreprise et subvenir à ses besoins ; une sorte d'encouragement, de motivation, d'*incentive* sans précédent, M. le président. Dans les annales, au niveau du *World Association of Small and Medium Enterprises*, cette initiative du budget 2012 à l'île Maurice est qualifiée comme sans précédent. Accorder un fonds de soutien de R 3 milliards pour les trois prochaines années et veiller à l'instauration de 175 unités destinées au secteur des petites et moyennes entreprises, telles sont les intentions de ce gouvernement à travers son budget.

Mais la véritable révolution, M. le président, c'est au niveau du financement. C'est vrai, comme l'honorable Lesjongard l'a mentionné tout à l'heure, que venir avec un taux de 8.5% n'est pas quelque chose d'inédit. La DBM a par le passé proposé des taux beaucoup plus préférentiels, mais il faut le reconnaître - et je suis bien placé pour le dire - que la DBM Ltd a

malheureusement ses limites. Malgré la bonne volonté de son personnel, la DBM Ltd est limitée en termes de ressources. La DBM Ltd n'a pas les moyens pour venir encadrer nos petits entrepreneurs, les aider dans le montage de leurs projets. La DBM Ltd a ses limites, M. le président. Elle n'a pas les moyens d'accompagner ces petites et moyennes entreprises, de veiller que le développement se fasse à bon escient, que les investissements se fassent à bon escient, et c'est cela qui n'a pas marché par le passé.

Au niveau des banques commerciales, quelles sont leurs priorités, M. le président ? Une banque commerciale a comme priorité la notion de profitabilité, la notion de rentabilité. La banque commerciale n'allait jamais s'engager au niveau des secteurs à fort risque, au niveau des secteurs vulnérables comme c'est le cas pour les petites et moyennes entreprises, et c'est cela la révolution. A maintes reprises, on a entendu l'opposition clamer que l'agenda du gouverneur de la Banque de Maurice était tout autre de l'agenda du ministère des Finances. Mais, au niveau des mesures annoncées pour le financement des petites et moyennes entreprises dans ce budget, on a apporté un démenti clair et net. C'est le partenariat initié par le ministère des Finances, la Banque de Maurice et certaines banques commerciales qui sont tombées d'accord pour le financement des PME qui va assurer le décollage de ce secteur, M. le président.

A travers le budget, le Premier ministre et le ministre des Finances ont réussi un grand coup ; celui que de faire de nos banques commerciales des banques de développement. On ne se retrouve pas avec une seule banque de développement ; on va se retrouver avec plusieurs banques de développement, avec comme vocation principale le financement. Les banques commerciales font preuve de rigueur ; les banques commerciales ont suffisamment d'expérience et d'expertise pour assurer, guider, accompagner, initier et faire de sorte que ces entreprises démarrent du bon pied, et les accompagner dans l'élaboration, le développement et la réussite de leurs petites et moyennes entreprises. C'est la grande révolution, M. le président, la distribution de la richesse, c'est de ça qu'il s'agit au niveau de notre Budget. C'est aussi tendre une main secourable, M. le président, aux plus démunis. C'est conclure un pacte social avec la population, lui faire comprendre qu'elle est partie intégrante, quel que soit son statut, quel que soit le domaine, le secteur dans lequel il exerce, que chaque individu puisse comprendre et croire qu'il est partie intégrante du développement, et que la croissance n'est pas que l'affaire des entreprises, M. le président.

Nous sommes fiers de ce côté de la Chambre que nous assurons une bonne transmission, une transmission noble, qui va dans le sens de la solidarité, M. le président. Nous sommes les héritiers du Père de la Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, qui a apporté la liberté, l'indépendance du pays. Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, le Père de la Nation a lutté, a œuvré, pour donner un sens d'émancipation à chaque couche de notre société, de notre communauté mauricienne, M. le président.

M. le président, malgré le fait qu'il a apporté l'indépendance en 1968, il ne s'est pas arrêté en si bon chemin. En 1976, le Père de la Nation accorde l'éducation gratuite à tous les niveaux, aux enfants, aux jeunes de ce pays. Aujourd'hui, en 2006, notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam annonce le transport gratuit pour les étudiants et les personnes du troisième âge. C'était notre façon à nous, de ce côté de la Chambre, au niveau du Parti travailliste d'exprimer notre reconnaissance, non seulement vis-à-vis du Père de la Nation...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Let the hon. Member make his point, please!

Mr Hossen: Non seulement notre reconnaissance ! Reconnaissance est un vain mot de l'autre côté de la Chambre et je suis bien placé pour le dire, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

Reconnaissance, méritocratie ! Ce sont de vains mots de l'autre côté de la Chambre et je suis bien placé pour le dire ! Reconnaissance, et aussi perpétuer cette tradition

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Hossen: Et aujourd'hui, nous sommes fiers, M. le président, qu'en 2011, le gouvernement, sous le *leadership* du Parti travailliste, sous le Leadership du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, en partenariat avec le Parti travailliste et le PMSD, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Baloomoody!

Mr Hossen: Je disais que le Parti travailliste, en partenariat avec le PMSD, sous le *leadership* de notre Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, fait en 2012, M. le président, 2,000 locataires des ex-Cités CHA devenir propriétaires, M. le président. On a mis sur pied, à travers ce Budget, un fonds de R 1.5 milliards, pour le *Housing Development Fund* ; on a augmenté...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Bundhoo, I am giving you the last warning! I don't want you to show any sort of disrespect to the Chair! It is not the first time. I am bringing you to order. I mean it seriously! Every hon. Member is duty bound to help the Chair to maintain order in this House. Is it clear, hon. Bundhoo? Yes, the hon. Member may continue!

Mr Hossen: M. le président, l'allocation des patients qui sont malheureusement inopérables à Maurice augmente. Elle passe de R 200,000 à R 500,000, M. le président, et cette paternité, on n'a pas le moindre doute dessus; c'est l'œuvre de ce gouvernement, c'est l'œuvre du Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, M. le président. Réaliste et réalisable - un Budget qui ne concerne que l'essentiel.

J'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention l'intervention de notre collègue, l'honorable Satish Boolell, lorsqu'il a évoqué le secteur de la Santé. Il a annoncé toute une panoplie de mesures, M. le président, qui ne sont pas réalistes. C'est comme si on entrerait dans un supermarché avec chariot, son caddie, on fait le tour des rayons et il y a pas mal de produits qui nous attirent, M. le président. *We pick* des produits, des items qui sont utiles, mais malheureusement on sélectionne des produits qui sont superflus, et dans le contexte économique par lequel le pays est en train de traverser, M. le président, il est de notre devoir de veiller à l'essentiel ; de venir proposer des propositions honnêtes, crédibles, réalisables ; de ne pas faillir devant notre responsabilité face à la population qui est en attente. L'essentiel c'est quoi, M. le président? L'essentiel ce n'est pas d'énoncer toute une série de mesures irréalisables, l'essentiel ne consiste pas à faire ou à ne pas faire. L'essentiel consiste à faire ce qu'il faut et rien d'autre, et c'est cela que nous faisons au sein de notre gouvernement, M. le président.

(Interruptions)

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

Mr Hossen: Ce budget, M. le président, vient aussi corriger des anomalies économiques, pour ne pas dire des injustices ; et là, je voudrais faire mention de la louable initiative qu'a prise notre ministre des Finances pour enlever...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, it seems that there is a problem somewhere, either with the microphone or on your side! Yes, the hon. Member may continue!

Mr Hossen: Donc, je mentionnais la correction des injustices, des anomalies économiques, M. le président, et là, je salue la noble initiative du vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances d'abolir purement et simplement la taxe....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden! What's the problem ?

Mr Hossen: M. le président, c'est une mesure qui a été accueilli très favorablement par les petits commerçants. Les petits commerçants de ma circonscription, en particulier, ont exprimé leur profonde reconnaissance et leurs vifs remerciements vis-à-vis de cette mesure. Je me permets d'évoquer au sein de cette auguste Assemblée quelque chose qui nous interpelle et la question a été soulevée aussi par mon collègue, le ministre du travail, l'honorable Shakeel Mohamed. C'est concernant une injustice au niveau des loyers de ceux qui occupent - qui sont les occupants - la foire Ibrahim-Abdoollah à Cité Martial. La question a déjà été évoquée auprès du vice-premier ministre et ministre des Finances. On a eu une écoute très favorable, et on souhaiterait qu'on puisse quand même évoquer cette question et trouver une solution afin d'alléger un peu la souffrance des occupants de la foire de Cité Martial.

M. le président, je voudrais saisir cette occasion pour attirer l'attention de cette Chambre à une autre injustice qui est perpétuée vis-à-vis des petits commerçants du centre-ville.

M. le président, suite au passage du cyclone Carol, en 1960, afin de veiller à la protection des intérêts, à la survie des locataires, et en particulier, des petits commerçants de nos centres-villes, on avait introduit le *Landlord and Tenant Act*.

En 1999, on a procédé à un amendement de cette législation, M. le président, et au niveau des *Regulations* prévues sous cette législation, on a introduit un *rental formula*. Ce *rental formula*, malheureusement, n'agit pas en faveur de ces mêmes locataires. Il y a des patrimoines qui ont existé pendant plusieurs générations, des familles qui se sont consacrées à la pratique du commerce depuis plusieurs générations, qui ont été obligées de fermer boutique, M. le président : Ghanty Brothers à la Rue Desforges, Timol Fils à la Rue Desforges, Prakash Kalachand à la Rue Desforges, Esquire Ltd. à La Chaussée, Quay Store à la Rue John Kennedy et là, je vous mentionne que quelques uns de ces commerces dans les centre-ville. Des centaines de commerces à travers l'île ont du fermer boutique puisqu'aucune notion de l'ancienneté n'est prévue au niveau de cette *rental formula*. Le ministre du Logement et des Terres, l'honorable Dr. Abu Kasenally avait reçu la délégation, *l'Association of Tenant Traders and Professional* pour essayer de voir dans quelle mesure leur venir en aide, et nous sommes reconnaissants, M. le président. Je parle en terme de nous puisque moi-même je suis issu d'une famille qui se consacre au petit commerce traditionnel. C'est un secteur, M. le président, qui nécessite toute notre attention. Lorsqu'on connaît l'émergence et la prolifération de nouveaux *shoppings malls*. Des nouveaux *shoppings malls* qui sont accaparés par des gens qui ont des *capitaux*. Ils ont des moyens d'investir. Mais il est de notre devoir de veiller aussi à la survie. Non seulement de veiller à la survie mais de venir en aide, d'assister quand-même ces petits commerçants qui ont été là pendant des longues années, M. le président. On voudrait remercier d'une part l'honorable ministre Kasenally puisqu'il était intervenu pour prolonger le délai accordé à l'exécution de certains *rental formula*, la décision du *rental tribunal*. On voudrait faire appel auprès du ministre des Finances et ministre du Logement et des Terres, l'honorable Kasenally pour qu'on puisse revoir ce dossier et essayer d'accorder encore plus de soutien et de soulagement à cette communauté de petits commerçants, M. le président.

Dans ma circonscription, dans le centre-ville de Port Louis, on se retrouve avec un problème de *parking lots*, M. le président. Il y a beaucoup de propriétaires qui ont transformé leurs terrains et leurs propriétés privées en parkings rudimentaires mais qui n'ont pas les moyens M. le président, que de venir ériger des *parking towers*. On dit trop souvent que le centre-ville de Port Louis se retrouve être un centre-ville désert le soir. Lors de son discours, l'honorable Ameer Meea a évoqué le problème de *housing lots*, le problème de *housing developments* au niveau de la ville de Port Louis. M. le président, il est tout à fait légitime lorsque nous sommes nés dans un

quartier, on a grandi dans ce quartier, on développe une affinité pour ce quartier. Il n'y a pas eu dans le centre-ville de Port Louis, ces dernières années, le moindre projet de *housing development* et comment on peut s'attendre à ce qu'il y ait une *night life* au niveau du centre-ville de Port Louis. L'appel que je fais auprès des autorités concernées, auprès du ministère du Logement et des Terres, auprès du ministère des Finances, c'est de veiller pourquoi ne pas même envisager des *compulsory acquisitions* de ces *lots* afin de libérer ces espaces, donner ces espaces à la CHA, à la NHDC pour qu'on puisse ériger.

Les membres de l'opposition, à maintes reprises, ont mentionné que soi-disant ce budget ne fait pas suffisamment de place pour la classe moyenne. Mais voilà une opportunité, M. le président, que de venir avec des *housing projects*, des projets de construction de bloc d'appartements destinés à toutes les catégories dans le centre-ville de Port Louis. Cela aura l'effet de donner un *boost* à notre industrie de construction. Les industries secondaires, tout ce qui est restaurant, tout ce qui est gymnase, tout ce qui est facilité de loisirs vont pouvoir bénéficier et on va pouvoir redonner vie à notre centre-ville, M. le président.

Ce budget, M. le président, est un budget de l'inspiration de notre cher Premier ministre, notre *Leader*, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam. Ce budget fait de la place à la croissance, M. le président. Ce budget a comme pour ambition d'agrandir et de grossir notre gâteau national afin de mieux le distribuer. Ce budget est porteur d'espoir et place l'individu au centre de nos préoccupations. La croissance économique est nulle sans le développement social, et le budget fait de la place pour le développement économique mais aussi bien pour le développement social le mieux-être de l'individu.

Je vous remercie de votre attention, M. le président.

(9.56 p.m.)

Mr A. Gungah (First Member for Grand' Baie & Poudre d'Or) : M. le président, après avoir écouté l'honorable Hossen, je peux comprendre son amertume vis-à-vis du MSM et sa tristesse, car il sait, comme tous les autres membres du gouvernement, qu'après le départ du MSM, les jours de l'alliance PTR-PMSD sont comptés.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah : M. le président, personne, sauf les membres du Parti travailliste bien-sûr, n'aurait jamais imaginé qu'un an après que le *leader* du MSM aurait présenté le premier budget de ce gouvernement, nous serions de ce côté de la Chambre. C'est bon de faire ressortir que quand le MSM était entré dans le gouvernement en mai 2010, nous l'avions fait pour travailler pour le pays. Tout le monde reconnaît d'ailleurs que le MSM a une culture de travail et que nous représentons la stabilité,...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah : ...le développement, le progrès, la sécurité et l'unité. Mais, M. le président, au fil des mois ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah : ...nous nous sommes rendu compte que nous sommes en train de travailler avec un partenaire qui a une culture complètement différente. Une culture qui représente le favoritisme, l'ingérence dans les institutions, une culture de lenteur chronique et d'incapacité pour prendre des décisions.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, please, let me hear!

Mr Gungah : Une culture qui favorise les petits copains et copines au détriment du peuple en entier. M. le président, il y a eu des blocages à tous les niveaux pour nous empêcher de faire bouger les dossiers importants.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: Et de mettre de l'ordre là où il le fallait. Nous nous attendions à ce qu'il y ait une solidarité entre les partenaires de l'alliance gouvernementale pour pouvoir prendre des décisions mais malheureusement le Parti travailliste s'était engagé dans des magouilles orchestrées pour essayer de finir le MSM. Et malgré tous les coups bas, malgré qu'on nous mettait des bâtons dans les roues quand l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth avait présenté son budget,

les résultats sont là pour témoigner qu'il avait *deliver*. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth avait su apporter un équilibre entre l'économie et le social et toute la population avait trouvé sa part dans le budget 2011. Même l'honorable Premier ministre avait flatté la gestion économique du pays. Et l'honorable Duval avait même décrit le Budget de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth comme étant un *super budget*. Mais qu'est-ce que nous voyons aujourd'hui, M. le président ? Le retour d'une politique économique ultra libérale qui fait la part belle aux capitalistes. Un retour confirmé par le ministre des Finances lui-même dans les déclarations publiques après la présentation de son Budget. Ce retour se confirme dans les cinq premières minutes du *Budget Speech* du ministre avec l'abolition immédiate de la *capital gains tax* sur les transactions immobilières et la *solidarity tax* sur les dividendes et intérêts. Contrairement à ce qui se passe dans le monde entier par ce temps de crise économique notamment en Europe, même un gouvernement de droite en France a réintroduit une taxe sur les grandes richesses. Ici, on note avec regret que ce gouvernement fait passer l'intérêt du gros capital avant l'intérêt du pays tout entier. Ici on note avec grand regret que ce gouvernement fait passer l'intérêt du gros capital avant de celui du pays tout entier. La priorité du ministre des Finances était de satisfaire le *shopping list* des *fat cats* du secteur privé.

Une fois que les intérêts du gros capital ont été préservés qu'est-ce qu'on voit dans ce budget, M. le président ? Des miettes pour la population ! Nous avons eu droit à un budget sans vision, sans innovation et sans ambition. Une série de mesures décousues sans aucun fil de pensée.

Even an ex-Minister of *l'Alliance sociale* of 2005-2010, Mr Dharam Gokhool, has said that the Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier Duval, has replaced the credo of putting people first with that of putting private sector first. The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order! Let him make his point!

Mr Gungah: He even goes further by stating that the PMSD's ideological proximity ...

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please!

Mr Gungah: ... is vindicated at the expense of the Labour Party. The Labour intelligentsia has shown signs of deep frustration, just like in the time of former Minister Sithanen.

The Deputy Speaker: Please! Hon. Assirvaden, please! I don't want any comment.

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since the beginning of the debate...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: My ears are here, my eyes are over there, no problem.

Mr Gungah: ... on this Appropriation Bill, I am surprised by the way the Members of the Government are behaving.

M. le président, pour un rien, quand un des leurs parle, ils acclament pour démontrer que faire du bruit veut dire être fort. Empty drums make a lot of noise, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! These same persons know very well...

The Deputy Speaker: Please order! No crosstalking!

Mr Gungah: ... that out there, *la population dans son ensemble, exprime sa déception et la colère gronde*. They can't face the noise outside, so to console themselves, they make noise inside. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they think they are hurting us, but when people hurt you over and over, think of them as sandpapers, they scratch and hurt you, but later you will be shining and polished while they end up useless.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me now to speak on the Civil Service, which was under my responsibility under the *trahison du Parti travailliste*. We, on this side of the House, *nu pas ene vender*. We, on this side of the House, have a vision to build a smarter Civil Service, as I stated, in this august Assembly during my intervention on the Government Programme. The efforts I made last year, along with the then vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to set up and operate a Civil Service College, is at long last on the path of being materialised, at least, on paper. We all know that training is becoming more and more important as a tool for development of our people. It has greater significance for the success of modern organisations.

The House will recall that in the Government Programme 2005-2010, it was announced that the Civil Service College would be set up, but I must tell you that since then the project was shelved as the Government showed no commitment and seriousness of purpose on that important matter. It was only when I took office in May 2010, as Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms that I brought this project on top of my agenda. I took the bull on by its horns to have this project progressed on the path of implementation. Today, after so many years, it looks that the Government seems to have understood the importance of this Civil Service College.

However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I fail to understand why the Civil Service College, will begin operations by outsourcing courses. It is a fact that the Ministry of Civil Service and

Administrative Reforms is already short of training infrastructural facilities because it has only one lecture room to train the thousands of public officers. In order to meet part of the demand, it is already outsourcing training programmes to institutions like the University of Technology Mauritius, the University of Mauritius and the Mauritius College of the Air, among others.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if we really want to provide quality training, we should imperatively set up the Civil Service College which should run as a training institution and manned by professional trainers. I have doubt, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on this Government's intention. I am asking myself whether it is aiming at outsourcing the training courses to those bogus training institutes which have been set up by their *petits copains*.

We, on the side of the House, would wish that a proper Civil Service College be set up and operate on the model of the Singaporean Civil Service College or the Malaysian Training Institute commonly known as INTAN in Asia or the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration and the Botswana Civil Service College in Africa.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when talking of reforms in the public sector, we must tread carefully. We all are for reforms in the public sector. However, the approach is crucial, if we have to make reforms more effective, meaningful and acceptable. Here, I wish to refer to the measure relating to opening of offices on Saturdays to, supposedly, improve access to public services.

We all know that a number of years back, nearly all public officers operated on a six-day week basis. When Government considered that operating offices on Saturdays was becoming costly compared to the real output for the half-day service provided, it was decided to have those offices, whose services that could be spared on Saturdays to operate on a five-day week, while maintaining the contractual hours of work of the public officers.

The measures announced in the 2012 Budget Speech to open offices on Saturdays is an insult to public officers. This measure will affect a large majority of public officers and yet this is being imposed on them as dictators do. We cannot take public officers working in the public service for granted. It is this same public service that has toiled hard to contribute to the development of the country since Independence. Undeniably, a Civil Service that has played an unfaltering and determining role in the development process of this country and that assures the continuity of the stage.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot understand how on such an important issue affecting public offices, the latter have not been consulted through their unions. If we are to really motivate public officers and to maintain harmonious employment relations in the public sector, we have to strengthen partnership with the stakeholders through consultation and dialogue.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 21st century has been dubbed the information age, a time in which communications and the ability to harness knowledge are central to success. The era is also characterised by the rapid pace of change in every aspect of economic, cultural and social life. This inescapably calls for the modernisation of the public sector, but opening offices on Saturdays does not lead to modernisation of service delivery. There are other means to bring the public service to the forefront of development and at the doorstep of the population. There are other means to bring the public service to the forefront of development and at the doorstep of the population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have to get our public sector organisations to move high-tech with fully computerised operations, increase the number of e-services and make use of SMS facilities to bring services and information within hand's reach of the public.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my appeal to the House - let us go for the modernisation of the civil service through the use of the state-of-the-art technology and information systems. ICT will definitely support the re-engineering of processes and the effective delivery of timely services. Towards that end, I had started consultative meetings with the Ministry of ICT. I endeavoured to push forward the project for online services and e-services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I foresee some Members on the other side will make reference to Singapore and the hours of work in the Singaporean public sector. The Prime Minister, himself, talks a lot of Singapore since his last visit there. But it is good for the House to know that, in Singapore, public officers are not made to work for long hours only. They are also properly and adequately remunerated with good conditions of employment. Singapore Civil Service is considered to be among the best paid in the world. What about the remuneration in the Mauritian Civil Service? If we want to compare the Civil Service in Singapore with that of Mauritius, we should also consider better pay packages for our public officers as well.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is sad to note that the present Government does not have at heart the interest of public officers. This Government does not have the political will to improve

the conditions of employment of the public officers who are among the pillars of the Government machinery.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the PRB report 2008, it has been recommended that the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms negotiates with the State Insurance Corporation of Mauritius, that is, SICOM for the setting up of a contributory medical scheme for public officers, but, unfortunately, no single action had been initiated on such a score that would have benefited the thousands of public officers until I assumed office as Minister in May 2010. I took the lead and I personally chaired a few meetings to ensure that actions are initiated to formulate a medical insurance scheme with the SICOM for the benefit of our public officers. Some important works had already been done when I was there as Minister to ensure the implementation of that recommendation of the PRB.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am surprised that not a single word has been mentioned on that important project to help the public officers. The vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance said that health is wealth, but the paradox is that Government does not care for the health of the public officers who are required to work under stressful conditions.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget was the opportune moment for the Government to show it is a caring employer by making provisions for the medical insurance scheme for public officers, but who cares? The Members on the other side only care for public officers to be made to work on Saturdays. They only want to exploit and squeeze the public officers to the maximum they can without caring for them.

The next PRB report, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is due for January 2013. The next report is expected to be published by end of 2012. This means five years have been lost and this medical scheme is kept in the drawer of this Government. Is this called effective Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Is this called efficient Government? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government will come with a lame excuse of financial difficulties, financial constraints, but how come the same Government has abolished capital gains tax *illico presto s'il vous plaît*. Who will benefit from that measure? Is it the workers or the fat cats? Is it what we call a caring Government, a caring employer, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

I will now refer to the measures on decent housing units for every family. This Government is in power since 2005. It is only now that the Government has discovered that

many of the housing estates so far have become no man's land. The Government has, through its lethargy and inaction, allowed the situation to deteriorate and become worse and in a state of dilapidation.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Government has only now acknowledged that in the housing estates there is lack of regulations and discipline, poor sanitary facilities, poor water reticulation and wastewater disposal systems. The living conditions have been made miserable as there is no clean, safe and healthy living environment in those estates. This is a complete averment of the Government which has been in power since 2005 of their inaction, lethargy, and uncaring attitude. Those inhabitants of the housing estates have been neglected and yet the Government is claiming that it has waged a war against poverty, that it is fighting and alleviating poverty. How can you claim to eradicate poverty when such insalubrious situation has been allowed to spread in those housing estates, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? This Budget provides for a contribution of Rs200 rupees per housing unit per month to ensure that all NHDC housing estates have a functional syndic. How will this work? What is the mechanism set up to implement this measure? The Minister of Finance has not said a single word on these.

M. le président, connaissant la mentalité Parti travailliste/PMSD de jouisseurs et de protection de petits copains, je suis très sceptique quant à la réussite de cette mesure.

M. le président, en parlant du problème du logement à Maurice, le ministre des Finances a ouvertement blâmé la politique de logement des travaillistes et a émis un certificat d'incompétence à l'ancien ministre travailliste Asraf Dulull et l'actuel ministre travailliste Abu Kasenally quand il affirme dans le discours du budget au paragraphe 254 que:

“Another most conspicuous manifestation of poverty in our country is the number of people who live in poor housing conditions - men, women, children and the elderly.”

En même temps, M. le président, le ministre des Finances donne une claque magistrale au ministre de l'Environnement, l'honorable Deva Virahsawmy ainsi que le Premier ministre, patron du projet Maurice Ile Durable, quand il affirme au paragraphe 150 que -

“As for our environment, there is far too much litter around.”

C'est malheureux qu'un gouvernement qui se vante de *'putting people first'* soit en train d'abdiquer devant ses responsabilités en matière de logement social et dépend maintenant du

secteur privé à travers le CSR. Il suffit de comparer les mesures en matière de logement social de ce budget à celles de 2011 et la conclusion sera claire, M. le président.

Avec Pravind Jugnauth comme ministre des Finances, l'État assumait pleinement ses responsabilités. Pas moins de quarante mille familles auraient bénéficié de cinq *housing schemes* annoncés en faveur des *ti-dimounes* et de la classe moyenne. Avec Xavier Duval comme ministre des Finances, la classe moyenne est complètement oubliée, et pour des gens au bas de l'échelle il n'y a que quelques centaines d'unités de logement qui sont mentionnées. Sachant M. le président qu'il y a une longue file d'attente à la NHDC pour l'acquisition d'un logement social, on est en droit de se demander sur quelle base les nouvelles unités seront distribuées. Est-ce que c'est la NHDC ou le Trust qui aura cette responsabilité ? Je pose la question.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me now come to a measure which is currently the talk of the town, that is, the introduction of a tax of 10 cents per message on SMS and MMS. I cannot understand why Government has decided to tax the whole population and, at the same time, remove solidarity tax and capital gains tax. I am of those who believe that the receipts from this tax will far exceed the Rs125 m. estimated in the Budget. Millions will be taken from the pockets of Mauritians while the same result could have been achieved by taxing the Telecom companies which are making billions of profits.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Members, on the other side, have been criticising the VAT and they have time and again, thrown uncountable criticism on the VAT, which is 15% and the revenue therefrom is filling the coffer of this Government. If they are genuinely and sincerely against it, they should have shown the courage and the guts by removing it from this Budget itself.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Members, on the other side, only talk and do not walk the talk, because they do not have the courage and the vision. This august Assembly and the whole country has, during the presentation of the 2011 Budget, witnessed the courage and vision of the MSM leader, who had at heart, the interest of the population.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Gungah: He showed the guts and courage by removing the NRPT and the tax on interests. These were the same taxes which had been imposed by the Labour/PMSD Government, at the time when Rama Sithanen was the Labour Minister of Finance. These are the same taxes which Pravind Jugnauth as a visionary leader removed immediately when he presented his first Budget in 2011, after the 2010 general election.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this tax on the SMS and MMS is more than the VAT. Why do I say this? It is because VAT is only 15% whereas this tax on SMS and MMS is 20%.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last week, hon. Varma, in his speech, stated that “*le départ de Pravind Jugnauth est un blessing in disguise*”. Do you know why they are happy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Because Pravind and the MSM were an obstacle to the style of recruitment of this Labour/PMSD Government...

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Mr Gungah:... which the whole population has been made aware of through one private radio and which has been the talk of the town and is still going on and the population is very worried, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We were an obstacle to the *bal de petits copains et copines*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. They are happy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: ...because we were an obstacle to the ill-doings of the Labourites. M. le président, je remercie et félicite vivement mon Leader ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Varma, please!

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: M. le président, je remercie et félicite vivement mon *leader* pour avoir claqué la porte, car *it would have been a shame to be part of a Government where scandals are part of governance culture. Talking...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry, please!

Mr Gungah: *Si to envie prend ene pizza talère mo amène toi manger. Laisse mo terminer, écoute moi, mone écoute toi.*

Talking of governance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is shameful for those in power to come and make big speeches while they are, in fact, treading on the dirty path of ill-doings.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Soodhun, please!

Mr Gungah: This Government has lost the right to speak of good governance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. My good friend and colleague, hon. Mahen Jhugroo, raised the example of what has happened at the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise. Absolutely shocking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! While the Prime Minister is supposed to lead the office of public sector governance and give the right signal, he, in fact, reappointed somebody at the Mauritius Duty Free Paradise, who was dismissed after a disciplinary committee found him guilty under five charges, including forgery. The Prime Minister went as far as coming to Cabinet to reappoint that person as Director of Human Resources. What is the signal being sent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? And the Prime Minister will come and tell the nation that he would be *intransigent* in the fight against fraud and corruption. *C'est une farce de mauvais goût, M. le président.* In the Betamax scandal also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, principles of good governance have been flouted. A contract binding the nation for 15 years had been signed again, *illico presto*, to give a jackpot of Rs8 billion to the clan *travailliste*, not to say *la famille travailliste*. The contract had been tailor-made, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no approval had been obtained from the Central Procurement Board, the advice and recommendations of the SLO had been ignored, abusive clauses of the contract have imposed unacceptable obligations on the STC and Government and, over and above all, Cabinet instructed that the deal should be finalised on a fast track basis. Again, shame on this Government, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: And these same people would point their finger at us. They have no right to do so. They are the culprits and the population is waiting to show them the exit door, Mr Deputy

Speaker, Sir. How come this Government is claiming to foster good governance which implies transparency, fairness and justice for all! When we have seen that the Betamax contract has been drafted in such a way that no information can be divulged or shared to the population. The contract is bound by confidentiality clause. Is this what we call transparency and good governance, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

On another score, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is unfortunate and shocking that today at a time when we are talking of global economic crisis where our export sectors are expected to face difficult situations ahead, our ICT sector which has become a major pillar of our economy, has been completely ignored in this Budget. Let us forget about measures to accelerate the expansion of the ICT. There is not even a contingency plan to preserve what has been achieved by this sector up to now. *Franchement, M. le président, je ne sais pas où le ministre avait mis sa tête lors de la préparation du Budget.*

(Interruptions)

Non, peut-être il était plongé dans les souvenirs de ses frasques à Mont Blanc!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is an illegitimate one. I repeat, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Government is an illegitimate one. *L'Alliance de l'Avenir* does not exist anymore.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Faugoo rightly said it in his intervention, when he stated that it was called *Alliance de l'Avenir*. So, it does not exist anymore. *L'Alliance de l'Avenir* does not exist anymore because *l'Avenir* is on this side, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. At a certain...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, you address the Chair.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: *Si to ti koné ki Ah Fat ti coze are moi ; si mo mette sa la, zotte tout sauver.*

The Deputy Speaker: Please, you address the Chair!

(Interruptions)

Order! Order! Hon. Assirvaden, please!

Mr Gungah: At a certain point in time...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: No. You will have the opportunity to talk later on and you'll make your point.

(Interruptions)

Mr Gungah: At a certain...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

(Interruptions)

Address me, please.

Mr Gungah: At a certain point in time, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, when there was tension within the Government, I remember very well, the Prime Minister had said that in case of *cassure* he would go for general elections. But, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, what did we see after that *cassure*? All types of canvassing had been going on, with indecent proposals. *Des propositions alléchantes...*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Gungah: ...avaient été faites à plusieurs membres du MSM, et cela fait honte à la politique. Et, aujourd'hui, le gouvernement ne tient qu'à un brin de fil avec le soutien de deux transfuges.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Gungah: Shame on them *pour la trahison dont ils sont coupables!* Shame on them!
Mais, en même temps...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member has got the right to make his speech. If you have any point to make, you will have the opportunity of doing so. Please!

Mr Gungah: Mais, en même temps, quand je regarde en direction de nos anciens collègues, j'éprouve de la pitié. Ils sont comme des orphelins politiques ; personne ne s'approche d'eux. M. le président, ils ne comptent qu'un numéro dans l'arithmétique de la majorité gouvernementale. M. le président, ce gouvernement est fragile.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: Le Budget présenté par le ministre des Finances le fragilise davantage. Des voix dissidentes se lèvent au sein même de la majorité gouvernementale. Je sais de quoi je parle. Ce budget, loin de souder le gouvernement, va le déchirer en lambeaux. Les travaillistes authentiques, l'électorat traditionnel du Parti travailliste, l'intelligentsia du Parti travailliste rejette ce budget. C'est pourquoi le Premier ministre a si mauvaise mine. Il sait que le peuple est contre ce gouvernement ; il sait que les jours de son gouvernement sont comptés.

Je vais conclure, M. le président ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Mr Gungah: ... en demandant au Premier ministre, s'il croit vraiment qu'il est aussi fort comme il le clame, qu'il dissout le parlement et qu'il retourne le pouvoir au peuple. La démocratie l'exige, le peuple l'exige.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: Le budget 2012 enfonce le clou dans le cercueil du régime Parti travailliste/PMSD.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Gungah: Vivement un leadership fort et une équipe avant-gardiste à la tête du pays !

Merci pour votre attention, M. le président !

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Yes, hon. Moutia!

(10.33 p.m.)

The Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms (Mr S. Moutia): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not going to take much of your time and the time of the House. It is a bit late. Nevertheless, ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, order!

Mr Moutia: ... listening to hon. Gungah, I am tempted to rebut him, but I am going to do so during the course of my intervention because he spoke about the Civil Service College as if here, on this side of the House, we are the dictators when we are asking to open some cash offices on Saturdays. He also talked on other topics.

Nevertheless, the tone and the content of his speech do not surprise me, because it all depends where you sit, and the contents depend on where you are. Last year, he was the Minister of Civil Service Affairs and was on this side of the House. I was sitting there, and I still remember his speech - I have his speech from the Hansard. What he said then and what he said tonight on the other side of the House is very eloquent.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quote my hon. friend who comes from the same village -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, before the presentation of the Budget many *oiseaux de mauvais augure* were flying all over the country, praying for failure. *Sans la peur au ventre, les tripes bien solides, le Grand Argentier a démontré qu’il peut faire mieux.* He had consultations with all stakeholders before putting himself to task. Et le résultat de son travail, on l’a vu le vendredi 19 novembre. *La population, dans sa grande majorité, a été agréablement surprise par la présentation de ce Feel Good Budget.* »

“We all recognise that he has done an excellent job.”

He was talking about the former Minister of Finance.

“The Prime Minister, immediately after the Budget Speech, gave a press conference *où il a salué les mesures énoncées.*

L’opposition MMM a été abattue par les multiples tirs foudroyants qu’a effectués le Grand Argentier, et ces tirs l’ont atteint en plein cœur.”

This is what my hon. friend said last year, when he was here as Minister of Civil Service. And he goes further, because this is what I remembered last time and that’s why I asked for a copy of this Hansard.

“I am surprised, Mr Speaker, Sir, that they are still opposing this pro-people Budget.”

And he says -

“This reminds me of a very nice story with great moral in Panchatantra. It’s about a scorpion and a tortoise. They were both on one side of a river. And they had to go on the other side. The river was very deep. At the time the tortoise was going to jump, the scorpion told him -

‘E bhai - zara dek ke chalo - e bhai, bring me along with you.’

The tortoise replied ‘Are you mad? You have got poisonous stings.’”

(Interruptions)

When you were talking, I listened to you.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, continue!

Mr Moutia: This is not what I said. It was said by the hon. Member.

“‘You have got poisonous stings and you will bite me.’ Then the scorpion said ‘My brother, how can I do that? Both of us will then die and, as I don’t know swimming, I will get drowned.’ Then the tortoise, believing in the words of the scorpion, asked him to climb on his back near the head. When the tortoise reached the middle of the river, the scorpion bit him. And the tortoise said ‘I told you that you are going to bite me.’ Do you know what the scorpion answered ‘This is my character, and I can’t change.’ This is how this present Opposition behaves in this country.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where are the scorpions today?

(Interruptions)

I can quote lengthily, but I don’t want to go that level.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Moutia: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would prefer, as I said, to reply to him when I will speak on the Civil Service College and the offices that have to be opened on Saturdays.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order, please! Order!

Mr Moutia: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I should, first of all, express my appreciation to the hon. vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for the presentation of the 2012 Budget, a plan of action that should be implemented within the set time frame. He has produced a document with a comprehensive package of provisions for all segments of the population against the backdrop of economic crisis across Europe and the USA. Such a brilliant

piece of work would not have been possible without the able guidance of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam -

«Pour son premier Budget, le vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances et du Développement économique a vraiment frappé fort. Il a fait des jaloux sur les bancs de l'opposition. Je crois qu'ils ont vu des étoiles qu'ils ont pris pour des confettis.»

I have no problem meeting the people – we meet people everyday – at grassroots level neither in my constituency nor anywhere else after the presentation of the Budget. The population is satisfied with the provisions in the Budget. The population knows very well that we are leaving no stone unturned and giving results. We are ensuring that the economy remains resilient although our markets lie in Europe and the USA which are faced with serious economic problems.

The population is literate and has extensive exposure on the plight of many European countries. Our people know what is happening in Greece, Italy, Spain, Ireland, France and the USA. The recent international financial crisis is still fresh in our mind as well as the Euro-Zone crisis. The people are aware that countries in Europe have completely crashed, banks have been bailed out by governments and the workers at France Telecom have experienced a traumatic situation. People are being laid off in many developed countries. Multinationals and even the public sector in UK and France are being downsized.

Against such a backdrop, this Government has presented a Budget consolidating the basis for Growth for the greater good. Still, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Members on the other side fail to understand the ingeniousness required to strike the line of best fit between measures to sustain growth, as well as providing additional protection for the vulnerable. Small entrepreneurs, small planters, fishermen, people involved in agri-business, men and women who take initiatives are not being scared away. Both the formal and the informal sectors have been taken on board in this Budget.

This team saved the country from its state of *état d'urgence économique* and transformed it into a resilient economy. The Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam has successfully-

- led the country through necessary wholesale change towards a new paradigm, embracing timely and bold reforms;

- transformed challenges into opportunities, and
- introduced a facilitation framework to support SMEs all the way, broadening the circle of opportunities.

It is this team headed, by the hon. Prime Minister Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam that trusted the capacity of the people to spring back and we created wealth. It is this team that widened the circle of opportunities. It is this very team that succeeded in setting the stage for robust growth and diversified the economic pillars. We instilled confidence in the people. The people got the message *cinq sur cinq* and we reversed trends with regard to FDI, unemployment, growth rate, just to name a few. We introduced the boldest of reforms in the public sector with the PBB and PMS.

All these were achieved amidst an unprecedented scale of uncertainties in countries across Europe and the USA. We did also stand the challenges of the triple shocks affecting our textile exports, oil imports and fall in sugar price with the dismantling of preferential regimes in the early stage of our journey to *redresse l'économie*.

Moreover –

- when food prices soar in the global market;
- when the world encountered the severe global food crunch;
- when the world economy slumped;
- when USA and Europe resorted to large scale downsizing, and
- when many economies in the developed world were brought to their knees, we resisted brilliantly as we became resilient because we had effectively managed the affairs of the country.

We travelled the road together with the people under the leadership of the hon. Prime Minister. We have worked hard and took many bold decisions. In fact, all the bold measures have been recognised in different quarters in the global village. Mauritius has emerged as a trend setter in the region. A small island of the size of a full-stop in the Atlas used by children in Mauritius and an unnamed island or rather a dot in the ocean in the map used by children in the Eastern Europe and many other countries, we have succeeded in rising to world fame -

- we rank first in Africa in the Mo Ibrahim Index of good governance;
- we are first in Africa in the Ease of Doing Business Index of the World Economic Forum for the past four years;
- we are 23rd in the world in the same index;
- in the Forbes Index of Best Countries For Business we hold a very interesting position, 19th among 134 countries, very much ahead of Germany.

Commenting on Mauritius, Forbes had advanced that, I quote –

“Mauritius’ sound economic policies and prudent banking practices helped to mitigate negative effects from the global financial crisis in 2008-2009”.

The same report makes mention of our growth rate to have been in the order of 5-6% over the years and this remarkable achievement has been reflected in more equitable income distribution.

We have blazed a new trail of successful development. We have earned respect throughout the world for the way we managed to withstand all external shocks. We have earned fame for our model of development. We are taken as example by many leaders of the world. We have created wealth as a result of the bold measures we have introduced since 2005. And, we have effectively redistributed the wealth among the population.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,-

- Rs87 m. for pre-registration for training of 373 doctors;
- Rs48 m. for 8,000 unemployed youths;
- Rs12.5 m. for outstanding sportsmen and sportswomen;
- Rs907 m. as Social Assistance;
- Rs150 m. for exam fees;
- Rs200 per housing unit for 6,150 families, and

- allowing poorer families to obtain a house costing Rs900,000 at one third of its market price, that is Rs300,000.

We are providing all these over and above the free bus transport costing nearly Rs1 billion next year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such a type of Welfare State does not exist in the club of developing nations in our region. We can proudly say that even the developed nations do not go that far in welfare provisions. The best part of it is that we are able to do all these efforts despite the fact that we do not have coal or gold mines, we do not have fossil fuel and we do not have large expanse of agricultural land. We are doing all these without holding any technology developed in Mauritius. We support our development with the help of technology imported at very high cost.

I believe our friends on the other side should call a spade a spade. These measures and many others, there is no problem however you call them, are clear indicators that this Government has a heart. We are working with our heart in the best interest of the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, wealth redistribution, protection of the most vulnerable including the poor children, women, senior citizens and physically challenged persons have always been priority concerns for Government led by the Mauritius Labour Party. We have introduced and still maintain subsidy on rice. Somebody was saying that the subsidy on rice has increased from 150,000 tonnes to, I think, it has doubled. So, we can understand here that we have maintained subsidy on rice because the quality of the ration rice is of very good quality. We provide subsidy on cooking gas. We have been providing social housing. We introduced the Casting of Slab Grant Scheme, the grant to persons inoperable in Mauritius, basic and contributory pensions; we doubled the rate of pension of the elderly, just to name a few. What did the hon. Member on the other side do upon assuming the function as hon. Minister of Finance in 2003? He wanted to undo all our good work. He traumatised our senior citizens with the most unpopular policy in this country with a tradition of *un état providence*. He started means testing and the Basic Retirement Pension, showing a profound sense of ingratitude towards our senior citizens. And he did it at a time when there was neither a national nor international financial crisis. We all know what happened after that!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have further consolidated welfare. We pledged that we would protect the people, especially the most vulnerable in our country. We have done it and we are providing a series of opportunities in this Budget. We said that we would put people first; our actions speak for themselves. Allow me to list only a few of them -

- 150% increase in the allowance for cases inoperable in Mauritius;
- support for access to pre-primary education to another 16,000 children;
- social housing schemes to low income groups;
- free bus transport to students, senior citizens and the disabled;
- enhancing the employability of the youth;
- integrating women in all spheres of development;
- preserving jobs when workers in developed countries were being massively laid off;
- providing support to SMEs, small planters, fishermen, and people involved in agri-business, and
- creating recreational space for senior citizens.

All these measures are undeniable facts. We were committed to walk with the people. I heard hon. Gungah say we never walk with the people. But all these measures show very clearly that we were committed to walk with the people, we have done it all the way and we are continuing to do so.

Unfortunately, some people pretend to be blind because they do not want to see. We should thank God that such people have gone back to the other side where they deserve to be. How can we progress in our economic march amidst all uncertainties and adversities of the global economic landscape when you have people with you, who are unable to understand the mission, vision and fail to understand priorities? Not only do they fail in their understanding, they confuse national priorities with the agenda for a few. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, they did not realise that the people elects a Government to do business for the country and not for a family. And the profits from the proceeds should go to the people. This is, in fact, what we are doing in this strong team under the effective leadership of the hon. Prime Minister.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the other day, it was good to listen to a sensible comment from hon. Mrs Labelle, with regard to the provision for the Syndic for NHDC housing estates. I should appreciate that a few on the other side have started to realise that there is no point in criticising provisions that are basically in the interest of the poorer segment of the population. The people who have trusted them so far may turn their back on them, if they continue to criticise the good we are doing for them. The Opposition's duty is to criticise. Nobody denies the fact. However, they are criticising just for the sake of criticising.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Moutia: This amounts to pure demagoguery. Unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we remain helpless as this Opposition is doing just that.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are sensible on this side. We welcome positive criticisms from the other side. It would be a fair game. We do not need *une opposition loyale*. But they should be sensible to admit that we are doing what they wished, but could not realise. We should not forget that we have on the other side two hon. Members who had great opportunity to do something remarkable for those in need. One was Minister of Finance and later assumed the position of Prime Minister for two years. The other one succeeded as Minister of Finance. They are dismayed that we are succeeding where they failed.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are creating capital gains for everybody, not for a few. This Budget ensures that gains from all our initiatives cascade down to the people. It is unfortunate that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has named the redistribution of the capital gains as *des mesures confettis*. We are happy that we are giving *confettis* by increasing the grant for persons inoperable in Mauritius by Rs300,000. And I would insist upon our friend, hon. Xavier Duval, to come up with many more such *confettis* in his next year's Budget Speech as well.

Families in the country are able to see and understand the pertinence of these measures in the Budget. Even the business community feels that the Budget 2012 is a good instrument of socio-economic development and in most of the public statements from the private sector, we sense a spirit of solidarity and social responsibility. Even workers' representatives have expressed their satisfaction with the provisions in the Budget. Their positive statements tend to reveal a form of increased maturity. Of course, some of the provisions on which we may have diverging views can be resolved around a table.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are investing in the people. We are providing facilities today to ensure that the country would have a competent labour force tomorrow. We will need healthy, educated, qualified, trained and competent human resource to ensure supply of labour for the economy for the next decades. As a responsible Government, we are sustaining families through the provision of -

- pre-natal care, post natal follow-up, crèches facilities for working women;
- support for pre-primary education, child-minding services, summer schools, enhancement programme, free education, school health programme, school support programme and refund of exam fees for the needy and free bus transport;
- pre-job training with stipend of Rs6,000 per month;
- tax exemption in case the child who has grown up and undertakes any economic activity but does not earn more than Rs240,000 per year;
- and, when that person grows old, we will give pension in recognition of his/her contribution to the economy, and we have constructed recreational centres as in Pointe aux Sables and Belle Mare for his/her leisure. And there will be more of such centres, and
- in between the life's journey of the typical Mauritian, if he/she proves to possess outstanding talents in sports, arts and/or education, the country will open other avenues to support him/her. This is not the complete course of provisions that Government provides.

Are all these measures *confettis* measures? Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I believe that hon. Members have made sensible effort trying hard to convince themselves that this is not a good Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have skipped many other things to save the time of this House. The majority of the population understands that this Government is going out of its way, walking many additional miles, especially when the situation is not good in countries representing the core of our export market. I am convinced that the majority of families do have a strong sense of gratitude and would not pay heed to the moods of the hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, our *peuple admirable* deserves a serious Opposition with the capacity to understand that this Government is doing its best to increase the size of the national cake, so that each and every citizen gets a fair share of that bigger cake.

I would advise our friends on the other side to reflect on what Stiglitz, Nobel Prize winner in Economics had said about the Mauritian economy. In case they are not convinced, I would refer them to the statement made by Mrs Hilary Clinton, US Secretary of States. They might, perhaps, refer to the reports and rankings of the World Economic Forum and Forbes. Once they have gone through all these, they should understand that they should -

- stop their litany overloaded with superlatives;
- let this team work, and
- let the country proceed on its developmental march.

While they would be counting *les années-lumière qui les séparent toujours*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not least surprised that the younger generations should know how the very same Opposition criticised the introduction of free education for secondary and tertiary levels as from January 1977. Had Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Chacha Ramgoolam, the father of the Nation listened to that Opposition and abolished free education, the whole story would have been different. We would have been a poor nation instead of a nation having a few pockets of poverty for which this Government and this very same Prime Minister has, in all his wisdom, created a special Ministry. We all know that it is the same hon. Xavier Duval who preceded our good friend, hon. Dayal, in that Ministry before the fate of the country changed for the better and we were relieved of a burdensome partner in the course of this year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, greatness of great statesmen are most of the time valued in the right dimension only after many years or when they have departed from power or from the world. Those who have the chance to take over the destiny of the country later should recognise the landmarks made in the social and political history of the country by such statesmen.

Since the time Mahatma Gandhi blessed this country with his presence on its soil for a few days at the dawn of the last century, we have had the benefits of guidance from Manilall Doctor, and then the Arya Samaj Movement has made immense contribution to sensitise people on the merits of educating children. Fortunately, the people came to value education as an avenue *par excellence* to drive the country out of underdevelopment and poverty. And, since then, Mauritius set on a long march that led to independence and social mobility of the working class.

When Chacha Ramgoolam took hold of the destiny of this country, in all his wisdom, he placed the future of this country on the foundation of a system of comprehensive welfare provisions. Today, the nation, and generations to come, should appreciate the vision he had when he gifted a free education system to the population of this country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would we be where we are on the world map if education was not given free to the poor families? In those days, the working class had an average of 8 to 10 children and they could not afford Rs15 to Rs20 to pay secondary schools. Moreover, families could not afford to send all the children to school. In those days, when I was at College, we had to pay Rs15 to Rs20 and it was very difficult to pay those Rs15 to Rs20 in those days, and in the very morning you were sent back home because parents could not pay the Rs15 to Rs20.

What would have happened if Chacha Ramgoolam would have not given free education in those days? If our population were not literate, how would the hospitality sector make such developmental leaps?

Without an educated labour force, would the second phase of industrialisation meet with the success that we all know? Could we have competed on the globalised playing field for business space in ICT and business process outsourcing sectors?

Could our youth embark on the Circular Migration initiatives of Government if they had not had the access to free education?

Many more such questions can be raised, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the Labour Party and the PMSD have been in Government for many years. On this side, we have a culture to govern. There, on the other side, Members have spent most of their active political career either in the Opposition or outside Parliament. They kept on trying to convince themselves that there should have been something wrong in what Chacha Ramgoolam did all the way. And, today, they are trying to convince themselves that this Prime Minister and his Minister of Finance should have taken wrong decisions in the context of the Budget. But I would tell them that this Budget is setting the foundation of a society wherein the most vulnerable would feel that they are being included in the development wagon.

This Budget is setting the basis of a more inclusive society and we are doing what others could not do. The outcome of our actions in this area will be generated in the next 10 to 15 years. Children benefiting from all the measures for an inclusive society should succeed in coming out of the poverty trap and there will be social mobility for them as well.

Mr Deputy Sir, let me now come to those issues falling under my Ministerial portfolio.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service operates within an increasingly dynamic, complex and demanding environment. It needs to remain alive to new challenges with regard to management of human capital and development of organisations. The organisational landscape of the Civil Service has to undergo continuous transformation. It will have to better respond to the needs and aspirations of its stakeholders and the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the 2012 Budget contains a series of reform measures aimed at further consolidating our progress. We are striving to embed efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services. In fact, several key sectors are concerned namely -

- Food security;
- Water and Waste Water;
- SMEs;
- Tourism;
- Fisheries;
- Air access, and
- Sustainable Development (MID).

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the amendment to the Public Procurement Act will, indeed, help to secure efficiency gains and reduce unnecessary costs through bulk purchasing. Experience has shown that there have been considerable delays in implementing projects. The proposed amendments would certainly streamline processes and procedures of procurement which would accelerate implementation of projects. Furthermore, my Ministry is supporting sustainable consumption in the Civil Service and this element is prominent in the Code of Ethics. It is also a criterion for assessing the Public Service Excellence Award.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in this very complex and dynamic environment, it is crucial that we provide the right information and services to stakeholders as well as members of the public. The opening of some Government offices - just to reply to my friend who is not here - on Saturdays will indeed help many of our customers and stakeholders to gain time in finalising important issues, especially as many of them cannot access such services during week-days

because of their professional and occupational obligations. In fact, if we would like to distribute more wealth to the people, we should produce that wealth in the first instance. The Civil Service has an undeniable role to play as facilitator and provider of public goods and services. The Civil Service cannot afford to play silent and not participate in the whole process -

- when our youths are taken up in private tuitions;
- when young men and women are ending their day's work after 5.00 p.m.;
- when a critical mass of our active population cannot afford to absent themselves or forgo their productivity bonus to call at a Cashier's Office or to make an application for grant under the Casting of Slab Grant Scheme;
- when the neediest segment of the population is not IT-enabled to shift to e-transactions, and
- when the country is moving to a 24/7 schedule.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government created the Citizens Advice Bureaux to take services to them. *La vocation des CAB est d'offrir un service de proximité.* Perhaps, we need to revisit the way we operate the CAB and other services that have been set up to provide such services. The service needs to be operational at a time when the target population is available to take advantage of the services. We do all love our country and we trust the wisdom and willingness of our people to face emerging challenges. It is true and it is bound to disrupt the routine and the comfort zone of some. But, who does not resent changes? It is human nature. However, as a responsible society and as responsible citizens, we must all, together, find the right modalities to provide what a modern society demands for its prosperity.

Who does not know that our own citizens work very hard in the countries where they choose to emigrate? In those countries, our people who are famous for their *débrouillardise*, do often work on shift systems, odd hours, overtime, and flexible schedules. We would need to think differently. Change is the only constant. Challenges have the potential of driving us away from our comfort zones. However, we need to face the challenges and create new comfort zones amidst a changed landscape. Otherwise, we perish, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, obviously this Government is committed to put people first and civil servants will not be left behind. Implementation of any new measure may concern a few sectors, which in view of the new economic agenda, will also be considered as essential. Such issues will be determined in consultation with all the stakeholders concerned, including trade unions.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am more than confident that such an arrangement will help a lot in accelerating the pace of development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Civil Service has, since the recent years, achieved significant progress through the different reforms initiatives. Those initiatives, *inter alia*, cover the following -

- Computerisation and modernisation;
- Greater emphasis on Human Resource Development;
- Better Terms and Conditions of Service for public officers;
- Implementation of quality initiatives (ISO, Excellence Awards);and
- Enhancement of work environment, and more.

Our vision is to make of the Civil Service “a professional public service committed to excellence”. Yes, we want to instil a culture of excellence by being both a driver and facilitator of change, while ensuring the creation of a conducive work environment to inspire and improve the morale of public officers in general.

Efforts need, however, to be sustained towards improving the overall capacity of the Civil Service to make it responsive to emerging needs and effectively support the development agenda of the country.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am pleased to note that the 2012 Budget has provisions for several initiatives to propel the Civil Service to a higher standard. In order not to take the time of the House, I will not go into details which are already published in the PBB of my Ministry. I will rather focus on some major ones.

Effective and continuous development of the workforce at all levels, irrespective of grades, plays a pivotal role in the improvement of competitiveness and equity. We all know that if we want to have a productive workforce, we have to ensure that we are helping the employees to remain skilled and competent.

Moreover, all reform initiatives must be accompanied by a proper training programme. Top managers, middle managers, supervisors and employees in general must all be trained to enable them to implement change and be part of the change process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in line with the Government Programme 2010-2015, Government has decided to go ahead with the setting up of a Civil Service College in Mauritius to help the public service to continually re-engineer itself so as to respond effectively to new priorities and challenges and provide high quality and timely services.

This institution will start operations hopefully before mid-2012. We would start up modestly and as the institution gathers momentum, we will work to expand its activities. In the longer term, when it becomes a full-fledged training institution, it will cater for the training needs of the wider public sector covering the parastatal and local authorities with training offered to every single grade in the public service.

Side by side, we are seeking technical assistance and expertise from the Commonwealth Secretariat and friendly countries like India, Australia and France which already have a long experience in training and development for the Civil service. We are hopeful that in the months to come, we would get necessary assistance to put the Civil Service College on a sound footing and I will see to it personally that early next year, the Director and the Trainers are recruited.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Government is committed to create the necessary conditions towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the Civil Service through, *inter alia*, the adoption of the appropriate technology in the day-to-day management of business.

A Central Personnel System (CPS), which was developed for the civil service in early 2000, is no longer responding to the needs of the modern civil service. With the new orientation towards a performance-based and results-oriented public service, Human Resource Management in the public service needs to be approached in a more strategic fashion in order to bring added

value to the organisation. This, however, depends on a timely availability of reliable and up-to-date information.

Thus, in addition to a review and streamlining of the existing procedures for the prescription of schemes of service, the development of a new integrated Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) in 2012 will be implemented. These two measures would be instrumental in ensuring an efficient and effective management of resources and will contribute significantly to reduce delays in recruitment. The proposed HRMIS will also modernise Human Resource Management in the Civil Service. It will include the required linkages and functionality to support processes that relate all direct stakeholders such as the Treasury Department; Central Information Systems Division and other Ministries/ Departments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the proposed system will be piloted in my Ministry in 2012 and will be replicated in other Ministries/Departments as from 2013.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, policy thinking in the Civil Service plays a vital part in ensuring of Government action. The Civil Service's involvement is equally essential in delivering agreed programmes. Experience has shown that the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms is short of adequate in-house technical support to ensure strategic planning and coordinating implementation of reforms initiatives across the Civil Service.

Provision for the establishment of a Reforms and Strategic Planning Division, with suitably qualified staff, has accordingly been made. The Division will provide support to the Ministry in the attainment of its overall objectives to respond to global and national challenges. It will, *inter-alia*, be responsible to address issues pertaining to manpower planning and coordinate the implementation of reforms initiatives across the service.

In addition, the people management agenda will have a higher profile in public sector management. HR units and officers will be called upon to place more emphasis on strategic issues, including change management and organisational development. Leadership development will also have a higher priority. Government is professionalising the function through raising its professional capability by appropriate training and identifying the behaviours that are critical to performance.

We are supporting the HR practitioners and will further help them to build a capability framework that takes full account of both current and future needs. The future Civil Service College will have a critical role to play in this process.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with a view to making work places safer and healthier, a Work Environment Enhancement Programme was introduced in 2011. This met with a resounding success with a total of 177 projects submitted by Ministries and Departments approved for implementation. 74 of these projects have already been implemented. In view of the success achieved, a sum of Rs30 m. has been provided to continue the good job embarked upon aimed at enhancing health and safety aspects of the work environment throughout the public service.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to announce that a Help Desk for public officers is being established in my Ministry as from early 2012 with a view to providing guidance and necessary assistance to public officers on specific issues affecting their conditions of service. This will ultimately lead to faster solving of problems faced by public officers and will accordingly help in improving their morale. Once this desk is established in my Ministry, we shall support its replication in all government organisations.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, before ending my intervention, I believe I should justifiably be proud and thank the vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for enabling the Civil Service to recruit additional human resources, in spite of the difficult economic context. This confirms the trust being put by Government in the Civil Service to achieve its overall aims and objectives.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with these remarks, I would like to again congratulate my colleague the hon. vice - Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development for this new Budget presented under the illuminated guidance of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

I thank you for your attention, Sir.

Mr Yeung Sik Yuen: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Mr Choonee rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for the adjournment of the House to Tuesday 15 November 2011 at 11.30 a.m.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

At 11.22 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Tuesday 15 November 2011 at 11.30 a.m.