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REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

**PARLIAMENTARY
DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

**FIRST SESSION
THURSDAY 17 NOVEMBER 2011**

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

FIRST SESSION

Debate No. 28 of 2011

Sitting of Thursday 17 November 2011

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 11.30 a.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

LIPOSUCTION SURGERY

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Health and Quality of Life whether, in regard to liposuction surgery, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain information as to the -
 - (i) number of cases thereof carried out, since 2005 to-date, on a yearly basis;
 - (ii) names of the medical practitioners qualified for the practice thereof;
 - (iii) names of the medical institutions where same were carried out, and
 - (iv) number of cases of death and complications reported following the carrying out thereof, indicating, in each case, the name of the medical -
 - (i) practitioner who practised same, and
 - (ii) institution where same was carried out, and
- (b) state the outcome of the inquiry into the death of Mrs M. N. V. at the Queen Victoria Hospital on 29 October 2010 after having undergone same at the *Clinique du Nord*.

The Minister of Health and Quality of Life (Mr L. Bundhoo): Mr Speaker, Sir, liposuction is a cosmetic surgery operation which removes excess fat from different parts on the human body. Areas usually affected are the abdomen, thighs, buttock and the neck, backs of the arms.

Several factors limit the amount of fat that can be safely removed in one session. Ultimately, it is the surgeon in consultation with the patient who makes the decision. There are negative aspects to removing too much fat. Unusual lumpiness in the skin can be seen in those patients over-suctioned. The more fat removed, the higher the surgical risk which I am being

told. The safety of the technique relates not only to the amount of tissues removed and the patient's overall health.

Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning part (a) (i) and (iii) of the question, I have to state that liposuction surgery is not carried out in Government hospitals. As regards, private clinics, I am informed that as from 2005 to date the number of liposuction surgeries carried out is as follows -

Clinic	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Remarks
Clinique du Nord	Nil	Nil	9	5	6	3	Nil	
Centre de Chirurgie de l'Océan Indien	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	24	
La Clinique Mauricienne	1	6	Nil	Nil	1	Nil	Nil	
Apollo Bramwell Hospital	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	15	5	

Regarding part (a) (ii) of the question, I am advised that a specialist with a Post Graduate qualification in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery has the professional competence to perform liposuction surgery. In Mauritius, at present, according to information gathered, the following four medical practitioners performing liposuction are mainly -

- (i) Dr. R. Gunessee, Clinique du Nord
- (ii) Dr. G. Crepet, Apollo and Fortis Darne
- (iii) Dr. P. Delarue, Darner and Centre de Chirurgie Esthetique
- (iv) Dr. T. Ayer, Apollo Bramwell

According to the Medical Council, all of the four medical practitioners mentioned have the professional competence to perform liposuction surgery.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards part (a) (iv) of the question, I am informed that, from 2005 to date, two (2) cases of complications leading to death from liposuction surgery have been reported to my Ministry. These are as follows -

FIRST CASE

In November 2006, a lady aged 22 years was first examined on 18 November 2006 by one of the four medical practitioners I have referred to earlier and who is a Consultant in Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at the Clinique du Nord, Baie du Tombeau for obesity and eventual liposuction. A few days later, that is, on Sunday 26 November 2006, early in the morning, the patient was admitted to the same Clinic. According to case sheets, the patient was fully explained about the procedures and risks of liposuction by both the Consultant and an Anaesthetist at the Clinic. In fact, the liposuction was carried out on Sunday 26 November 2006.

Following the surgery, the patient was fully conscious and was sent to the ward I am being told. However, at around 1300 hours, patient was restless and was sedated. This unfamiliar postoperative situation became a major cause of concern among the treating doctors. I am further informed that a Neurophysician also attended to the patient.

The treating doctors decided to inform her parents as the critical situation of the patient required intensive care treatment. On the same day, 26 November 2006, at around 1800 hours, the patient was transferred from Clinique du Nord to the Intensive Care Unit at Victoria Hospital for postoperative observation.

The patient stayed at the ICU of Victoria Hospital from 26 November 2006 to 15 February 2007, when she collapsed and passed away at 1950 hours. The cause of death, as mentioned on the death certificate, was septicaemia (Infection).

SECOND CASE

A second case concerns a lady aged 41 years who was admitted in Clinique du Nord on 22 October 2010 for the surgery of liposuction. Prior to this, the patient was assessed by a qualified surgeon on 16 October 2010. She was found fit for surgery, I am being told. She underwent liposuction under general anaesthesia on 22 October 2010 in the afternoon. Surgery went without any complications and she made a postoperative recovery.

She was assessed everyday by the treating surgeon. According to her treating doctors, she did not have any other complaint except for mild abdominal pain.

She was medically reported as tolerating oral feeds well. Vital signs were also medically reported to be normal.

On 25 October 2010, in the evening, the patient started complaining of abdominal pain. She was assessed again by a team of doctors including the treating doctors. Ultra sonography was performed and revealed collection of fluid on the anterior abdominal wall around the umbilicus. No intraperitoneal abnormality was detected. CT scan was performed and the report suggested a perforated viscus.

A diagnosis of Peritonitis was made and decision was taken by the treating doctors to transfer patient to a major hospital. The patient opted for Victoria Hospital.

The patient was subsequently transferred to Victoria Hospital on 20 October 2010 around midnight. At Victoria Hospital she was assessed by a surgical specialist and a clinical diagnosis

of Peritonitis was confirmed. An urgent laparotomy (exploration of the abdomen) was performed under general anaesthesia.

The findings at laparotomy were as follows -

- (i) faecal matter in the peritoneal cavity,
- (ii) two perforations 2 cms apart in the small intestine.

The perforations were closed by suturing, abdominal lavage was done and the abdomen closed.

As her condition was serious she was transferred to ICU and put under ventilator.

The anaesthetist saw the patient on 26 October 2010 and decided to keep her on ventilation. On 27 October 2010, the condition of the patient was still poor and did not allow weaning off the ventilator.

On 29 October 2010, at around 1.15 a.m., the patient had a cardiac arrest. Despite resuscitative measures, she could not be revived and she was declared dead unfortunately at 1.30 a.m. The cause of death was certified by the Chief Police Medical Officer as septicemia.

Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding part (b) of the question, my Ministry conducted a preliminary inquiry, on 12 November 2010, to look into the death of Mrs M.N.V at Victoria Hospital on 29 October 2010 following complications arising from a liposuction surgery, which was performed on her at Clinique du Nord.

The enquiry was conducted by a panel of officers from my Ministry, chaired by an acting Director Health Services and comprising of two consultants in charge, of General Surgery and an acting Principal Assistant Secretary.

The panel concluded that the case was one of perforation of the small intestine which is likely to have been caused by an instrument used during the surgical procedure. The perforation eventually led to faecal peritonitis, septicemia and death of patient. The post-mortem report

concluded that the death was due to generalised septicemia. The panel subsequently recommended that the case be referred to the Medical Council of Mauritius for an in-depth enquiry.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Director General Health Services of the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life fully supported the recommendation of the Enquiry Committee to refer the case to the Medical Council. He further recommended that, on the same day, that is, 12 November 2010, pending determination of the case by the Council, the doctor concerned should be interdicted from performing the liposuction procedure on patients in either public or private health institutions.

I am surprised that the recommendation of the Director-General made on the 12 November 2010 for an in-depth inquiry by the Medical Council was not acted upon promptly and it is only on 25 February 2011 that the Supervising Officer took it upon himself and discussed with those concerned to refer the case to the Medical Council.

I am informed, Mr Speaker, Sir, after several complications with regard to this case, that the enquiry is still ongoing by the Medical Council.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I think I heard the hon. Minister say that, according to the Medical Council, four medical practitioners are qualified to perform liposuction surgery. Can I ask the hon. Minister if there are people at the Medical Council who are themselves qualified to certify who is qualified to perform liposuction surgery, if yes, what specialists, and if not, what are we going to do? Are we going to call in foreign specialists in that subject?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am pretty sure that the Medical Council must have the reasons and the grounds upon which they have allowed these four specific persons to conduct

this liposuction in Mauritius in the private clinics. As I said earlier, it is not allowed in the public clinics.

As to whether these four specialists mentioned are allowed to do this specific operation in the private clinics in Mauritius, I am sure the Medical Council must have checked all the certificates of these people before authorising them to do it.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know if, amongst those four declared to be qualified by the Medical Council, there are foreigners?

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, I am told there are foreigners, that is, Dr. G. Crepet, Dr. P. Delarue and Dr. T. Ayer, who operate at Apollo Bramwell, Fortis Darne, *Centre de Chirurgie Esthetique* and Dr. T. Ayer, again from Apollo Bramwell. They are French nationals.

Mr Bérenger: So, I take it that there is only one Mauritian doctor who has been performing those liposuction surgeries and who has, in the meantime, we have been informed, been interdicted. There are countries and States within the United States and so on where the law provides for what is legal and what is not legal, what is allowed and what is not allowed, in terms of liposuction surgery. Does our law, as it stands, sufficiently protect our nationals?

Mr Bundhoo: I must say one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. When I assumed office some two months ago the issue was raised in the paper. I conducted a meeting with doctors, Director Generals and Supervising Officers. I made the same request and I insisted that we review the law in Mauritius in order to make it in line with what is happening in other countries and especially with what is happening in Singapore and in Europe.

Mr Bérenger: Elsewhere the law also provides for what must be done and what questions must be asked before the liposuction surgery. For example, people with *diabète* are not allowed or are allowed after special conditions. People have to stop smoking months before the

surgery is practised. People have to be warned in all sorts of ways. Is that being done? Has the Medical Council seen to it that, especially in the case of that one Mauritian doctor, all this has been followed?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I did raise the same question early this morning. But, I am being told that it is a normal practice that the specialists have had a long conversation with the to-be patient and informed her of all the possibilities and all the complications that might arise afterwards. The issue remains whether this is being done on paper whereby the patient acknowledges having been informed of all the precautions, of all the possible consequences and whether a document is signed making the patient aware of the conversation he had with a doctor. I have asked for this information, I do not have it on me. I will check whether some kind of a check form is being done in all private medical clinics.

Mr Bérenger: As far as the private clinics are concerned, who exercises control, is it the Ministry or Medical Council, on the sums, sometimes very big sums of money, requested from the patients? What control is exercised on the marketing rules? People are literally fooled on the results that are likely to arise. Who keeps control over all this for the private clinics?

Mr Bundhoo: I guess it would be both the Medical Council and the departments of my Ministry whereby we have to caution people about this. In any case, prior to authorise a clinic to be able to do this operation, it must satisfy certain criteria as laid down by the Medical Council.

With regard to prices, we live in a free market, we have a certain control. I have myself, in the past, made an appeal not to out-price Mauritius if we intend to make of Mauritius a medical hub. I agree totally with the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Probably in the near future, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Finance, we will set up, at least, a maximum charge for people to be made aware that this is the maximum charge and then they could, in their own

deliberate judgment, take a decision on whether to go ahead or not, and to be aware of the cost of any operation at any clinic and have an idea of the comparative cost of a specific operation done by the different clinics.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Minister said that according to his information or rather, information that has reached his Ministry, two cases of death have happened after liposuction surgery. He is in the presence of that information. Am I right in saying that in both cases it is the same medical practitioner and the same private clinic involved?

Mr Bundhoo: Unfortunately, yes, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Bérenger: My information is that there have been more than two cases; at least, three cases involving that same medical practitioner. I tried to take notes and listen carefully at the Minister, at the same time, is there any reason why he has answered as far as deaths are concerned, but not as far as complications are concerned?

Mr Bundhoo: It is very simple because the hon. Leader of the Opposition, if I am not mistaken, has put the question with regard to death...

Mr Bérenger: Death and complications.

Mr Bundhoo: From information I have gathered there are only two deaths and the one that I have mentioned and from other complications, it was not reported to my Ministry and, furthermore, probably even the complication could have been reported to other Governmental institution. But, still, it was not referred in form of complaint to the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, and this is probably why we would not have a report. If the hon. Leader of the Opposition wants me to pursue that further, I am prepared to ask all the private clinics report for post operation, if there is any complication and to make up a list of the complications and have it tabled at the National Assembly.

Mr Bérenger: We have a number of medical practitioners here and I understand that they were nearly put to work last night, but we know that when you have the post mortem and so on, it is very difficult to link the final death to the liposuction surgery that took place.

Can I insist that as far as possible the Ministry should carry out an inquiry with a required specialist because my information is that there have been numerous complications in that same Clinique du Nord. There is one, which I am personally aware, where things went wrong again and the lady concerned has been going through several operations, to try and limit the damage caused by that medical practitioner on the occasion of a liposuction surgery.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, maybe the hon. Leader of the Opposition is right that there are other complications, but, as I said earlier, it was not reported to my Ministry. Firstly, I would kindly, one to one, request the hon. Leader of the Opposition if he could later on request the lady concerned to be in contact with my Ministry where we can do the needful.

Secondly, with regard to the clinic that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has mentioned, subsequently to the second death, instruction was given by the CMO and the DG, instructing the clinic, to stop performing liposuction henceforth. The instruction was given immediately after the death of the second person mentioned in this PNQ.

Mr Bérenger: Can I ask the hon. Minister if that medical practitioner concerned is abiding by the instructions because I understand that the letter was issued to the clinic and not to the medical practitioner. Did he go by that interdiction or is he performing liposuction surgery elsewhere?

Mr Bundhoo: From the record I've gone through, the letter went to both, that is, the clinic and the RHD where the consultant supposedly is doing this simultaneously; therefore, he

has been informed. I assume that he is not practising any liposuction now, unless I am being informed otherwise.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was a bit surprised when the hon. Minister insisted that the poor lady involved in the second deadly case opted for Victoria Hospital. On the basis of what evidence is the hon. Minister saying that? Is it the practice to allow somebody to opt for this or that hospital? I think we are all aware, especially where we have cases of *bavure médicale*, the medical practitioners have their *petits copains*, *grands copains* and so on in this or that hospital and they choose – sometimes something goes wrong in the north - to send to Victoria Hospital as in this case because they have their *allées et venues*, *leurs contacts* and so on. On the basis of what information did the hon. Minister say that it is the poor patient who opted for and, if she opted for, on the basis of what? Was she allowed to opt for, out of the blue, or was she provided with the information that moved her in that direction?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I raised the same question myself.

(Interruptions)

Let me tell you why I raised the same question myself. I have been appointed Minister only recently. The case was referred to my predecessor and they slept with the files for a few months until it was referred to the Medical Council. The first question that I've asked myself, if the case of the patient happened in Baie du Tombeau, in my view, the nearest two possible hospitals would be either Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam National Hospital or the Jeetoo Hospital. We do not have to discover America to understand. The consultant, who did it, is probably working in a specific place. He chose and advised and probably, the patient decided then that it is in his/her interest to go there with the belief and understanding that the consultant worked there during the day and he would be in a position to take care of the post operative difficulties.

Mr Bérenger: I beg to differ with the hon. Minister. He seems to put his complete faith in the Medical Council. I am not impressed at all by the performance of the Medical Council over the recent years, but then we have the Medical Council. Can I know whether any of these cases of death after liposuction surgery or complications - which the hon. Minister is not aware of - reached the Medical Council apart from the last case of death?

Mr Bundhoo: I must say something, Mr Speaker, Sir, only - I can't remember the date - in September, especially after the issue was raised in papers, I did call a meeting with the DG, the SO and a couple of other persons whereby I was informed of all the cases that are presently pending at the Medical Council. I also requested to intervene impartially with the Medical Council to make sure that they expedite matters with regard to all inquiries which are under suspension or which are ongoing.

Dr. Boolell: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether he could inform the House about the conditions in which the patient was transferred from as far as the North to the centre of the island, thereby increasing his chances of dying? What were the conditions? Was SAMU called upon to transfer the patient - because I want to know the relationship between private and public sector through Government facilities?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure that the inquiry by the Medical Council will look into this matter. When the findings will be brought in, I am sure they would tell us in what conditions the patient was transferred?

Dr. Boolell: May I also ask the hon. Minister whether his Ministry allows certain medical institutions to perform operations - and especially with the famous medical hub coming up - without the back up of an intensive care?

Mr Bundhoo: I am not exactly aware of what the hon. Member just said, but some of the medical clinics, with the operations that they do, I am sure they must have some form of back up. If they don't have it - that's why I said ...

(Interruptions)

Can I finish, please? This is why yesterday during the Budget Speech I said that we need to come up with a blueprint with regard to the medical hub in order to ensure that all the criteria are followed and adhered to as it should be.

Dr. Boolell: I fail to understand, Mr Speaker, Sir. Would the hon. Minister intervene with the Commissioner of Police, to request that a judicial inquiry be conducted on each of the two cases, which he has agreed so that, at a short notice, we shall know the reasons independently of the Medical Council? I agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that they might not have the qualifications to actually decide who was guilty; therefore we need to have a judicial inquiry urgently.

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, probably in one of its recommendations, the Medical Council referred the case for a judicial inquiry. Let us come to this part of the bridge and then, we will cross it.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister whether the preliminary inquiry, which was carried out on 12 November, was purely a preliminary one and not an in-depth one, whereby even the *Clinique du Nord* was not convened at the inquiry and that was why the inquiry was delayed. The Medical Council, itself, has written a letter - is the hon. Minister aware that the Medical Council ...

Mr Speaker: One question by one!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Is the hon. Minister aware that the Medical Council, itself, has written to the Ministry to say that it is the responsibility of the Ministry to carry out ...

Mr Speaker: No. Ask the hon. Minister the first question first!

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Can the hon. Minister say whether the first inquiry was only a very preliminary one where those concerned at the *Clinique du Nord* were not convened; even the parents of the patient were not convened.

Mr Bundhoo: The issue, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the Director- General, Dr. Gopee, made a recommendation on 12 November that an in-depth inquiry be carried out by the Medical Council. The clinic may have its own opinion. After all, it is the clinic that had conducted the operation where things went dramatically wrong. It is, therefore, their duty and I believe it was right for the Director-General, to request for an in-depth inquiry. The issue is: why has the request for an in-depth inquiry by the Medical Council taken so much time between 12 November to 23 February of the following year?

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, the two deaths that have occurred are two deaths too many, and we need to pre-empt any repetition. To take up from what the Leader of the Opposition said earlier, will the Minister take a formal commitment before the House to develop with foreign assistance and the Medical Council, if need be, an appropriate protocol, backed up by legal provisions, and to introduce same as a matter of urgency?

Mr Bundhoo: This is exactly what I said during my speech on the Budget, namely that we are going to work out a blue print to take on board all these things. With regard to what was said earlier, when I went through the file, I was shocked to see that some of the information requested was not sent to the Medical Council until such time that we had the issue raised in the press. When I assumed office, I asked the question and decided to make sure that all the

documents be sent to the Medical Council in order to enable them to do the job independently. The whole thing, Mr Speaker, Sir, was done wrongly until lately.

Mr Bhagwan: The Medical Council is an organisation that we can't trust. From what we have witnessed in this particular case and others, can the hon. Minister say whether it is not the time, at least, to do the necessary and come with legislation to amend the Medical Council?

Mr Bundhoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the hon. Member that, during the Budget Speech, the vice-Prime Minister did make reference about amending the Medical Council. Shortly, part of the Medical Council Act will be amended in order to address some of the issues. But I do agree with the House that we need to relook any law in this country and update it with what is happening in the country and overseas, especially within the medical field where things change every second and every minute.

Mr Bérenger: I am glad I heard, for once, that, after I raised the issue of liposuction surgery in the press, it was worked upon by the new Minister. I am glad to hear that. After today's debate, after more information has come in, we have the assurance from the Minister that there is going to be a thorough audit and a protocol adopted. In the meantime, we have a *devoir de précaution*. Will the hon. Minister see to it that this local medical practitioner who has been interdicted will remain interdicted until a full enquiry - even judicial - is carried out, and that the three foreigners - I have no report of any ill doing by the three foreigners - will be kept on a close watch as well? As I said, we have *un devoir de précaution*.

Mr Bundhoo: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, I can assure the Leader of the Opposition that the medical practitioner concerned in the two cases has already been interdicted from performing any liposuction in any private clinic. In any case, in the public institutions, in our hospitals, this is not done. With regard to the other three clinics and the three foreign practitioners that are

doing liposuction in Mauritius, as I said earlier, we must work out a protocol in order to make sure that patients, who intend to do liposuction, are made aware of the preconditions, the condition in which it is going to be done and the consequences of the liposuction. I have given instructions, and I will see to it that they are followed, namely that the patient is briefed, signs a document and is informed about the things that have to be done before, during and after liposuction. From now on, we would also request that all cases of liposuction be closely monitored, and reported to the Ministry for close surveillance.

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.

Mr R. Uteem (Second Member for Port Louis South & Port Louis Central): Mr Speaker, Sir, I have to start by congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance for his honesty when, at paragraph 213 of the Budget Speech, he says, and I quote -

“We must prepare for the worst and hope for the best.”

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, we must prepare for the worst and hope for the best, because you can only expect the worst from this Government; a Government which has no sense of direction; a Government that sells dreams but delivers nightmares; a Government of trial and error and I am not the only one holding this view.

In his latest report the Director of Audit stated, and I quote -

‘There is currently a lack of orderly planning in the formulation of appropriate policy measures and no coordination at a central level which is resulting in incoherence and delays at the implementation level’.

Lack of planning! These are not words of the Opposition. This is not *démagogie*. These are the words of the Director of Audit. He goes on -

“In order to have effective planning, the line Ministries/Departments have first to trigger the thought process at their level including thinking about availability of financial resources and human resources.”

This is the whole problem with this Government, Mr Speaker, Sir. They don't trigger the thinking process before they decide something and then, they have to back-pedal. They have to do U-turn; they have gone around in full circle and they are still turning. This year we have again witnessed - and I will quote only two examples - this lack of triggering of the thinking process. The hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure is looking at me. His Ministry announced that we will impose speedometers on motorcycles. Who thought about this brilliant idea? When

some of the motorcycles are out of production, where will we get speedometers to be put on these motorcycles? He back-pedals! It is the same thing again with the number plates. The Opposition put pressure, and then again back-peddalling. This is the Government!

(Interruptions)

It is not only about the Ministry concerned. Year in year out, for the Budget it is the same thing. Wasn't it the Government, under the able leadership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, that introduced tax on interest and National Residency Property Tax? One year later, was it not this same Government, led by the same Prime Minister, that removed tax on interest and National Residency Property Tax? Wasn't it the same Government, led by the same Prime Minister, that removed subsidy on exam fees and, then the year after, reintroduced that subsidy? Wasn't it the same Government, with the same Prime Minister, that last year introduced the Solidarity Tax on interests and dividends, only this year to unwind the whole thing? Wasn't it the same Government, with the same Prime Minister, that last year introduced capital gains tax, only this year to remove it? Where is the thought process? Who is thinking?

Mr Speaker, Sir, let us be serious. Is there really no one in this Government who goes through the thought process before a decision is announced? They all keep *tappe la table!* A bunch of *tappeurs la table!* No one dares, Mr Speaker, Sir, say anything, because like the hon. Prime Minister always likes to remind us, it is his budget; after every budget he makes a conference and says 'it is my budget.' Before the Budget is heard, in the press and especially on the MBC/TV, which is recording me today, it goes on and on saying that the Prime Minister is having regular talks with the Minister of Finance, and the Minister of Finance is holding regular talks with his colleagues. My God, so much thought is being put before this great document, the Budget Speech is made public and then, one year later, it's back to square one again.

Unfortunately, it is not a laughing matter and the population can only expect the worst from this Government. It is not a laughing matter because every decision, every action of this Government has a reaction. Every action has a cost and the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, himself, is the first one to recognise that.

At page 8 of his speech that's what he says -

“Some taxes are discouraging investment.”

At paragraph 55 -

“Tax on dividends is a double tax. No one should be made to pay tax twice.”

At paragraph 56 -

“To tax interest income is to tax savings and we do not want to penalise savings.”

The very same Minister, last year, applauded all these measures. I went back to read his last year's speech. He congratulated the then Minister of Finance. He called it, I quote, ‘an excellent budget, *un budget de continuité*’. This is what he said. I can understand, Mr Speaker, Sir, that other backbenchers, who are not literate in Economics and Accounting, unlike the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development, can applaud these measures, but the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development is a Chartered Accountant of good repute. Why did not he point that out last year? Why did not he say that these measures were going to affect the economy? Hon. Dr. Bunwaree, who was Minister of Finance and Economic Development, said this year that this capital gains tax has affected our negotiations with India over the double taxation avoidance treaty. That is what he said -

«Le *capital gains tax* est introduit et on vient couper sous nos pieds, un élément solide de la défense qu'on devait donner vis-à-vis de ces techniciens étrangers.»

(Interruptions)

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, the MMM said so last year! I said it last year, I said so. Hon. Kee Chong Li Kwong Wing said so last year but, at that time, the hon. Dr. Bunwaree was busy '*taper la table*'. Hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing, probably, the most literate of all in economics, but still not Minister of Finance, unfortunately. This is what she said -

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

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a crime and I am not saying it, the hon. lady on the other side said it. It's a crime what you are doing to this country by not being able to trigger the thought process.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we heard a lot of things in this House about '*pa mwa sa li sa!*'. May I remind the hon. Members who are sitting on the other side what my friend, hon. Lormus Bundhoo, keeps saying *ad nauseam* - 'There is one Government! One Prime Minister!' There is collective responsibility; any decision that is taken, is a decision of the Government, you have to shoulder your responsibilities.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: The hon. Minister has to sit in his place! That is the rule!

Mr Uteem: Hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing comes here, and shamelessly wants us to believe that she was against some of the measures in last year's budget. She was even embarrassed by some of the comments, but she kept quiet.

(Interruptions)

You could have chosen to speak up your mind and inform the public what was going on. You chose to remain silent.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Leader of the Opposition had made two formal propositions in his speech. He had requested the Government to revise its decision and increase the pension payable to old-aged pensioners and other vulnerable members of this society to align it with salary compensation. May I know whether Ms Deerpalsing is for or against this proposal or will she say next year that she was against?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! She has the right to rebut what you said and she has the right to make comments.

(Interruptions)

No, you cannot! Even if he asks you questions, you don't reply!

(Interruptions)

Some other time you will reply!

Mr Uteem: The hon. Leader of the Opposition made a second proposal which is a cry from the heart of the youth of this country: please, go back on your decision to impose a tax on SMS. Will the Government go ahead with this?

Will the Government change it next year? If the Government is still here, which I doubt very much!

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is not the only time that this Government is refusing to shoulder its responsibilities. We have seen it in the Med Point saga. I will not go in details in this case, Mr Speaker, Sir, which we know is the subject matter of an attachment order!

Mr Speaker: I must remind the hon. Member; I made a statement in the House that the application for the attachment is *sub judice*. That is the only issue because it is actively being pursued before the Supreme Court. Otherwise, I have never said anything.

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir, for this clarification. Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Baloomoody reminded us yesterday, that the only political party which from day one has been denouncing this scandal, *le scandale du siècle*, is the MMM; the only party which stands as the last *rempart contre la fraude et la corruption*. Day after day, week after week, we came up with new information, we released new information. The situation was so grave that we made a plea to the hon. Prime Minister to re-convene Parliament. But, what did the hon. Prime Minister do? Nothing, business as usual and when finally, we were...

Mr Speaker: According to the Standing Order, Parliament can only be recalled when there is urgent Government business to be discussed and that also, at the discretion of the Speaker.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this was our point...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Government business!

Mr Uteem: Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is what we thought. We thought it was Government business. But, anyway, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is bygone. Let's see what happens next! The hon. Leader of the Opposition comes and asks a PNQ. What does the hon. Prime Minister say? First, he refuses to set up a Select Committee and then, he refuses to give details on the ground that ICAC is conducting an enquiry. This is what the hon. Prime Minister stated -

“Let us wait for the ICAC to produce its report and I believe they won’t have to wait for so long to get the report, because I am told that they have questioned many people and they must finish the report very soon.”

Very soon! That was six months ago, Mr Speaker, Sir! After that, every Minister be it the then Minister of Finance, the then Minister of Health and even, the Minister of Public Infrastructure, every time this side of the House asks a question, they refuse to answer. They hid behind the argument that ICAC was conducting an enquiry. Hon. Minister Jeetah kept very quiet about the exchange of emails with Dr. Malhotra, about the visit to clinics. The hon. Deputy Prime Minister, Dr. Beebeejaun, also kept very quiet about his indirect shareholdings - him, his family and his relatives - in Med Point. Apparently, the hon. Deputy Prime Minister ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Uteem: ...holds indirectly, 1,000 shares in Med Point. That’s 20 times ...

(Interruptions)

Listen to me! This is 20 times the number of shares which hon. Pravind Jugnauth holds; and he kept quiet. Suddenly, last week, the hon. Minister of Finance explained to us in detail - how the sale was conducted and how the proceed was transferred. All these information that we have been requesting for months, suddenly, the hon. Minister of Finance says it all; divulging confidential banking information without a Court Order and we are happy to hear what happened. Now, this Government wants us to believe that it has nothing to do with the Med Point saga! May I remind hon. Members of this House who signed the deed of sale on behalf of the Government of Mauritius? The Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Lands! Are we to believe that the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Lands took it

upon himself to sign the deed? I am glad that the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands is here. Will the Permanent Secretary take it on himself without consulting the Minister to sign the deed of sale of Med Point on the eve of Christmas? Would the hon. Minister of Housing and Lands take it on himself to authorise his Permanent Secretary to sign this deed without consulting his colleagues of Cabinet and without consulting the hon. Prime Minister? This is what this Government is trying to tell the population! Come on! Start shouldering your responsibility!

The acquisition of Med Point clinic was a Government decision and hon. Members, on this side of the House, would better make their own *mea culpa* and apologise to the public. Those who have participated directly or indirectly should be prosecuted if there is a case for prosecution; those who stayed there silently and watched are just as culpable as those who committed the crime.

(Interruptions)

Government, Mr Speaker, Sir, can do more and should do more than just apologise to the nation. As a lawyer, I believe that the Government, as buyer of this clinic, has a case to bring before the Supreme Court to ask for rescission of the sale. The Government can argue that the sale was based on underevaluation, inaccurate reports, misleading information, misrepresentation such that their consent was vitiated and if this does not work, as an alternative, this Government can ask the Supreme Court to rescind the sale on the ground of illegality, if this Government feels that there was an illegality underlying the transfer of this clinic and of its equipment. But somehow, we, on this side of the House, doubt that Government would do that. But let us take a pledge to the nation, Mr Speaker, Sir. *Aujourd'hui, nous, le MMM, nous prenons l'engagement que le MMM ne lâchera pas prise tant que toute la vérité ne soit pas faite sur ce scandale du siècle.*

(Interruptions)

Failure to assume responsibility for anything seems to have taken endemic proportion in this Government. *'Pas moi ça li ça' fait bonne école.*

How can we forget about the hedging saga? It hits us in the face and hurts our pocket each time we buy petrol and diesel. Rs5 billion vanishing! When I asked hon. Yeung Sik Yuen, the then Minister of Commerce, if prior approval of the Minister responsible for commerce was sought and obtained, what did he say? He stated that there are no records on file to that effect. Are we, Mr Speaker, Sir, to believe that the State Trading Corporation went ahead with such a big transaction without the knowledge of hon. Dr. Jeetah, the then Minister of Commerce? Where was hon. Dr. Jeetah? Was he too busy handling Desbro or Amul milk?

There is more, Mr Speaker, Sir. In an interview in June of this year, the former Minister of Commerce, the one who succeeded hon. Dr. Jeetah, hon. Mahen Gowressoo, Minister, under the former Government led by the hon. Prime Minister - one Government, one Prime Minister - answered a question about consumers having to pay for hedging. He had this to say and I quote-

“C'est un fardeau que le tandem Soomaroah-Jeetah a quitté. Mais, pour moi, le plus grand coupable du hedging demeure Rajesh Jeetah et il aurait dû en répondre. Les consommateurs doivent payer pour cette bêtise, car le ministre Jeetah ou Soomaroah ne tireront pas un sou de leur poche pour leur erreur de jugement.”

Not the Opposition, not the MMM, a former Cabinet Minister who has all insider information of what went on in this saga. This is what he said and we are still waiting for an apology from hon. Dr. Jeetah and Mr Soomaroah. Mr Dobson was requested to review the hedging process by the STC and this is what he wrote in his report –

“The key failure of the system was that no person or organisation was closely monitoring the economic effects of the oil price increase on the economy of the country, even though it represented a massive portion of Mauritius’ Foreign exchange requirement.”

This is what happened, Mr Speaker, Sir. Lack of proper monitoring! Now, because of the incompetence, the population must pay for the blunders. The Government and his Minister walk scot-free. Yes, we can! This is the message this Government is giving to the nation. We can waste public funds. We can do whatever we want. Yes, we can! You can’t do anything about it.

The list is long, Mr Speaker, Sir, but time is short. If you would allow me, I would now turn back to the Budget Speech. The hon. Minister of Finance lived up to his image of *‘l’homme du secteur privé’*. Listening to the people...

Mr Speaker: No, that is not fair. The hon. Member is imputing motives!

Mr Uteem: I am not imputing motives!

Mr Speaker: This is my ruling. It is imputing motives that he is a man of the - I made the same ruling when the former Minister of Finance was there.

(Interruptions)

Mr Uteem: Mr Speaker, Sir, listening to people from the private sector as relayed by the media, it would appear that the hon. Vice-Prime Minister performed beyond expectations. There is nothing wrong and nothing to be ashamed about it. *Le PMSD* has historical ties with *le gros capital*. It is only logical if their *poulain* becomes the Minister of Finance that he should look after the interest. This certainly explains the decision of the Government to remove solidarity tax on high income earners, *les capitalistes* and Capital Gains Tax which affected directly the

owners of land - *cadeaux pour les cousins, cousines, enfin presque cousins, cousines même de loin*'.

We also saw smiles on the faces of the representatives of insurance companies and private clinics. They were here supporting the hon. Minister. Private health insurance got a real boost, Mr Speaker, Sir. It is good. Why take the money from the National Savings Fund? Why shouldn't the employers be made to take medical insurance for their employees? Why should it be the employees taking from their meagre National Pension Fund contribution to pay it? No, taking from the employer, that's not on. That will take away the smile off the face of the private sector.

In doing so, Mr Speaker, Sir, isn't the hon. Minister of Finance giving *une claqué magistrale à son collègue, l'honorable Lormus Bundhoo. Au lieu d'améliorer le service de la santé publique, au lieu de la rendre plus accessible, on est en train de dire aux gens de prendre des assurances médicales pour se faire soigner dans des hôpitaux privés et dans des cliniques privées. C'est le message que le ministre des Finances et ce gouvernement envoient. Go and privatise !*

Mr Speaker, Sir, les petits copains du secteur privé se frottaient les mains à l'annonce de la création d'un *National Resilience Fund*. Rs 7.3 milliards! Call it stimulus package, call it Mechanism for Transitional Support for the private sector, call it Economic Restructuring Competitive Programme. You can call it by whatever name you want. All that this Government is doing is taking taxpayers' money and giving it to private companies. This year, the novelty, *la marque de PMSD*, Business Growth Fund is doubling. Come on! It's PMSD in control here. What have we not heard in this House to justify the giving of public funds to the selective few including those closest to power?

The Government has lost over Rs150 m. with RS Denim. The beneficial owner was a former MP for the Labour Party, Ram Mardemootoo. But that did not prevent the Government from giving it an additional Rs75.5 m. under the first stimulus package.

Worse - they gave Rs82 m. to R. S Fashion, another company owned by the same gentleman when he was still a sitting Member of Parliament for the Labour Party. This is what we call 'putting our people first'. It is the same thing for Infinity BPO of Mr Jean Suzanne. Answering to a PNQ from the hon. Leader of the Opposition, this is what hon. Dr. Sithanen, then Minister of the same Government led by the same Prime Minister, said:

“Infinity is a viable company, it is a solvent company, but has a problem of liquidity. There are 550 people who could have lost their jobs and that's why we massively put money.”

550 people who could have lost their job! That is what exactly happened and today Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Suzanne, must be somewhere laughing out loud, how he got away with it all, and the poor employees had to go on hunger strike, not once, but twice, and they still did not get their full compensation. History will remember that the Government of Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, who was ready to give millions of rupees to his special advisers under the stimulus package, refused to give priority over repayment of unpaid wages to these poor employees, most of whom were very young.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance was also applauded by the banks which can now deduct millions of rupees of bad debts from their tax. What does that mean? It means less money to the Government, more money to the shareholders of the banks. When we know - we read the papers yesterday – that the banks in this country make billions of rupees of profit. We are talking here about millions of rupees of tax losses, of loss of revenue for coffers of the State.

That is not all. Banks are also now exempted from paying Land Transfer Tax on the sales of the immovable property relating to debts recovery. Incidentally, Mr Speaker, Sir – and I say so with a bit of sadness - this is the only measure which relates to Sales by Levy. We all know - you, yourself, Mr Speaker, Sir, who has been a very able Attorney in the past, knows - that every Thursday, dozens of people lose their house through an unfair bidding process. Instead of protecting these people from, what I call, the institutional loan sharks, this Government is facilitating the sale, the disposal of their assets. Why such generosity? What is the rationale? It is a caring Government, Mr Speaker, Sir; a caring Government for the capitalists of Karo Kaliptis, to quote my hon. friend, hon. Barbier. I can go on enumerating other pro-capitalist measures in this Budget, but I think I have said enough to rest my case that this Budget will result in windfall gains to the private sector.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is one decision though which was not applauded by the private sector and this is the decision of the Government to impose a Solidarity Tax of 10% of chargeable income on management companies. Management companies have to pay more tax and I need to declare my interest here, Mr Speaker, Sir, because I own a management company. This morning I read in the press that the hon. Minister had decided to backpedal again. Finally, he has triggered the thought process or did he receive a phone call from the big boss from the private sector?

The expected revenue in 2012 on this Solidarity Tax was expected to be Rs200 m. based on Estimates. They can remove Rs200 m., but they can't remove tax on SMS which would generate revenue of only Rs124 m. This is the caring Government that we have over there.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the philosophy behind this Government policy: if you make the rich richer, then they will invest and create wealth, and there will be a bigger cake to share. This is

the supply side, Economics theory. This is what has characterised this right-wing thought of the Government. But the fallacy of this argument, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that there is no trickle-down effect in Mauritius. The poor are getting poorer, the rich are not investing in productive sectors which will generate a bigger cake to be shared among more people. This is the fallacy. This is where the Government gets it wrong. Once again, because of this lack of trickle-down effect, this caring Government, which cares so much for the capitalists will ask the working and middle classes, to carry the burden of the high income earners on their shoulders. This is, I think, too much for them.

At a time when people are finding it harder and harder every day to maintain the same standard of living; at a time when yesterday's basic necessities have become today's luxuries; at a time where a mother has to choose between buying butter or cheese because she can no longer afford to buy both for her children; at a time of such misery, this Government once again will drain more money from the poorer section of society to finance the budgetary expenditure.

Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, out of the Rs7.6 billion increases in expenditure, Rs4.4 billion, almost 60%, would come from additional VAT. Even without raising the rate of VAT, the Government will get Rs4.4 billion additional revenues from VAT. Magic - where will it come from? From the pockets of the consumers, from those who are the least able to bear the extra expenditure of the Government.

Mr Speaker, Sir, year in year out, we hear the same rhetoric from Ministers, including Ministers who have been Minister of Finance, reminding us that the MSM and MMM Government raised the rate of VAT. Yes, we did so! We assumed our responsibility. Why did we do so Mr Speaker, Sir? We did so in order to build 39 colleges and thousands of houses. This is why we raised it. We spent billions of rupees on education and on school infrastructure. We

spent billions of rupees in public infrastructure, on schools, but the hon. Minister of Education today is bragging about providing Rs500,000 to each school. This will not even cover wear and tear. We spent billions in education, they brag about Rs500,000 for each school.

Once the major expenditure was complete, once there were bumper crops, early harvest, what did the Government do? Reduce the rate of VAT? No, Mr Speaker, Sir! They chose to reduce the income tax rate from 30% to 15%, and the Corporate Tax rate from 25% to 15%. They chose to alleviate the burden of those who could afford the most to pay taxes. They chose to shift the burden onto the shoulders of those who can afford the least to shoulder the expenditure.

Taking this year's estimate, the hon. Minister of Finance is projecting to collect an additional Rs4.4 billion VAT. This is 11% more than last year's revenue collected from the VAT. What does that mean, Mr Speaker, Sir? That means that if this was a caring Government they could have reduced the rate of VAT by 11% and still recovers the same amount of money which they got last year, but did they do so? No. A reduction of VAT would have alleviated the suffering of people who are struggling against the galloping increase in the cost of living. This Government chose to ignore *la souffrance du peuple*. VAT was not reduced, not even on certain specific household items and goods consumed by the least fortunate.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I concede the Budget does contain some positive social measures especially in the housing sector, if they are implemented of course. We also welcome the increase in grant available for those who require overseas treatment, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, taking into account that we had a budget deficit of only 3.3% of GDP, I am sorry, but we could have done much better. The Rs 1,500 per month per child to pay for la crèche is welcome, but it would

serve no purpose if the family does not have milk and proper food for the kids to send them to those crèches.

Here, Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me to make a humble appeal to this Government. You have decided to provide a hot meal for children going on summer school programme, please extend this policy to all children of all schools throughout the year and don't discriminate between ZEP and non ZEP schools because there are also a lot of poor people, who do not go to ZEP schools - a free meal at school probably would have saved lives. The children, who left alone in their houses were found burnt, may have gone to schools and have a meal instead of being left alone at home. So, I urge the Government, as a caring Government, to reconsider. There are budgetary *marges de manoeuvre* available to provide a hot meal, one meal per day for each student going to school.

Mr Speaker, Sir, there is water everywhere, but not a single drop for us. Water supply is probably the greatest concern of Mauritian families these days. If you would allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to share some humour with you - on the night of the Budget on Facebook and other chat rooms, everybody was busy commenting the Budget and then one person asked the question: do you know why the Government removed duty on perfumes? It is because soon it will become a luxury in this country to take a shower. Joke apart, Mr Speaker, Sir, the situation is critical. Judging from the tone of the hon. Deputy Prime Minister, in his response to the PNQ of yesterday from the Leader of the Opposition, it would appear, unfortunately, that he still has not grasped the seriousness of the situation. He is still not aware of the rising dissatisfaction of the public with the amateurish way this Government and the CWA are handling the situation. I'll pray, Mr Speaker, Sir; we all pray that we get heavy rainfall in the days to come to replenish our reservoirs and boreholes otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, I fear for the worst for this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I would like to say a few words on the measures announced for Small and Medium Enterprises. SMEs employ over 300,000 people. We heard from the hon. Minister of SMEs that they represent 54% of total employment, yet in 2011 only Rs15.7 m. were disbursed to the SMEs. The two major constraints for SMEs are access to finance and proper training. What is the solution proposed by this Government - participating banks will collectively make available Rs3 billion for the next three years at the effective rate of 8.5%. The Minister of Finance calls this measure revolutionary. Hon. Nita Deerpalsing talks about a very groundbreaking measure – *une mesure phare pour la démocratisation de l'économie*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, what is the Government saying here? Is the Government putting Rs3 billion at the disposal of the SMEs? No, it is the private banks - *pa li sa, mwa sa*. This is now what this Government is saying. It is not the bank, it is me the Government which is putting it. This is what they want us to believe. Come on, Mr Speaker, Sir. Banks are here to make money – their duty is to their shareholders. *N'en déplaise à l'honorable Abdullah Hossen, elles ne sont pas et ne deviendront pas des banques de développement*. Don't take my word for it, Mr Speaker, Sir, *je ne suis qu'un oiseau de mauvaise augure qui ne voit rien de bon comme dirait l'honorable Reza Issack, alors place au spécialiste*. Voici ce que le Managing Director de Barclays Mauritius et le Chairman de la Mauritius Bankers Association ont dit dans un récent entretien:

'Personnellement, je ne pense pas qu'il y ait un réel problème s'agissant de l'accès au crédit pour les PME. Il y a une douzaine de banques qui proposent des prêts très compétitifs pour le financement des PME. Le reproche que l'on faisait aux banques jusqu'ici, c'est qu'elles ne jouaient pas suffisamment le jeu auprès

des PME. Il faut bien comprendre que les banques, qui gèrent l'argent des déposants, ont un devoir d'être prudentes avec l'argent des autres. De ce fait, les banques ont un sens de rigueur et procèdent à une analyse pointue des demandes de prêts aux PME, parce qu'il faut bien l'admettre, c'est un secteur qui comporte plus de risques que d'autres. Ainsi si certaines demandes ne répondent pas aux critères de sélection, elles sont malheureusement rejetées.

Le nouveau plan que propose le budget 2012 ne va en rien diluer la rigueur appliquée jusqu'ici sur le crédit aux PME. Il n'a en rien une licence pour faire du *reckless banking* et cela, même avec une garantie de 35 % de *l'Equity Fund*.'

The bank is still applying the same criteria. They will look for the same security and collateral. They will ask for personal guarantees. They will take the same fixed charge over the property and if you don't have any collateral then that is it. 'Bye Bye Charlie'. The Chairman of the Mauritius Bankers Association goes further and lets the cat out of the bag. He says:

'En fait, l'Etat avait le choix entre taxer une nouvelle fois les banques qui paient déjà 15 % de taxe corporative en sus d'un *special levy*, sans parler des R 150 millions de contribution à *l'Equity Fund* ou alors prendre directement cet argent pour aider les PME.'

Not a bad deal for the bank c'est donnant- donnant, mais il y a plus Mr Speaker, Sir.

'Nous nous sommes prêtés aux exigences et avons voulu jouer le jeu mais avec une condition quand même : que le gouvernement accepte de revoir l'aspect lié au *writing off* des dettes et de rendre cette pratique moins contraignante pour nous, avec des procédures légales moins longues. Le gouvernement a accepté de revoir cet aspect.'

PMSD strikes again, private sector one, SMEs zero. SMEs are not sure to get financing, but the Government has already allowed banks to write off millions of bad debt from their income tax, caring Government who cares for the bankers.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will end by referring to something which is very close to my heart. Mr Speaker, Sir, we cannot talk about the SMEs without acknowledging the existence of the informal economy - people trying hard to earn a living and raise a family.

I am talking of hawkers, I am talking of those we see everywhere on the streets, the street vendors. This Budget makes no mention of them. They are simply ignored as if they do not exist. Nobody cares about them. They are at the mercy of the Police and Municipal Inspectors who pick and choose who to harass and when to harass.

What all these people want to do, Mr Speaker, Sir, is to work. If Government cannot give them work, it should, at least, provide them with the space where they can work. Maybe I have a soft spot for hawkers, because my forefather was a hawker, he was selling milk from door to door and I am proud of my origin, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would urge this House to ponder upon what Mr Justice Domah stated earlier this year in the case of Joonas Industries Ltd & ors v Municipal Council of Port Louis. I quote –

“(..) If the allegation, on the face of it, is that the hawkers fall outside the formal economy, that they make up their own laws, that they defy the offices of law and order openly or by stealth, that may be(..)”

because not enough attention has been given to assisting them to enter the formal economy. “Their illegality lies not in their activity but in a status which is being denied to them. Earn a living is not illegal; it is what they should do. The illegality stems from a non provision of space

and status to a group of people in the nation that is willing to work and contribute to the economy. Society overheats when laws overheat. Antiquated laws cannot show the way forward.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would make an appeal to the Minister of Local Government and to the hon. Prime Minister to give space and status to the hawkers. I would make a formal plea to the Minister to amend antiquated laws and to release funds necessary to assist hawkers, street vendors to enter the formal economy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to conclude, this is the second Budget since the May 2010 elections. A year has gone by, *le rapport des forces* has changed drastically. Government today hangs on to power thanks to two former MSM Members. I don't know if they are independent or they have joined the Labour. Today, not more than two or three Ministers can travel at any one time. They may lose their majority. They cannot even take sick leave. This year hon. Ministers were forced – and we saw it yesterday - to stay in this House till late in the night because otherwise they could not get a quorum. Yesterday's friends have become today's force. I join hon. Mrs Perraud to condemn the language used in the august Assembly by certain hon. Members. The insult exchanged, the lack of decorum, the lack of respect for this Chair.

Irrespective of whether it was the MSM or the Labour Party who is the traitor, irrespective of the reason for the break-up of this Government, one thing is certain: this Government was never elected to govern without the MSM and, therefore, this Government is illegitimate and cannot morally continue to govern.

(Applause)

Everything that you say and do is recorded in Hansard. If the hon. Members, on the other side, do not want to go down in history as serial rapists of regional democracy, then give us municipal election as you promised to us last year.

(Interruptions)

Do not postpone it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, if you, on the other side, do not want to go down in history as men and women desperately clinging to power, then listen to the people, give back power to the people and call for snap elections.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for one hour and fifteen minutes.

At 1.05 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 2.22 p.m with the Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

The Minister of Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection (Mr C. Sayed-Hossen): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like, first and foremost, to avail myself of this opportunity to convey my gratitude to the hon. Prime Minister for the trust placed in me in assigning me the Industry, Commerce and Consumer Protection portfolio.

Then I would like to congratulate my colleague, the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, for presenting this Budget. Some would say “*coup d’essai, coup de maître*”, but I am more tempted, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to say “*coup de massue*” for some.

This Budget, as most people agree, reconciles economic growth and social justice, whilst bolstering the global competitiveness of Mauritius. This is precisely why this Budget addresses the emerging issues which affect our economy now, in the short and medium terms. It is a

Budget that is courageously prudent while being bold enough to come up with innovative schemes to boost the economy and strengthen the social component.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is laying a solid base for a high investment, high productivity, high efficiency and high wage economy; for a robust growth path, whilst simultaneously broadening the social safety net and consolidating the Welfare State through further increase in social benefits for the most vulnerable among us.

This Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is also improving the ecosystem for SMEs in our endeavour to transform Mauritius into a nation of entrepreneurs, and pursuing the modernisation of the economy through massive investments: Rs21.2 billion in key infrastructural projects.

This Budget is widely recognised as a forward looking one which provides the means for realising the hon. Prime Minister's vision for a society where unity, equity and modernity remain entrenched as our core values in our socioeconomic fabric. Indeed, the measures contained in the 2012 Budget do not only cater for economic efficiency, but also aim at creating an inclusive society.

In fact, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you only need a minimum dose of intellectual honesty to agree that, at a time when the world is hit by the worst economic turmoil that it has known since the Second World War, the Minister of Finance has conceived the best strategy that can mitigate the adverse impacts of the renewed global economic uncertainties, stimulate savings and investment, unleash the creative potential of all the sectors and protect the vulnerable groups.

In short it is, as rightly pointed out by the hon. Prime Minister, "*un budget responsable, avec une vision sur le long terme.*"

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody in this House or outside this House can deny the fact that, today, we are living in a globalised world with no safety nets, and where the only constant

is change. We are living in an era where all economic fundamentals are being questioned and where climate change is redefining the mode of operation, production and consumption.

The business environment has become highly volatile. Budget cuts in advanced economies, increasing unemployment in the euro zone, sovereign debt concerns in some European countries and the declining purchasing power of consumers have drastically affected businesses.

These new dynamics will continue to impact on our economy. Moreover, we face resource constraints and the impact of global climate change. With political uncertainties in the Middle East, natural disasters like in Thailand, the world's largest rice exporter, and increasing demand in emerging countries, the prices of commodities have become more volatile.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is never an easy task to strike the right balance when global issues intersect with local issues nevertheless, this budget reconciles the interests of all stakeholders, and is pushing further this Government's efforts at democratisation of the economy and empowerment of the people.

Economic democratisation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is indeed and, in fact, the empowerment of the people. This encompasses wide ranging issues like greater access to resources, the broadening of shareholding to include individuals and workers, the opening up of opportunities, equity in job access and career development opportunities, and the emergence of a strong and competitive entrepreneurial nation through access to finance, know-how and technology.

This Government is accelerating the process of economic democratisation started in 2005. In this context, a number of additional measures have been announced in this Budget. My

friends and colleagues, hon. Seetaram and hon. Ms Nita Deerpalsing, have dealt with these in their interventions. So, I will not canvass these.

Let it be said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that we are going to pursue our efforts relentlessly to transform Mauritius into a nation of entrepreneurs in our drive to achieve economic democratisation. This is what the people expect from us, and this is the mandate we have got from the people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, debates on this Budget have been going on for ten days approximately, and I have had the opportunity to listen to hon. Members on all three sides of this House. I would like to make a few comments on remarks made by Members of the Opposition. I am in a predicament, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It has been very easy for the Opposition to criticise us. I can't criticise the MMM, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. For about half a century of their existence, they have hardly done anything. How can you criticise a party that has hardly been in power? It is very difficult. Being given that they have not done much, not having been given the opportunity by the people to do that, they have specialised in talking, talking and talking. However much I dislike that, I will have to comment on talking. I will start with what the hon. Leader of the Opposition said in his intervention about a week ago. Of course, with his usual arrogance, he starts by treating us as '*illettrés économiques*'. This somehow was mentioned again by hon. Uteem a few minutes ago. Of course, this comes after the '*intellectuellement limités*' which was addressed to my friend and colleague, the hon. Minister for Public Infrastructure and he combines this by saying in his speech, I quote –

“J'ai des manières...”

Il a des manières, but still we are illettrés économiques. Hon. Uteem also thinks that; and my good friend, hon. Bachoo, is also *intellectuellement limité ! Comme disent les français, M. le président, ce n'est pas la modestie qui l'étouffe.*

Just like the cheap, unbecoming, undignified and totally uncalled for remarks which the Leader of the Opposition addressed to hon. Minister Bunwaree. To sum it up: *'Si je ne parle pas aujourd'hui, il se tait.'* dixit, the hon. Leader of the Opposition. *Quand même, M. le président, le Premier ministre un illettré économique ! Ce côté-ci de la Chambre, des illettrés économiques, M. le président !* I will show you a bit later and I will demonstrate to the House where the *illettrisme économique* is.

Le taux de croissance, M. le président, en 2011 : 4,2%. Il est prévu pour 2012 que ce sera 4%. Le *Leader* de l'opposition compare avec les rapports du Fonds Monétaire International sur l'Afrique Subsaharienne, lequel Fonds Monétaire International prévoit une croissance de plus de 5% en 2011, et plus de 6% en 2012.

He goes on saying - I mean the Leader of the Opposition - I will quote him, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. -

« (...) la vérité, c'est que quand nous comparons notre performance à la performance en moyenne en terme de *GDP growth* de l'Afrique Subsaharienne, nous sommes en train de faire moins bien que l'Afrique Subsaharienne.»

Le Zimbabwe, M. le président, prévoit cette année, d'après les autorités politiques, une croissance de 9,6%. Le secteur privé Zimbabwéen déclare que 9,6% est un chiffre qui est trop faible et que la croissance sera probablement de plus de 12%. Est-ce que le Zimbabwe est en train de mieux faire que nous, M. le président? Le *Leader* de l'opposition sait très bien qu'un comparatif est toujours par rapport à une base. La comparaison de Maurice par rapport à

l'Afrique Subsaharienne – 5%, 6% or *whatever it is, is irrelevant, uninformed and truly illetteré*,
Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

This has to be compared with the baseline. Then he goes on saying why don't we compare ourselves with China, 9% growth; with India, 8% growth. 'Enfantillage', M. le président, j'utilise encore ses mots, c'est dans le Hansard. La Chine et l'Inde sont des pays immenses avec des ressources pratiquement à l'infini, avec un marché interne de plus d'un milliard de personnes et le Leader de l'opposition compare notre taux de croissance avec le taux de croissance de la Chine et de l'Inde! A tout seigneur tout honneur, M. le président !

Je cite encore le *Leader* de l'opposition pour montrer son incohérence. Il parle de 'zigzag'. Je crois qu'il mentionne six ou sept fois le mot 'zigzag' dans son discours et il nous décerne le Prix Nobel des 'zigzag'.

Il dit –

«Le Dr. Rama Sithanen venait présenter un budget ultra libéral à la Banque Mondiale ; tout le monde applaudissait. Une certaine ligne économique ! Et puis, l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth remplace le Dr. Rama Sithanen, défait tout ce que le Dr. Sithanen avait fait ou presque.... »

Je continue –

« ... Un an plus tard, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval arrive et il défait tout ce que l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth avait fait. »

Donc, Dr. Rama Sithanen arrive avec un budget et ensuite l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth. L'honorable Pravind Jugnauth défait tout ce qu'a fait le Dr. Rama Sithanen - selon le *Leader* de l'opposition et, ensuite arrive l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval qui défait tout ce que l'honorable

Pravind Jugnauth avait fait. M. le président, laissez-moi rappeler à la Chambre ce que le *Leader* de l'opposition avait dit l'année dernière dans le *Hansard* -

« Et voilà qu'après cinq ans de dénonciations pareils, aujourd'hui s'il y a une chose sur laquelle l'unanimité s'est faite, c'est le fait que sur le fond c'est un budget de continuité.»

Le budget de l'honorable Jugnauth par rapport à l'honorable Dr. Rama Sithanen - 'Sur le fond, un budget de continuité' par rapport au budget présenté de 2005-2010. Il est facile de le prouver, il n'y a même pas besoin de le prouver - 'continuité totale'. « Tout le monde constate l'évidence que c'est un budget de continuité », *on and on and on* - continuité. Un an après, il vient nous dire 'zigzag', M. le président. Où est le 'zigzag'? Où est l'incohérence s'il n'est pas dans l'esprit même du *leader* de l'opposition, M. le président ? Unless, of course that incoherence is a by-product of the contraction of the famous light years, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. When light years, which are huge periods, – light years of separation between him and his small brother – contract into sudden love, love lost and rediscovered, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one loses one's mind. One can become incoherent, I can understand that. That was for the *grand frère*.

Maintenant en ce qui concerne le reste de la fratrie, M. le président, j'ai écouté, l'autre jour, avec surprise je dois dire, l'honorable Ameer Meea *who started a sort of convoluted arithmetic defeating, logic negating, demonstration on* la majorité. La majorité moins ceci, la majorité moins cela, l'Opposition, etc. etc.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is only one fact: here a strong, united, coherent and confident majority behind a strong leader, *rassembleur*, compassionate and *unificateur*. On my right side in front of me: the MMM Opposition, obviously elected to become the Opposition because they were elected as a minority; Opposite me on my left, the remnants, vestiges of what

I would call, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the collateral damage of democracy. The word ‘*transfuges*’ has been mentioned so many times, uttered so many times. ‘*transfuges*’, ‘*transfuges*’; everybody seems to have forgotten – I can understand younger people like hon. Uteem, maybe he was wearing shorts in those days.

In 1990, when the Labour Party was booted out of power by Sir Anerood Jugnauth, not one, two or three, but a whole party, the whole MMM became *transfuges*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The whole MMM left the Opposition *en bloc*, one year before the elections, to join Government, with the present Leader of the Opposition, of course, given that he was not a Member of Parliament, he became an Advisor on disarmament

(Interruptions)

Quand on vous confie la gouvernance économique d’un pays en 2003, et que vous faites chuter le taux de croissance économique de 10%, dont vous aviez hérité en 2000 quand le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam a quitté le pouvoir, quand vous faites chuter ce taux de croissance de 10% à 2% en 2005 en dépit d’un environnement économique mondiale positif, la morale ne vous donne qu’un droit, M. le président, c’est de vous taire même si la démocratie vous donne le droit à la parole.

Quand vous êtes le ministre des Finances en 2003 et 2005, et que votre Premier ministre, l’honorable Bérenger, votre grand frère, lui-même vous désavoue, en déclarant publiquement que nous sommes en état d’urgence économique, en d’autres termes, quand votre grand frère lui-même vous traite d’incapable, la morale ne vous donne qu’un droit, M. le président, c’est celui de vous taire même si la démocratie vous donne toujours le droit à la parole. Quand on vous confie encore une fois le ministère des Finances en 2010, et que par incompétence en matière de gestion des Finances de l’État, maintenant en matière de gestion des finances de la famille, c’est

une autre histoire, M. le président. Toujours est-il que par incapacité et incompétence dans la gestion des affaires de l'État, vous faites chuter le taux d'investissement de 69% dans un trimestre suivi de 46% - par incompétence et par incapacité - et vous mettez encore une fois le pays sur le cap de la faillite comme vous l'aviez fait en 2003, 2004 et 2005, vous n'avez qu'un droit, c'est celui de vous taire, M. le président, encore une fois, même si la démocratie vous donne le droit à la parole. Quand vous vous présentez devant l'électorat, avec une promesse, avec un engagement, avec un *commitment*; quand vous êtes élu sur la base d'un programme avec un partenaire, quand vous demandez à la nation de vous confier une responsabilité donnée; *to entrust you with a specific mandate*; quand vous dites à la nation que vous la représentez avec un mandat spécifique, et ensuite vous décidez pour d'obscures raisons familiales, M. le président, d'oublier ce mandat, de trahir ce mandat, de vendre votre parole, encore une fois la démocratie vous donne toujours le droit à la parole, mais la morale ne vous donne que le droit de vous taire, M. le président. C'est bien connu, M. le président, 'moralité pas rempli ventre.'

Let me come back to the hon. Leader of the Opposition qui, dans son discours, comme je l'ai dit, sombre dans l'incohérence quand il commente sur les taux comparatifs etc., etc. Il oublie de nous dire. Il le sait, c'est un homme très, très bien informé. En 2011, la Grande Bretagne a eu un taux de croissance de 1.6% ; la France 1% et les États Unis d'Amérique 1.8%. L'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition est un homme très bien informé, il le sait très bien, mais il ne parle pas pour informer la nation, il parle pour la galerie, M. le président. Il parle à ce peuple qu'il a appelé admirable et intelligent, il fut un temps. Démagogie, M. le président !

L'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition commente sur l'augmentation des revenus de la TVA et ensuite l'honorable madame Navarre-Marie, l'honorable Baloomoody et l'honorable Uteem suivent les même traces en commentant, avec des trémolos dans la voix, l'augmentation

de revenus de la TVA, en oubliant qu'en 2002, c'est ce même gouvernement, ce même *Leader* de l'opposition, quand il était ministre des Finances, a augmenté la TVA, pas les revenus, le taux de la TVA, de 50% en une année, de 10% à 12% et de 12% à 15%. On vient maintenant nous faire des leçons en termes d'économie, en termes de la TVA.

Evidemment, l'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition ironise sur la non-croissance des revenus des impôts sur les sociétés, en faisant croire à la nation que nous sommes des *soutireurs*, M. le président, que nous sucions le sang du petit peuple, mais laissant de côté les grandes sociétés. M. le président, puisqu'ils sont des lettrés économiques, de grands intellectuels, ils le savent très bien.

Par honnêteté intellectuelle, M. le président, le ministre des Finances prévoit un taux de 4% dans la croissance économique l'année prochaine. Quand on prévoit une contraction de la croissance économique, c'est clair que la production, *output* production, ne va pas croître, cela va probablement baisser. Quand l'*output* production baisse, la profitabilité probablement va baisser. Quand la profitabilité baisse ou demeure constante, évidemment il n'y a pas de croissance d'impôts sur les sociétés. Cela aussi, il le sait très bien, M. le président. Encore une fois, il parle pour la galerie. Démagogie, M. le président !

L'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition et beaucoup de membres de l'autre côté ont critiqué la taxe de 10 sous sur les SMS, plaidant supposément pour les jeunes. L'honorable *Leader* de l'opposition parle d'un malheureux R 140 millions que les caisses de l'État vont engranger oubliant que le petit frère, tellement chéri aujourd'hui, n'a pas trouvé quelques millions, pas un malheureux R 140 millions, mais quelques millions que l'honorable madame Sheila Bappoo avait demandé à l'époque pour employer une dizaine de personnes pour s'occuper d'enfants battus, d'enfants malheureux, d'enfants maltraités au point où l'honorable madame Sheila

Bappoo n'a eu d'autre recours que d'en faire état publiquement. Aujourd'hui, on vient nous faire la leçon sur R 148 millions qu'on appelle malheureux R 148 millions. Démagogie, M. le président !

Il déclare quand même, cependant qu'il existe une marge de manœuvre budgétaire pour frapper un grand coup dans le social, M. le président, pas un coup, mais un grand coup dans le social. Démagogie, M. le président ! Le *Leader* de l'opposition sait très bien que nous devons le faire, en notre qualité de gouvernement responsable, et surtout au vu des grands risques que nous pourrions courir en 2012. Tout le monde le sait, l'honorable Uteem, qui possède et gère un *Management Company*, comme nous le savons, le sait très bien puisqu'il conseille les investisseurs que le contexte économique mondial est en tendance négative, M. le président. Tout le monde le sait. La littérature économique demeure générale. La bonne littérature économique parle d'un *impending depression*. Tout le monde le sait. On sait très bien que dans ce genre de contexte, il nous faut tout faire pour relancer les investissements et donner un coup d'accélérateur à notre machine de production. Cette machine de production est le secteur privé, M. le président, qui emploie 85% de notre population active. Le *Leader* de l'opposition devient maintenant un grand pourfendeur du secteur privé, se présente en Zorro du petit peuple et déclare sereinement que - *the private sector has been given more than they asked for*, mais tout en ce faisant - subtilité, M. le président - le chancre, l'apôtre, le champion de cette grande revendication du secteur privé, une roupie moins forte, voire une roupie dépréciée.

Qu'ils soient des gens responsables, M. le président. Qu'ils parlent au moins dans l'intérêt du pays et non pour la galerie, pour ce que la presse va mettre comme titre le lendemain. Instead of whispering sweet nonsense in the ears of the people, let them be responsible politicians, even if they have not ruled the country for so many years! Hon. Uteem says:

‘Government selling dreams and delivering nightmares’, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and asking us to do some thinking process. I do not know whether they do thinking process, but one thing that we know they do is talking process. That’s not a problem - happily hitting like that, one after the other, on the private sector, whom they call the fat cats. After having hit hard on the fat cats, they are going to sit very happily, even more happily at the table with the fattest of the fat cats and eat *camarons* and drink champagne with them. I could go on and on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

La jeunesse, le 3^{ème} âge, les orphelins, etc mais le petit frère n’est pas en reste, M. le président. Le petit frère a dit, et je cite –

« Le Père Noël est passé avant le 25 décembre pour les capitalistes. »

He does not understand that the measures contained in this Budget are responsible ones and they constitute a firewall around the country to protect us and protect this economy.

Again, demagogy, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is a poor attempt. He mentioned *le Père Noël* and *le 25 decembre*. We know, they know, but outside also they know, that for certain people, one year ago, *le Père Noël est arrivé en TGV et est passé pour certaines personnes avant le 31 decembre*. They know that, I know that. My good friend, hon. Li Kwong Wing, who is not here, contrary to what he said in 2010, has not qualified the 2012 Budget as what he called “Pick Pocket Budget”. I further note that the former Minister of Finance is now sitting fairly next to him, closer to him, cousin sort of.

I also noted the remarks made by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee on the metayers. Saying that - of course, discovering, a year and a half ago only - that there existed a group of people in Mauritius, beaten down, exploited, who were called the metayers, and saying that I, hon. Sayed Hossen, was in charge of that dossier and that the metayers are still crying that nothing has been done for them, and their land is being snatched away.

If the hon. lady, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, were she honest - I don't mean the moral kind of honesty - I know that she has that sort of honesty, I have no doubt. Nobody around here in this House or outside of this House has a single shadow of a doubt about the moral honesty of the hon. lady, of the hon. Members of the MSM in this House or outside of this House. But I am talking about intellectual honesty. If she had some intellectual honesty, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, she would have asked herself: why did Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who had been Prime Minister for 15 years, not even realize that there was a category of people in Mauritius called metayers. She would have asked her colleague, hon. Nando Bodha, who was Minister of Agriculture, what did he do. Hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Minister of Agriculture, what did he do? Metayers had to wait until 2006, then, that the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, be sensitive to their plight and bring the reform of the conditions of the metayers as an essential condition of the reform of the sugar cane sector. It was the doing of the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and now somebody, who has as allies in her party, a former Prime Minister who had been Prime Minister for 15 years, two former agricultural Ministers who come and blame us, and she knows very well, she has been a Minister. She sat in Cabinet for one and a half years, why did not she bring up the issue of metayers?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, such demagogy reminds me of a story. If you will allow me, I will tell that story which, my good friend, the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure told me some time ago. There was that priest, and somebody came to visit him. They were discussing and he asked the priest: "what do you do? How do you spend your time? He says: " I look after myself and then I pray." He asked: "Do you pray all the time?" He said: "Well, most of the time." The visitor said: "Do you pray for everybody?". The priest said: "Well, I pray not only for anybody, but I pray for all the creatures of god." Then the visitor said:"When you see a

demagogue, do you still pray for him?" The priest said: "No, my son. I pray for my country." I will pray for my country also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I shall now refer to my Ministry.

I see that the Chief Whip is looking at me and pointing his watch to me. My Ministry comprises two Divisions namely the Industry Division and the Commerce and Consumer Protection Division.

In this era of globalisation, our manufacturing sector, which employs around 113,000 workers, that is, more than 20% of the workforce, is expected to generate a total output of Rs130 billion and accounts for 18% of the GDP. Of course, this sector is evolving in a very highly volatile and competitive environment which has been further worsened by the renewed economic crisis or rather impending recession triggered by the Euro Zone Crisis.

I am happy to state, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that our manufacturing sector has performed relatively well despite the crisis. Allow me to mention a few figures; in 2005, the manufacturing sector had a negative growth of 5.5%, after we know what, we know who.

After 2005, the manufacturing sector has steadily progressed to reach 2.2% growth in 2010 and we are forecasting 3.7% for 2011 and, within the manufacturing sector, we have the export oriented sector. Again, the former sector, what we used to call, the EPZ (Export Processing Zone), from 2002-2005, went down. Until 2005, the export-oriented sector reached a negative of 12.3%. However, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, since this Government came into power in 2005 the trend has been reversed. The sector has recorded a positive growth of 8.2% in 2006, 11.2 % in 2007, and 1.6 % in 2008 - financial crisis in the world.

In 2009, we had a negative growth financial crisis followed by a nuts and bolts economic crisis. Negative growth of 0.9%. In 2010, the sector has rebounded with a growth of 6.5%, and this year the growth rate is expected to be between 6% and 6.5%.

I will come to the details, but I would wish to point out that these achievements have been made possible due to the various bold economic reforms taken by this Government since 2005, to create confidence in the country and in its people, and among local and foreign investors. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, confidence brings investment; investment brings production; production brings jobs; jobs bring income, and income allows people to live, to prosper and progress. You must be either totally lacking in understanding or you must be the archetype of demagoguery not to understand or to pretend not to understand what investment is all about, what confidence is all about, This is exactly the context in which these tax dividends, tax on interests and the Capital Gains Tax have been removed.

De toutes les façons, M. le président, aucune loi n'est gravée dans le marbre, may be at one moment in time it had a justification, maybe. Hon. Uteem was talking about what backpedalling. These taxes as the Capital Gains Tax had caused investment in property development, *dans l'immobilier*, to stagnate totally. The construction industry, had we continued along these lines, would have been completely dead within two years' time. We have just to go out and ask the people in the construction industry. There was an absolute need, an essential need to remove the Capital Gains Tax if we are to restore confidence. Dividends and interests - capitalist, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Probably, very wealthy people have money in banks. So, they earn interests. Very wealthy people also have equity and share in companies and they also earn dividends. Middle income people also earn dividends. They have some savings in the bank. They also earn interests and it was a wise move to restore confidence, to show to the people that we trust them and that they should trust us, to show to the external world that they can trust this country to remove these taxes.

Risks are here and, today, our enterprises have to operate in a world that is changing so fast that we can only say that it is characterised by unpredictability and risks. To survive, our enterprises should imperatively reorient their business models, reinvent themselves and harness their strengths to exploit hidden opportunities.

Therefore, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to give new impetus to the industrial sector, various policy measures will be implemented over the next three years by my Ministry.

First, greater synergy will be created between the public and the private sectors. For that reason, I have set up an Industrial Advisory and Monitoring Committee comprising public and private stakeholders to monitor the performance of the manufacturing sector and advise us on measures that could be needed in case there is a problem.

Second, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we need to harness knowledge and information for business advantage. For that, my Ministry will launch an “*Observatoire de l’industrie*” which was started a number of months ago under my predecessor. We are going to launch it next month to provide the business community with information and data on technology, market trends, investment flows, profiles of competitors and trade agreements.

Third, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are revisiting our export promotion strategy and we have agreed together with the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development and the Minister of Tourism and Leisure that we are going to not really merge, but have joint operations together between the Board of Investment, Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority and Enterprise Mauritius. We are going to jointly, formulate an action plan to attract FDI in the manufacturing sector.

I would like to mention, very briefly, some new growth poles for a diversified industrial base, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I see that time is running out. In general, what I wanted to say,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that we can no longer afford to depend heavily on the textiles and clothing industry and a narrow product range. This strategy is risky and fraught with danger. So, we feel that there is an urgent need to diversify our industrial base and move into sectors where we can develop a competitive edge in a bid to enhance the resilience of our economy.

Amongst others, we have identified four sectors into which we are going to invest efforts and time and we hope that we will be able to make these new poles some success stories within a few years. These include medical devices, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, like a seaweed processing industry which had started under the aegis of my colleague, the hon. Minister for Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology and the Mauritius Research Council; a platform for trading in jewellery and gem stones, and a regional platform which would serve as an exchange platform between Africa and Asia.

We are also planning to hold an annual industrial fair not really industrial but an annual fair where we hope we will be able to sell Mauritius to the world and make it a yearly event. We are planning also - that was an idea that was shared with me by my colleague, the hon. Minister of Labour, hon. Shakeel Mohamed - on the setting up of a “*Village des Métiers*” which will include -

- (i) a textile museum;
- (ii) a market place for the exhibition and sale of high value products;
- (iii) a food court, and
- (iv) appropriate facilities for the implementation of the said project.

Under my Ministry, we also have a few support institutions like MAURITAS, Assay Office, Mauritius Standards Bureau and Enterprise Mauritius which, I am happy to say, are

doing very well. I would like to have some more time but, unfortunately, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I cannot afford that.

I would like to say a few words on the Consumer Protection Division of my Ministry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The Commerce and Consumer Protection Division plays a vital role in facilitating trade and ensuring a constant supply of basic commodities for the country, while protecting the consumers from unfair trading practices. In this respect, we look after trading, import and export, consumer protection, legal metrology which is a very, very important institution in my Ministry as well as after consumer education.

I wish now to say a few words on the State Trading Corporation (STC) before I conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The STC has a very important primary mission to ensure that there is adequate and regular supply of essential commodities in the country and this role will stay and will be reinforced. STC will continue to be used as the price stabilizer in the market whenever the need is felt.

The activities of the STC allow us to supply ration rice to the nation which is sold at Rs5.40, in spite of the fact that it costs Rs8.42 a pound. Wheat flour is sold at Rs 5.85 despite the fact that it costs Rs8.48 per pound and LPG, cooking gas, where the real price of one 12-kg cylinder is Rs510, is sold at Rs300 only. Subsidies on these commodities in 2011 will amount to Rs1.347 billion. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this, of course, allows the population to get products of very good quality at a very affordable price.

STC, which has the mandate of supplying beyond the country with its essential products, has also a role to play in the region. We are looking at a larger role, a broader role for the STC in the petroleum industry, just like they do in the Seychelles which is a smaller country with a population of less than 100,000. Seychelles is a major trading partner in the Indian Ocean.

To move towards these objectives, my Ministry is defining a road map and is planning to resort to external expertise to develop Mauritius into a regional Oil Terminal and to become a stakeholder of a certain substance in the regional oil business.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will now conclude. Let me conclude by again reiterating my congratulations to the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for his excellent Budget. It is a responsible Budget with a long term vision. This Budget is about eliminating inequality gaps, alleviating poverty, providing opportunities to all Mauritians, unlocking the potential of our SMEs, stimulating investments and savings, creating employment, protecting the vulnerable groups and enhancing the resilience of the economy to face new challenges ahead.

The 2012 Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has set the tone for that. *M. le président, un article du grand journaliste français Jean-Claude Guillebaud, paru dans Le Nouvel Observateur, il y a à peu près un mois, m'inspire mes remarques finales. Nous avons pratiquement tous dans cette Chambre - du moins, ceux et celles qui ont prononcé un discours et ceux et celles qui en feront - fait une compétition de chiffres. Nous avons tous subi ou fait un assaut de statistiques.*

Loin de moi, M. le président, l'idée de sous-estimer l'importance des chiffres, tel que les taux de croissance, les mesures de performances ou autres statistiques.

Mais qui peut croire une seule seconde, M. le président, que la politique se ramène à cela, à la raison calculatrice, comme le dit, Jean-Claude Guillebaud ? Et là, je le cite directement - « Lorsqu'elle devient hégémonique, la "raison calculatrice" est une forme étriquée de la bêtise. »

Elle ouvre un chemin dont l'aboutissement est inhumain. Le culte infantile des statistiques conduira les décideurs loin de la vraie vie. J'ajoute, M. le président, que cette vraie

vie est faite de « ressentis », « *what you feel* » que l'arithmétique est incapable de prendre en compte.

Ces « ressentis » sont, par exemple, l'indignité profonde de la misère, l'injustice des inégalités qui sont le fruit d'une histoire elle-même inégale, l'humiliation, le dédain, la solitude de l'exclusion, ces « ressentis » ne sont pas mesurables.

Un projet politique, M. le président, s'il doit aussi intégrer des chiffres, est d'abord une vision, un dessein. Notre projet politique, comme démontré par ce Budget, est inspiré par un souffle de mansuétude, par un esprit de justice et de compassion – celui du Premier Ministre, le docteur Navin Ramgoolam.

Ce budget, M. le président est une brique, une grande brique, mais c'est une brique dans l'élaboration de ce projet. C'est pour cela que nous sommes convaincus que notre cheminement est profondément humain parce qu'il a pour objectif la réalisation de la vision et du dessein politique et social, de mansuétude, de justice, de compassion et de générosité du Premier ministre, le docteur Navin Ramgoolam.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Deputy Speaker : Yes, hon. Ramano!

(3.11 p.m)

Mr K. Ramano (Second Member for Belle Rose and Quatres Bornes): M. le président, le budget qui a été présenté par l'honorable ministre des Finances présente des mesures que les membres du gouvernement ont louées et applaudies systématiquement comme le veut la tradition mais sans grande conviction. Ils ont fait la même chose l'année dernière.

L'ironie, M. le président, ce qu'on défait aujourd'hui a été applaudi hier par tous les membres de gouvernement et on ne se rappellera jamais assez les bonne paroles du ministre Xavier-Luc Duval à l'égard de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, alors ministre des Finances.

L'honorable ministre a de plus condamné cette année le fait que plus de 60% de mesures n'ont pas été exécutées. En ce faisant, M. le président, on ne peut pas imaginer un blâme aussi cinglant à l'égard du Premier ministre lui-même, l'honorable Navinchandra Ramgoolam. Pour chaque budget présenté, l'honorable Premier ministre a toujours réclamé une copaternité comme si bien souligné par l'honorable Reza Uteem. Il a toujours réclamé une copaternité que ce soit Rama Sithanen, Pravind Jugnauth ou Xavier-Luc Duval. Les mesures ont été discutées en profondeur l'année dernière et l'honorable Premier Ministre les a défendues de tout son cœur. N'est-il pas surprenant que le ministre des Finances abolisse la même mesure concoctée et défendue par le même Premier ministre et son colistier spécial monsieur Andrew Scott. De quoi lui faire perdre son latin à ce British ? Que s'est-il passé pour que ce qui était si bon l'année dernière soit devenu si démoniaque ? Ce manque de constance dans leur approche en si peu de temps est un signal d'instabilité et d'incompétence lancé à l'investisseur tant local qu'international. Il n'est guère surprenant que les investissements soient en déclin et en particulier le FDI.

Ce qui est encore plus triste M. le président c'est que les mesures fiscales de l'année dernière sont aujourd'hui applaudies non pas parce qu'elles sont susceptibles de laisser plus d'argent entre les mains des consommateurs ou de stimuler la croissance mais bien plus pour régler leur compte avec un adversaire qui quelque mois de cela était encore membre de ce même gouvernement. Quel signal lançons-nous à nos jeunes et aux membres du public en général ? Cessons d'être indignés si les jeunes du pays expriment leur manque de confiance et du dégoût

envers la classe politique dont le rôle premier est de servir et guider la nation. L'honorable Xavier Duval a quand même le mérite de présenter un budget avec un emballage d'expert en communication dont le contenu laisse à désirer. On a évoqué quelques problèmes mais on est passé à côté des vrais problèmes de société. Le ministre vient de l'avant avec quelques mesures relatives à l'inégalité de richesse et de sa création mais n'a rien à proposer pour rétrécir cette inégalité dans la distribution des revenus. La distribution des revenus continue d'être tirée vers le haut, l'indice de GINI continue à démontrer une disparité alarmante et grandissante entre ceux qui sont les mieux lotis et les 'pâtis' de la société. Malgré les belles paroles du gouvernement, les statistiques sont là pour les contredire. Le '*unemployment rate*' est stationnaire aux environs de 8% en général pendant les derniers sept ans. Les fondamentaux économiques ne sont guère impressionnants. Quand le Bureau de l'Audit énumère, explicite les cas de gaspillage de fonds publics aucune mesure n'est annoncée de façon concrète. M. le président, avec raison l'honorable Reza Issack l'a dénoncé.

Le règne de la corruption, une violation constante de la méritocratie, les nominations bidons à la tête des instances cruciales de notre économie et les aveux de favoritisme venant de la gueule même de requin, chouchou de DSK, c'est cela la bonne gouvernance à la sauce rouge et bleu.

Le ministre est silencieux à ce propos dans ses mesures. Quel message lançons-nous aux instances internationales ? Prenant en compte le parcours professionnel et académique du ministre, on s'attendait à des mesures phares quant aux concepts de bonne gouvernance et d'*accountability*. Tout en étant un instrument de développement, le budget doit véhiculer des mesures fortes à l'intention des investisseurs. M. le président, il faut sans cesse le rappeler que

la crise financière et la crise du crédit ont leurs racines dans la violation des paramètres de l'éthique et dans l'absence de transparence.

M. le président, que nous soyons au gouvernement ou dans l'opposition, le chômage est un danger permanent pour notre harmonie sociale et notre stabilité économique. Nous avons besoin de projets capables de générer de l'emploi et des revenus pour cette ressource humaine non-utilisée. Au lieu de faire dans la réalité, le gouvernement a adopté une approche non-structurée et tend à berner la population en faisant croire que des milliers d'emplois ont été créés. M. le président, si des emplois productifs ont été créés comment justifier un taux de croissance de 4% et un taux de chômage de 8% pour les sept dernières années ? Comment expliquer encore que les revenus de la taxe affichent un manque d'un R 1 milliard. Clairement, M. le président, nous ne sommes pas en train d'administrer nos ressources économiques d'une façon optimale. C'est précisément dans cette ligne de pensée que je souhaite parler de l'industrie touristique, un secteur qui, une fois restructuré, présente le potentiel d'absorber notre ressource humaine non-utilisée et d'assurer par la même une croissance appréciable de notre économie. Quelques années de cela, le Premier ministre annonçait en fanfare l'arrivée de deux millions de touristes d'ici 2015. Il convient de rappeler que ce chiffre fut avancé sans aucune étude empirique. A la base avant d'annoncer un objectif gouvernemental, il convient d'assurer un environnement propice pour assurer sa réalisation, de contrôler la performance et les dépenses du secteur d'une façon professionnelle dans un environnement où la *good governance* et l'*accountability* soient les maitres mots. Notre politique gouvernementale ne peut être en reste. Si vous le voulez bien M. le président, analysons ensemble quelques chiffres du secteur.

Le taux de croissance du secteur touristique ne dépassera pas 4.8% cette année en comparaison à un taux de 6,2% l'année dernière. L'année dernière j'ai attiré l'attention de cet

auguste Assemblée à l'effet qu'à ce taux de croissance nous sommes très loin de l'objectif de deux millions de touristes pour 2015. Notre bilan dans le secteur est loin des prévisions de Boeing ou d'Airbus qui reflètent notre potentiel. Je trouve les membres de gouvernement sur la défensive quand on aborde des sujets d'importance nationale.

Il est temps d'appeler un chat un chat. Boeing prévoit une arrivée touristique de 6.5% en comparaison à 7.5% pour Airbus. M. le président, je cite ici les chiffres des opérateurs indépendants qui prévoient la vente des sièges de leurs avions.

Cela révèle une chose, M. le président. Nous ne sommes pas à la hauteur de notre potentiel, et cela influence négativement notre *GDP growth* et la création d'emplois. Le taux de chômage est toujours alarmant pour les derniers sept ans. Les revenus totaux sont estimés à R 42,5 milliards, représentant une augmentation de 7.7%. D'une période de séjour de plus de treize nuits des années 80-90, nous sommes passés à une moyenne de huit nuits. Ceci s'explique en partie par le coût relativement élevé des chambres. La raison du raccourcissement de la durée du séjour doit être notre priorité, car elle répond à nos préoccupations du secteur hôtelier et aussi bien aux préoccupations du gouvernement central en terme d'entrée de devises étrangères.

Un package plus compétitif renversera cette tendance tout en assurant un revenu plus attractif. Les études de ces trente dernières années ont démontré que la demande suit une élasticité de prix pour la destination mauricienne.

Le secteur privé annonce par ailleurs une surcapacité de 18%, ce qui signifie que les investissements n'assurent nullement des revenus optimaux. Personne ne souhaite hériter d'une situation où on a raté des occasions, où on se retrouvera dans des scénarios où le fameux slogan 'squelettes dans placard' reviendra avec force.

La vision du Premier ministre est trahie par ses actions. Il est un fait que le dernier remaniement ministériel suit plus une logique d'opportunisme politique qu'une logique de *putting the right people in the right place*. Les occasions ratées par l'indécision ou l'incompétence laissent un secteur en appréhension d'un avenir sombre.

Le ministre annonce de bonnes intentions pour réformer les institutions gouvernementales et augmenter leur performance.

Comme je suis sur ce point, l'année dernière on a annoncé la création d'un *Economic Intelligence Unit* au ministère du Tourisme. Dans mon discours de l'année dernière, j'ai déploré le fait que même si le *Mauritius Strategic Plan on Tourism*, publié en 2009 pour la période 2009-2015, fait mention d'un *proper market intelligence*, on attend toujours les premiers rapports de l'*Economic Intelligence Unit*. Il est à déplorer qu'il n'y ait pas de rapport sur le profil des touristes et sur la perception des touristes. Il est temps qu'on redéfinisse la collaboration entre le *Passport and Immigration Office* et le ministère du Tourisme avec la mise en place de l'*Economic Intelligence Unit*. Aucun *marketing strategy* n'est possible sans une définition et une analyse approfondie de la clientèle qu'on souhaite exploiter.

Autre institution, M. le président, est le *National Economic and Social Council* duquel on attend toujours des rapports pertinents sur la performance socioéconomique du pays, ou encore la *Tourism Authority*, où des dossiers dorment dans des tiroirs ou sont traités selon les caprices de certains nommés politique. La *Beach Authority* est devenue un loueur de parasols par excellence, ou encore un expert en *design* pour convertir les toilettes en restaurant. Le roi Midas avait le don de convertir tout ce qu'il touche en or ; le nommé travailliste Subash Seeruttun convertit les toilettes en restaurant.

M. le président, malgré le potentiel que représente le tourisme, l'industrie touristique doit faire face à des défis importants; l'industrie de l'aviation est étroitement liée au tourisme. La majorité des compagnies affiche des baisses conséquentes de profits. Les compagnies traditionnelles comme Air France ou British Airways affichent des chiffres inquiétants, avec des *overhead* conséquents. Air Mauritius, face à la crise de l'euro et en raison de notre politique de change, a peu de chance d'afficher des profits.

Nous faisons face aujourd'hui à une concurrence plus féroce, et le centre des affaires n'est plus concentré sur l'Europe. L'Afrique commence à sortir lentement de sa léthargie. La Chine et l'Inde connaissent une croissance à pas de géant. Nous sommes sur la bonne voie sur ce point, et je pense que nous récolterons les dividendes de notre politique aérienne et touristique dans cette région.

La MTPA doit constamment suivre sa performance en respectant des *benchmarks* établis. Nous votons des sommes faramineuses pour la promotion touristique, mais nous sommes toujours dans le flou total concernant les retombées de ces campagnes de promotion pour chaque sou dépensé.

Il convient de faire une juste balance entre les paramètres de quantité et de qualité. Un juste dosage s'impose. Quel pays viser ? Il convient de rappeler que les touristes allemands dépensent quatre fois plus qu'un touriste moyen. Logiquement, sur une base purement économique, il serait plus judicieux de considérer des marchés avec un retour d'investissement plus profitable. Il convient de rappeler que le chiffre de deux millions ne peut être considéré sans une évaluation sur son impact tant direct qu'indirect sur l'environnement. Est-ce que deux millions de touristes est un chiffre optimal quelque soit le marché visé et quelque soient les dépenses journalières ? Il convient d'examiner les conséquences externes et de bien peser le pour

et le contre avant d'adopter une politique. Le monde a aujourd'hui atteint un niveau critique, où le triptyque profit/population/planète demeure incontournable. La communauté internationale y veille au grain. Un investissement responsable demeure un atout majeur.

Les études récentes que sont les *Oxford Economics, liberalisation report* de *EU Intervista* ou la *IATA* report sur les politiques d'accès aérien tendent tous vers une libéralisation du service aérien sur Maurice. Une connectivité adéquate assure des bénéfices de l'industrie touristique à 1% du GDP. Il est important de souligner qu'il existe une disparité sérieuse entre ce que le voyageur souhaite payer et le prix actuel pratiqué. Maurice doit adopter une politique plus agressive d'investissement dans le secteur d'aviation. Ce dernier représente un effet catalyseur dans le *cluster development industries* que sont les services financiers, la logistique, le voyage, le tourisme bien sûr, et d'autres services professionnels à travers une connectivité adéquate.

Il est impératif que ceux qui sont responsables du tourisme sachent apprécier la part du secteur d'aviation dans le *GDP growth*. A titre d'information, il est bon de souligner que *l'economic footprint d'Emirates* représente 11.7% du GDP. L'effet catalytique est bénéfique tant pour le tourisme que pour le reste de l'économie.

Une meilleure connectivité, à part d'être bénéfique aux passagers, implique des investissements infrastructurels. Une compétition saine engendre nécessairement des bénéfices financiers et des services aux passagers. Dans la même optique, un *high wage policy* est la bienvenue. Cela a été citée - c'est la bienvenue - et c'est pratiqué à Singapour. Des compagnies opérant dans le bas de gamme technologique seraient alors obligées d'investir dans la technologie, assurant plus de plus-value.

Pendant près de quarante ans, la promotion touristique s'est construite à travers la compagnie nationale d'Air Mauritius. Il convient de réinventer notre modèle, afin de s'assurer

que le secteur de l'aviation soit la locomotive dirigeant les wagons, dont le secteur touristique en fera partie entre autres.

Air Mauritius a été le pivot de l'industrie touristique, la fierté nationale, exception faite du *hedging losses* et des extravagances des vice-présidents et autres directeurs en période de crise. Ce statut de fierté ne peut se faire au détriment de l'économie en général. Air Mauritius a eu suffisamment de temps pour s'épanouir et renforcer ses ailes. Elle sera toujours un opérateur majeur, mais faisant face à la compétition. Le temps est arrivé de voir les choses d'une façon dépassionnée. Le temps est arrivé de ramollir notre position avec une étude approfondie, avec un débat approfondi quant au *fifth freedom rights*, et de cesser d'insister sur la réciprocité. La compétition encouragera la croissance d'Air Mauritius. Une politique plus transparente dans le recrutement et dans la gestion financière y résultera. Elle sera condamnée à résister aux interventions politiques malsaines et d'être plus *customer-oriented* avec la pratique d'un tarif plus compétitif. Les possibilités de formation pour des postes de responsabilité, telles que l'ingénierie, le transport et autres *managerial courses* assureront par la même ce *high wage policy*.

Un changement de politique concernant l'accès aérien est capable de générer 34% à 39% de croissance dans le trafic. Selon les études établies, cette croissance du trafic proviendra directement d'une baisse du tarif qui est lui même le résultat d'une meilleure gestion des coûts.

M. le président, en 2009, il était prévu qu'une libéralisation des accès entraîne une baisse de 31% du tarif, la création de 1,900 *high quality jobs*, de 6,500 emplois indirects et d'une arrivée additionnelle de 323,000 de touristes additionnels à moyen terme. Les incitatifs aux SMEs dans le secteur touristique sont les bienvenus. Ces sommes se révéleront être un non sens sans une analyse du *multiplier effect*, sans des législations adéquates, sans une formation

appropriée et adaptée aux besoins du secteur. Les opérateurs économiques revendiquent depuis toujours et le revendiquent encore - une formation plus adéquate au secteur est plus qu'une nécessité.

La catégorisation des hôtels renforce l'image de marque sur le marché international. On s'attend à ce que cette mesure prône une image d'équité, de bonne gouvernance et d'honnêteté intellectuelle. Il était temps d'envoyer un signal fort aux visiteurs qui sont souvent bernés par des campagnes de promotion à titre individuel. Ils sont sûrs d'avoir un meilleur rapport qualité prix. Toutefois il incombe à la *Tourism Authority* de procéder en toute transparence et célérité et qu'elle ne renouvelle pas la triste expérience de délivrance de permis de plaisanciers à certains ministres et autres nommés politiques dont la compétence dans le domaine est plus que légendaire.

L'extension et la construction d'un nouveau terminal de l'aéroport était *long overdue*. Nous l'accueillons bien sûr, M. le président.

Le personnel là-bas doit être apte de passer d'un stade de *day-to-day management* à un stade de *monitoring* efficient ; la conduite des études permanentes pour évaluer la performance des services, les attentes des passagers et la diffusion adéquate des informations aux passagers sont un *must*.

M. le président, l'image de Maurice a été ternie tristement par le meurtre du touriste irlandais. Les cas d'agression qui s'élèvent à une moyenne de 600 chaque année contre les touristes ne font pas honneur au pays. Il convient de réintroduire la police du tourisme qui s'est trouvée réintégrer sous le ERS depuis l'année dernière. Dieu seul sait pourquoi. Il convient d'avoir un personnel formé, instruit pour faire face à des situations extrêmes et savoir rassurer les victimes qui sont, rappelons le, au pays que pour une période de huit jours en moyenne.

L'extension des caméras de surveillance - qui soient en marche bien sûr - est un must dans les quartiers dits sensibles.

M. le président, le ministre des Finances, dans son discours du budget à la nation, stipule et écrit à la section consacrée au tourisme un slogan ronflant: '*back to basics*'. A quoi se résume ce '*back to basics*', M. le président ? Nous savons tous ce qu'a été la vocation des succursales du ministère que sont la *Tourism Authority*, la *MTPA* entre autres.

Prenons le cas de la *Tourism Authority*, M. le président. Le *Programme-Based Budget Estimates* de 2010 énumère d'une façon précise la vocation de la *Tourism Authority* que sont le *licensing, inspection of tourist enterprises, enforcement of regularity* mais comme par magie, cette vocation se trouve, encore une fois, détournée de son rôle premier pour redevenir le tristement célèbre: *cleaning and embellishment agency*.

Nous savons tous le rôle politique qu'a joué la *Tourism Authority* dans les circonscriptions 4, 17, 18 et 20 pour ne citer que celles là. Si la *Tourism Authority* est responsable du *cleaning and embellishment programme* du pays, pourquoi ne pas fermer les services de voirie dans les différentes municipalités, le service du ministère de l'Environnement ou encore le département de nettoyage du ministère des Infrastructures Publiques – coller, décoller.

M. le président, face à cette absurdité politique, nous avons un drame humain. Plusieurs dizaines de personnes ont cru dans les belles paroles de certains hommes politiques qui n'ont pas hésité à exploiter les conditions de misère de ces gens là. Dans ma circonscription, il y a une bonne quinzaine qui travaillent toujours dans la précarité depuis plusieurs années.

Ces *manual workers* de la *Tourism Authority* sont restés sur une base contractuelle et précaire pendant plusieurs années et sont renvoyés de la *Tourism Authority* au *local Government*

alors que pour d'autres, après de bons et loyaux services pour le *Leader* pendant la campagne électorale, ont vu leur contrat terminé brutalement après les élections. On n'avait plus besoin d'eux M. le président.

Le ministre du tourisme a parlé de tourisme médical. Quoique le tourisme médical serait souhaitable, il faut nous rendre à l'évidence que, dans ce secteur, nous serons appelés à nous mesurer à certaines nouvelles puissances médicales telles que la Thaïlande, l'Inde et la Singapour. Les soins dentaires à prix forfaitaire sont devenus la spécialité des européens de l'Est en l'occurrence la Hongrie, la Roumanie et la République Tchèque. La Thaïlande et l'Inde se sont spécialisés dans les greffes d'organes, de spécialités en cardiologie et en chirurgie à cœur ouvert. A ce stade, que pourrions nous proposer dans ce secteur sauf les belles plages et les hôtels. Nous ne sommes pas contre le projet mais nous ne sommes pas reconnus comme une puissance médicale et nous n'avons aucune expertise mondialement reconnue pour relever les défis du tourisme médical. Nous avons entendu la triste expérience dans la PNQ de ce matin M. le président. Il faudra encore une fois nous tourner vers un transfert de la technologie sans pour autant négliger les services publics.

A cette fin, ce serait souhaitable que le *Blue Print* pour l'implémentation de ce projet soit rendu public le plus vite possible et aussi que soient rendus publics les mécanismes pour la mise en place du projet afin d'atteindre les marchés sinon ce projet restera toujours au niveau de rêves comme il l'a été ces dernières années.

Dans le même ordre d'idée, M. le président, les membres de cette Assemblée ont accueilli, avec satisfaction, l'augmentation du *quantum of grant* à R 500,000 pour les malades inopérables à Maurice. Nous accueillons tout aussi bien la décision d'une implémentation

immédiate de la mesure suite à une proposition de l'honorable membre, le docteur Satish Boolell.

M. le président, un autre chouchou des bleus : le Festival Kreol. Le Festival Kreol est devenu une vache à lait pour le coq ! Soyons sérieux si vous le voulez bien, M. le président ! Le Festival Kreol a coûté R 9,2 millions en 2006. Qui dit mieux? R 13,9 millions en 2007; R 21,172,000 en 2008 et R 18 millions en 2009. Quelles sont les procédures qui ont été suivies, comment les fournisseurs ont-ils été choisis? Vous serez surpris de connaître les *shareholding structures* de ces compagnies M. le président.

D'un point de vue culturel, M. le président, le ministère des Arts et de la Culture a démissionné devant ses responsabilités. Il serait intéressant de savoir pourquoi le Festival Kreol ne fait pas partie de son calendrier d'activités. Est-ce que la culture se résume aujourd'hui à une question de 'boute' ou de quota? C'est ça ma question, M. le président.

M. le président, ne soyons pas surpris lorsque les chiffres pour l'édition de Festival Kreol 2011 seront rendus publics - dans le détail s'il vous plaît. Il y aurait des surprises, de grosses surprises, M. le président, parce que les *big brothers* et les *big Joes are back*. Qu'avons-nous à répondre à la classe moyenne, M. le président ? Cette classe moyenne où on les appelle tous les jours - et on pose la question à la classe moyenne, à toutes les classes bien sûr : avez-vous joué au Lotto aujourd'hui ? C'est cela l'avenir du pays, M. le président ?

M. le président, depuis sept ans, le Premier ministre et les membres de son gouvernement nous assomment avec le concept de la démocratisation de la richesse et des revenus. L'intention est sans nul doute bonne mais il est temps de se rendre à l'évidence que dans le concret, rien n'a été fait. Oublions le comité de démocratisation de l'économie où les membres sont grassement payés des fonds publics, mais ont été incapables de produire le moindre rapport jusqu'à présent.

Et, ce n'est surtout pas la colistière de ma circonscription qui me contredira à ce propos, M. le président. On n'a légiféré aucune politique à cet effet, on n'a vu aucun projet d'une magnitude significative qui soit au juste la base de ceux, propriétaires de la richesse. Bien au contraire, M. le président, la classe moyenne continue à être plumée. Nous constatons aujourd'hui un appauvrissement de la classe moyenne que ce soit du service civil ou des professionnels en général.

M. le président, prenant en considération le *time preference value of money* on aurait dû maintenir le seuil à ce que c'était l'année dernière pour les *taxpayers*. Au taux d'inflation annoncé, lorsqu'on déduit le nouveau seuil proposé le *taxpayer* est bien mal loti de ce qu'il était l'année dernière. Prenons l'exemple, pour les *taxpayers* avec *three or more dependents* le *net present value* révèle un chiffre de Rs450,740.23 qui est bien moins que le chiffre initial de R 465,000. Ce type de malhonnêteté intellectuelle est présent tout le long du budget. Ainsi les pensionnaires en ont aussi fait les frais.

Les salariés arrivent difficilement à comprendre la logique de prévoir une compensation salariale uniquement pour ceux touchant moins de R 30,000. Au lieu d'élargir la base des processus de démocratisation, le gouvernement est en train d'infliger une injustice à la classe moyenne. C'est sans surprise que la disparité des coefficients de GINI s'est aggravée.

Avant de parler de démocratisation, il convient de rappeler qu'il est difficile pour les investisseurs honnêtes d'avoir accès à un emplacement ou à une portion de terrain face au pillage du patrimoine national à Balaclava, à Palmar ou même les Salines, entre autres, par les agents politiques du gouvernement. On aurait souhaité qu'avec l'introduction du *LAVIMS project* il y ait une transparence dans la gestion des terres de l'Etat. Il est regrettable qu'un *pin code* soit prévu seulement pour les terres privées alors qu'il existe une opacité totale sur la disponibilité ou la non

disponibilité des terres de l'Etat. Pourquoi autant d'opacité pour les terres de l'Etat, M. le président ? Cette information il faut bien le souligner n'est aujourd'hui à la disposition que des agents politiques qui agissent comme courtiers pour certains.

M. le président, Mark Twain a été plus que flatteur de la beauté du pays. L'*Index Branding/Futureland* classe Maurice à la septième place des pays étant plus attractifs en beauté naturelle. La destination de Maurice est première en Afrique mais au vingt deuxième rang dans le monde. On ne doit pas continuer de s'asseoir sur ses lauriers et de dire que nous sommes les meilleurs en Afrique. On le dit toujours : le borgne est toujours roi parmi les aveugles.

M. le président, pour la deuxième partie de mon discours, je compte faire quelques commentaires sur les mesures fiscales annoncées dans le budget. Le concept de *First Time Buyer* a été reconduit l'année dernière après son abolition lors du fameux budget de 2006. Ainsi ceux qui achètent pour la première fois des terrains vagues sont exemptés jusqu'à une somme de R 750,000 alors que ceux qui achètent une maison ou un appartement sont exemptés jusqu'à une somme de R 1,5 million. La différence de prix est taxable à 5% normalement. L'exemption a été maintenue cette année mais il convient de souligner, M. le président, que le seuil prévu pour les exemptions ne reflète pas les prix pratiqués sur le marché que ce soit pour les terrains vagues ou pour les immeubles résidentiels bâtis. On trouve difficilement sur le marché des terrains vagues à R 750,000 ou des maisons à R 1,5 millions. Je propose au ministre de reconsidérer l'exemption de terrains vagues jusqu'à une somme de R 1,5 millions au moins et les maisons et appartements jusqu'à une somme de R 2,5 millions au moins.

M. le président, cette suggestion a une certaine logique car dans le budget de 2012 présenté par le ministre des Finances, provision a été faite de la réintroduction du jadis *Housing Development Certificate* qui existait avant le *Finance Act de 2006* pour l'exemption de la taxe

de vente et d'achat pour les *low cost housing units*. Maintenant, le concept a été re-introduit pour le *middle income group* pour les ventes des maisons n'excédant pas le prix de R 2,5 millions. C'est une décision qui va dans le bon sens, M. le président. Dans cette même optique, je réitère ma proposition pour que logiquement l'achat de maison pour les *First Time Buyers* soit exempté du *registration duty* jusqu'à une somme de R 2,5 millions pour les maisons et les appartements et R 1,5 millions pour les terrains vagues, M. le président.

Je tiens aussi à saluer, M. le président, l'exemption pour l'enregistrement des *deeds of loan* jusqu'à une somme de R 1 million. C'est avec satisfaction que je constate que ma modeste question parlementaire du 01 novembre n'est pas restée sans réponse. Je propose toutefois que pour rendre l'exemption des maisons de R 2,5 millions plus effective le *financing aspect* doit être pris en considération. Il n'y a pas d'achat sans financement d'où la proposition d'exempter les *deeds of loan* des *first time buyers* et des acheteurs des complexes pour les *Middle Income Group* jusqu'à une somme de R 2,5 millions.

L'endettement de la population constitue un drame affectant les familles mauriciennes. Avec raison, mon collègue, l'honorable Reza Uteem a souligné le calvaire des victimes de *sale by levy*. L'endettement pour un achat immobilier se taille la part du lion. Il appartient à ce Parlement d'alléger le fardeau fiscal des familles mauriciennes, surtout de la classe moyenne.

Pour terminer sur cet aspect des choses, M. le président, je demande au ministre des Finances de revoir lors de l'adoption du *Finance Act* les conditions relatives au *First Time Buyer*. A titre d'exemple, ceux qui ont déjà vendu leur bien et qui ne sont propriétaires d'aucun bien actuellement ne sont malheureusement pas éligibles et ne peuvent bénéficier de l'exemption du *First Time Buyer*. C'est une anomalie de la loi qu'il va falloir corriger, M. le président,

M. le président, les professionnels de l'immobilier sont restés sur leur faim quant à la réintroduction des conditions attachées au *Additional Stimulus Package* relatives à l'immobilier introduit en 2009. La taxe de vente, c'est-à-dire la *Land Transfer Tax* était ramenée à un taux unique de 5% et la vente des appartements pour les projets d'appartements dépassant les R 50 millions était exemptée de la taxe de vente et du *Registration Duty*. Je parle ici des projets dont le prix des appartements dépasse les R 2,5 millions. Cela a malheureusement pris fin lors de l'adoption du *Finance Act* de 2010.

M. le président, le secteur de la construction est en crise. C'est un fait. Quand la construction va tout va. Tel n'est malheureusement pas le cas actuellement, M. le président. Il convient de prendre des mesures incitatives qui touchent toutes les fourchettes des prix et pas seulement les appartements à R 2,5 millions. La majeure partie des prix des appartements aujourd'hui dépasse les R 2,5 millions.

M. le président, j'ai été contre l'introduction du *Gains Tax* en 2010 et je salue donc logiquement son abolition en 2011. Je m'explique. Je suis de ceux qui pensent que la taxe tue la taxe, car la sur-taxation de l'immobilier freine nécessairement la consommation. Il n'est pas juste de dire que cette taxe concerne seulement le gros capital car une charge additionnelle sur le dos du promoteur est logiquement répercutée sur le dos de l'acheteur. C'est un fait que malgré la crise internationale il existe une inflation galopante dans le secteur de l'immobilier à Maurice, M. le président.

M. le président, je fais un plaidoyer comme je l'ai fait l'année dernière pour l'application du *Land Transfer Tax*, la taxe de vente au taux de 5% à 10% pour les terrains agricoles sous plantation de canne. Nous parlons de démocratisation, la nécessité de protéger la communauté

des planteurs, mais il convient d'avoir un régime particulier pour la communauté des planteurs, M. le président.

Il convient de rappeler qu'un régime différent a toujours existé et est appliqué pour les terrains agricoles sous plantation de canne. Avant le fameux *Finance Act* de 2006, le *Land Transfer Tax* n'était pas imposé aux vendeurs des terrains agricoles alors que les acheteurs étaient imposés au taux de 2% seulement comme frais d'enregistrement. Le contexte est différent dans le secteur agricole. La marge de profit est différente entre terrains résidentiels et terrains agricoles. M. le président, les planteurs de canne doivent être encouragés à diversifier leurs investissements face aux aléas du prix du sucre sur le marché européen. Il convient de le préciser. La marge de profit n'a rien de comparable, je le dit. C'est une injustice de taxer les terrains agricoles à la même enseigne que les terrains résidentiels. Il convient d'avoir un régime différent comme cela était le cas avant 2006 sous le *Sugar Industry Efficiency Act* et sous le *Sugar Sector Package Deal Act*.

M. le président, l'accès à la terre a toujours été un sujet émotionnel. Dans un souci de ne pas créer une inflation importée et de permettre l'accès de la terre aux mauriciens, la *Non-Citizen Restriction Property Act* définit d'une façon explicite les conditions à respecter pour l'achat des biens immobiliers par les étrangers. Il est un fait que les mauriciens n'arriveront jamais à concurrencer les étrangers en terme de pouvoir d'achat de propriétés. Il convient de limiter dans les zones spécifiques la possibilité d'achat par les étrangers comme c'était initialement le cas lors du lancement des projets IRS en 2002.

Sous le *Investment Promotion Act*, la possibilité d'achat est ouvert *for business purposes* et là aussi, il n'existe aucune restriction quant au prix d'acquisition ni quant au lieu d'acquisition. Ils sont plus d'une centaine aujourd'hui à avoir bénéficié de cette aubaine. Les petites et

moyennes entreprises mauriciennes méritent une protection face à la concurrence étrangère et nous savons tous le poids de l'acquisition de la location des locaux sur le budget des petites entreprises, M. le Président. Le fait d'être propriétaire de son local facilite nécessairement l'obtention d'un crédit.

La porte est aujourd'hui grande ouverte pour l'acquisition des appartements par des étrangers et là encore, pas de restriction quant aux superficies, aux prix et aux lieux. La démocratisation de l'économie est un non sens sans une protection des mauriciens quant à leur chance d'accès à la propriété.

Dans le budget, au paragraphe 82, mention est faite –

« We are also amending the law to enable Permanent Residence Holders to purchase an apartment. »

M. le président, il convient de préciser que le nombre de personnes qui sont concernées par une telle mesure, tenez-vous bien, M. les Président - les détenteurs des *occupational permits* qui ont droit, après trois années, de faire une demande de *Permanent Residence Permit*, en 2010, le nombre était de 7,278 regroupant les investisseurs, les professionnels et les *self-employed*. En 2011, le nombre s'élève à environ 8,000 ou plus. A ce chiffre, il faut bien ajouter le nombre de *IRS houses* qui aussi donnent droit au *Permanent Residence Permits* qui est aujourd'hui à environ 400 ou plus.

Les honorables Membres de l'autre côté de la Chambre ont rassuré que les mauriciens ne seront jamais étrangers dans leur propre pays. Cette condition ne sera respectée seulement si des conditions sont appliquées quant à un seuil, quant à la superficie, le lieu et surtout un minimum quant au prix d'achat. Je dois dire que je ne suis pas contre la possibilité d'achat par les

étrangers, mais il faut bien que cela soit fait dans des conditions spécifiques car les mauriciens ne pourront jamais concurrencer les étrangers en terme de pouvoir d'achat.

M. le président, il n'y a pas de développement sans démocratie. Le développement est un non-sens sans démocratie. A entendre les députés et ministres de la majorité, les projets pullulent les circonscriptions. Avec un tel bilan, pourquoi avoir peur de l'électorat ? Pourquoi abuser de cette majorité relative pour violer la démocratie ? Les habitants seront notre seul juge. Si vous êtes si fier de votre bilan, que vous assumerez vos responsabilités en tant que démocrates, que vous mettez votre bilan à l'épreuve des urnes. La population sera au rendez-vous pour vous affronter et vous donner la leçon que vous méritez.

Merci, M. le président.

At 3.55 p.m the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 4.28 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair

The Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment (Mr S. Dayal): Mr Speaker, Sir, I wish to congratulate my colleague, the vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development for having presented a balanced and ambitious Budget to the nation, especially in a difficult international economic environment and perspective.

We all know how Europe, our main trading partner, is mired in a deep debt crisis - a crisis, Mr Speaker, Sir, which is seriously undermining and precipitating the downfall of Government of many countries like Greece, Spain and, not later than a few days, Italy. Europe has practically gone bankrupt and is now being regarded as a lost continent. France, Mr Speaker, Sir, which was once considered as the bedrock of the EU is also struggling to emerge from this crisis. It has been forced to have recourse to a series of very stringent measures to curb its national budget deficit and to prop up economic growth.

In the circumstances, Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is a well-balanced budget to spur investment and economic growth. At the same time, it has laid a strong emphasis on the social dimension of development and has taken one step further all the measures that we have been implementing since we assumed power in 2005 and even between 1995 and 2000.

All these measures were taken by Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and not by the MSM in spite of the fact that they had been in power from 1983 to 1995. The Opposition has been throughout the debate on this Budget stressing that we should have done more on the social side. The proposition is laudable, I do not dispute it. But, Mr Speaker, Sir, we should not be oblivious to the fact that our resources are limited. We can only do what our resources permit us. I am glad that this Budget has taken on board the risk that we have to face in the context of the fragile and even dangerous economic situation now prevailing in Europe. What is worse is that we do not know when the economic financial turmoil is going to be resolved. Therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Opposition has to be fair and reasonable and not try to draw a political mileage on the back of those who deserve more support and help. Mr Speaker, Sir, do the Members of the Opposition realise the extent of social coverage in this country? Indeed, Mauritius is one of the rare very few countries that have got such an extensive social coverage for its people through the establishment of the Welfare State by the Father of the Nation, Sir, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam.

Mr Speaker, Sir, not less than 60% of our Budget is dedicated to social transfers namely: free education, health, basic retirement pension, support for the poor, support for medical treatment abroad, doubling of the old age pension, free transportation for school children and elderly people, just to name a few. Even countries endowed with natural resources cannot achieve what we have achieved in this country. Mr Speaker, Sir, I have heard hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee yesterday saying that hon. Pravind Jugnauth has re-established payment of fees for

the SC and HSC exams. It seems that she is oblivious to the fact that this measure was introduced by none other than Dr. Navindchandra Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister of Mauritius in 1997 when hon. Dr. Vasant Bunwaree was Minister of Finance.

The MSM and the former Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth had been at the helm of power since 1982 to 1995, not a single measure, Mr Speaker, Sir, was taken to further consolidate the Welfare State established by the Labour Party. We should not forget the saga of removing subsidies in 1982 on rice and flour at a time when the people of this country were in dire difficulty. I repeat, Mr Speaker, Sir, SAJ was the PM. Since the Labour Party came to power in 1995, in its very first mandate under the Prime Ministership of Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam doubled the old age pension from Rs500 to Rs1000 - and to be fair, the MMM was together with us - the first social measure to help the poor. Second, Mr Speaker, Sir, support for medical treatment abroad which has now been increased to Rs500,000, who introduced this measure if not Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, the Prime Minister of this country? Who introduced the extending of support for casting of slabs to the poor if not again the Labour Party in 1997? The ZEP school, Mr Speaker, Sir, the list is long but I am just mentioning a few - that was the first mandate, Mr Speaker, Sir. Then we lost the election and we went. Again show me one single measure that goes in the direction of consolidating the Welfare State. Just show me one in favour of the poor between 2000 and 2005. None! Instead, VAT was increased by 50%.

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I proceed further, I should like to convey my heartfelt thanks to the hon. Prime Minister because this Budget reflects and translates his vision of a modern Mauritius, a Budget that is meant to chart the course of and spearhead Mauritius into the next decade. The Prime Minister has been faithful to his beliefs and has delivered on what he has always promised to the people of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I do not want to repeat all the points raised by several Members on this side of the House with regard to the Budget. There is already a national consensus that this Budget is fully responsive to the needs and aspirations of the population of this country. Before I talk on the activities of my Ministry, I would like to take some time of this House to refute some of the points that have been made by Members on the other side of the House, in the MSM corner and, particularly, by the MSM Members.

Mr Speaker, Sir, they engaged themselves in a series of futile arguments in an attempt to project the image that they were loyal, they were honest. They were loyal and honest to whichever partner they allied with. How far from the truth, Mr Speaker, Sir! In a minute I am going to demonstrate that the MSM is a party of opportunists and always uses its partner either to come to power or stay in power. Mr Speaker, Sir, how a party which had roughly 5% of the votes and now I think it is about 2%, a little less than 2%, remained in power from 1982 to 1995 and then in 2000 to 2005? How? It is because they allied themselves either with the MMM or the Labour Party, the two main parties. They are like empty bags, Mr Speaker, Sir, they cannot stand on their own. Somebody yesterday mentioned they are like parasites, on the back of either the Labour Party or the MMM.

Mr Speaker, Sir, let me now turn to my own case. I would not have come to my own case but while listening to hon. Mrs Maya Hanoomanjee yesterday, she opened the Pandora box and talked lengthily, Mr Speaker, Sir, on the *soi-disant* loyalty that I feel compelled to raise the issue of sabotage and dishonesty that I suffered in the hands of the MSM during the last elections in 2010, that is, last year. Mr Speaker, Sir, I live it, I saw it and I experienced it. Everybody knows that I left no stone unturned to help, to assist the Leader of the MSM to get elected in the by-election of 2009. I contributed massively, Mr Speaker, Sir, to ensure that the MSM leader got

elected. And, he was elected, Mr Speaker, Sir! I almost took him by the hand to every nook and corner, literally speaking, in the Constituency. He was alien to the Constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I still remember how many Members on the other side of the House came to me, they pleaded : When are you coming? When will the Labour Party help our Leader? Because '*Ashok ti pu manze zot kri sa!*'. My involvement in the by-election was such that after the election I was overwhelmed, Mr Speaker, Sir, that when hon. Pravind Jugnauth, the leader of MSM was elected by the number of messages of congratulation that I received from the MSM, after the declaration of the results?

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Leader of MSM did not hesitate one second to lift the banner of the Labour Party up, '*attrape pavillion rouge levé*' and this *au vu et au su de tout le monde*. Mr Speaker, Sir, I also cannot refrain from talking of the experience and trauma that I underwent during last year's general election, the 2010 general election. After the by-election and during the general election, the trust, Mr Speaker, Sir, and the confidence that I had placed in them, the loyalty that I have shown to the MSM Leader was not reciprocated at all in the general election. The MSM agents were giving their support to the MSM candidates only. MSM candidates only! They were openly campaigning against me. When the campaign started, Mr Speaker, Sir, my agents came to me, they reported to me that the MSM supporters were systematically campaigning against me in the Constituency. Their objectives were to ensure - and this is very important - that their Leader tops the list. Yes, Mr Speaker, Sir, this was their sinister objective, and with the blessing of the high command. That was very important.

When it was reported to me, Mr Speaker, Sir, I raised the matter with the MSM Leader. I told him: do you recall how I organised the by-election in each of the 20 Polling Stations?

Mr Speaker, Sir, I organised meetings with the MSM activists and the Labour activists, created a synergy and he got elected. And, what happened, it is the contrary in the general election, Mr Speaker, Sir! They were given instructions by the high command to sabotage me in the bid to top the list!

I was told - *par des notables* - that they wanted the two MSM to be elected. I would have been a thorn in their flesh had I been elected '*parce ki mo lérat circonscription, sa pou gène zott.*' They do not go to the Constituency and he is known as 'Mr Excuse' in Constituency No. 8. 'Mr Excuse' means that every time he has to apologise because he cannot be present. He knew well in advance that I would have been a thorn in his flesh. So, two MSM and one in the Opposition – an easy life - and this is what they looked for!

Mr Speaker, Sir, I raised this matter with the hon. leader of the MSM, but to no avail. The sinister motive was already there. I even gave him names, Mr Speaker, Sir, of the MSM activists who were working against me. At times, the Labour activists in front of him mentioned names, but to no avail. Nothing was done, Mr Speaker, Sir, to stop that practice. I went to the Prime Minister's Office and informed the hon. Prime Minister, how the campaign was being orchestrated. I said that I don't mind, I will fall in honour, but I won't retaliate the way they are doing. I told my agents, my activists that the ultimate aim is important, that hon. Dr. Ramgoolam will be the Prime Minister, that is most important. '*Mo pran bal là dan mo l'estomac*' I told them that I won't follow them.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I was squeezed in the campaign. I was left on my own. I had to fight my own battle. I still remember the slogan, '*PAL*'. I was also in the Central Campaign Committee, I told my friend Deva "*bœuf dan disable laisse mo alle débrouiller papa.*' Pal means '*Pravind Ashok Lila*' throughout the Constituency. I thought that we just won a by-election and that this is

going to be reciprocated to me - oh my God! Mr Speaker, Sir, to make matters worse for me, during the general electoral campaign and on the election day, an armada of agents throughout the island were posted in all 20 Polling Stations - my colleagues hon. Baloomoody and hon. Lormesh Bundhoo are aware. There were 20 Polling Stations. They were posted in all the 20 Polling Stations, Mr Speaker, Sir. Posted scientifically! This is very important! It is important to look after the interests of the MSM Leader as if there were no alliance, Mr Speaker, Sir. My election - thank God! - was due essentially to my proximity with the people of the Constituency No. 8 and also because of the works I had done in the Constituency. This House will bear testimony that I am one of the rare MPs, who, each Tuesday through PQs, at Adjournment time, Debate Time addressed the problems of my constituents. That's no secret, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have demonstrated our sincerity of purpose during the 2010 General Election. But again, Mr Speaker, Sir, let me repeat that this was not reciprocated at all by the MSM. What happened to me, happened in almost all the constituencies in the island, to a lesser extent, but my case was different. In a Labour *bastion*, I accepted two MSM candidates because it was based on trust, confidence and sincerity. But, it was not all the case Mr speaker, Sir! The faith was betrayed, Mr Speaker, Sir, and yet they got guts, *l'audace de dire* that they were loyal, they were sincere, always sincere. And this is what their Leader always says, 'principle'. *Trahison* is their principle. You will find him very cool, but let me tell you in this House, history will bear testimony; he is not cool, but a cold guy. Mr Speaker, Sir, because of their culture, which is altogether different, all this happened. What is their culture? This is good to know. What is their culture? Egotism, self-centeredness, selfishness, *moi, moi, que moi! Bane la ti bizin M, M, M! Moi, moi, que moi!* That is me, myself and I!

Yesterday, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee had the guts to say that practically all the MSM candidates were elected first; topping the list. How can one explain, Mr Speaker, Sir? I am a mathematician. I have been there in the Constituency. I put the question: how on earth can one explain that a party, which has more than 45% of the vote base in a Constituency, its candidates trail behind a party, with a maximum of not more than 5%; today it is 2%, a little less? At the same time, bragging, boasting that they are the strongest party in the country!

Mr Speaker, Sir, how did candidates top the list? How do you explain that, if not through dishonest practices and disloyalty to their own *colistiers*? I have proof, but today is not the forum to say it. When somebody before the general election congratulated him, telling him 'congratulations, you are getting elected', he said '*zis élu pas important. Sorti tête de liste qui pli important.*' So, a strategy was orchestrated, a master plan was put, so as to top the list. From the by-election to the general election, again after he has been elected, I took him everywhere. He saw my popularity in this Constituency; and knew that I was a threat. He said to people '*Dr. Navin Ramgoolam premier, Beebeejaun premier, Xavier pu premier, Arvind premier, Bachoo premier, mais moi comment mo kapave second ou troisième?*'

(Interruptions)

Bhagwan is an exception!

This is their culture, the MSM culture, the Sun Trust Culture, the Med Point Culture, the money culture, the *paisa, paisa, paisa* culture, Mr Speaker, Sir, and only *paisa!* I tell them to be patient. Time will unfold and tell. *Ils ne perdent rien pour attendre.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee made a list of cases which, according to her, constitute mega scandals at the STC. But all these matters, all these issues were known to them before the general election. They were in this House; they were Members loyal to the

Government, and disloyal to this side of the Opposition. If they felt very strongly about them, why did they join *l'Alliance de l'Avenir*? Lure for power, *faire vision sa chaise vice-premier ministre et ministre des finances là!* On the part of the MSM, this is utter dishonesty. One language in the Government, quite another in the Opposition. Just like the case of Mrs Rehana Ameer, they did not raise a single finger, Mr Speaker, Sir, when the case was mentioned. They were in the Government; I was also in the Government. My friends will recall what happened to employees at the Bank of Mauritius. They were reinstated. At Mauritius Telecom, they were reinstated. We were in Government; they too had back benchers. Don't play double standard! This is the MSM culture; double standard.

Hon. Maya Hanoomanjee - selective memory, amnesia, memory playing truant - must also speak about the Sun Trust scandal. By the way, in 1996, this was my first PQ in this House. What about the Sun Trust lease contract with the State of Mauritius? *Si sa pas béton, qui sa veut dire béton?* The famous contract between the Sun Trust and the Government of Mauritius regarding the lease of the building to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment was signed, if I am not mistaken, by the then Prime Minister, Sir Anerood Jugnauth; himself as President of the Trust, while also being Prime Minister of this country.

Mr Speaker, Sir, a ten-year lease at the rate of Rs640,320 a month, that is, Rs7,683,840 a year and Rs76,838,400 for the ten-year period. I should like to repeat in this House: Rs640,320 a month, Rs7,683,840 a year, and Rs76,838,400 for the ten-year period. This is the Sun Trust culture. If there is a party in Mauritius that always had a money culture - I would like to refresh the memory of hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee - it has been the MSM, and I am going to demonstrate how.

Let me start Mr Speaker, Sir, with the Sun Trust. This building has been qualified, and rightly so by the MMM and the Labour Party, as *le monument de la corruption et de la honte*.

Now, let us come about the contract; contrat en béton. Let me look at the facts first. My first question is: who signed the contract? Who, Mr Speaker, Sir? Maybe, I should refresh their memory a little bit. Isn't it the then Head of the Government, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, who was also the Chairman of the Sun Trust? Was it ethical? Was it moral for the Head of Government and also, Chairman of the Sun Trust, to sign a contract with the State of Mauritius? Who is talking about morality in this House, Mr Speaker, Sir? The MSM? Of all people, the MSM! And, when we, in 1996, decided to leave that 'monument de la corruption', the Sun Trust chose to sue Government for the unpaid rent for the remaining period of the lease.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have a copy of the judgement regarding the Sun Trust game. It is common practice in every lease between the State of Mauritius and any other party that there is an exit clause. This is a standard and long-established practice. In other words, if Government decides to *résilier le contrat*, it should give a reasonable notice - I think some three months' notice - before doing so. That is what we call an exit clause. Why is there no exit clause in the case of Sun Trust? Why was the clause not there? Why did the then Government depart from this long-established practice? I would like the Leader of the MSM, and other MSM Members who will intervene after me, to furnish an answer to the House and to the public as to why this was not so. Mr Speaker, Sir, they have to provide an answer. Why was there no exit clause in the lease agreement with the Sun Trust? This is what the people of this country want to know.

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Let us go to the judgement of the Supreme Court when Government was sued. This is one of the defences that Government gave and, I quote, Mr Speaker, Sir, -

“That the plaintiff - that is the Sun Trust - had failed to take any steps to find alternative lessees for the premises.”

Who was the Attorney General then? Was he an elected Member of the MSM Party? It is quite normal that the Government was represented in court by a representative of the Attorney General's Office and he or she takes instructions with the Attorney General regarding the stand he or she has to take in court in a particular case.

The question is, Mr Speaker, Sir: why did the Attorney General's Office not press upon the defence? The question also is: why was there no evidence adduced by the Government to contradict the Sun Trust evidence? Why?

Again, I am asking: who was the Attorney General then? Was there some sort of connivance when the lease agreement was signed? Everybody knows that MSM was in power. We have to remember that when the case was tried, the MSM was again in power. Mr Speaker, Sir, one of the Permanent Secretaries in court said, and I quote

“I cannot say whether the rate paid was reasonable. I have no records at the Ministry. I cannot even say whether the plaintiff did take the necessary steps to look for the clients.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Judge further states in his judgement and, I quote -

“There was absolutely no evidence to contradict or to question the plaintiff’s claim regarding the loss and prejudice suffered as a result of the cancellation of the contract nor was there an iota of evidence adduced by the defendant that could show that plaintiff’s claim for damages is excessive and should be reduced.”

Why? Why such a big mismanagement of a case where the claim was to the tune of Rs45 m.? Was there some sort of connivance? Hon. Pravind Jugnauth was Leader then of the MSM, and yet, some people, Mr Speaker, Sir, have got the cheek, *l’audace*, the guts to talk of the money culture - ‘*Maja karo! Jouisseurs!*’

I leave it to the House and the public outside, Mr Speaker, Sir. Mr Speaker, Sir, I am not talking through the hat. This is all empirical evidence that the ‘*jouisseurs*’ are there, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Of course, I am not referring to the MMM and some other Members. I am just referring to this corner of the House. I will leave it to the public to draw its own conclusion. Today, they have eaten their ideologies. They have even eaten their principles. Before, I end on this note, Mr Speaker, Sir, I kept something for posterity, Mr Speaker, Sir. Everybody knows that in 1991, the MSM and the MMM went in election together, in Alliance. A few days before the general elections, at Goodlands, Bois Rouge, do you know what the then Prime Minister, Leader of the Alliance said at Goodlands? I have kept it for posterity, Mr Speaker, Sir, since 1991! And listen to what he said, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“Si mo pou en majorité mo capave dire MMM: ou capave aller ! »

Zote allié sa! The Alliance in 1991!

“Si mo pou en majorité mo capave dire MMM: ou capave aller! »

They were desperate for the Hindu votes. Again, listen to what he said -

“Mais faudrait qui ou soutenir moi! Si tou hindou soutenir moi mo pou enn partenaire majoritaire!”

Not only, ‘*nimak haram*’, not only disloyal but communal, Mr Speaker, Sir! Appealing to the Hindu community to vote for him! Mr Speaker, Sir, I will make a plea to the MSM Members - ‘*Retourne sa Rs45 m. là!*’

As Minister of Social Integration, I could have built several shelters, extend care and attention to the children, the poor and the vulnerable. ‘Service to mankind, they say, is service to God.’ You will be doing a very good job.

To conclude on this chapter, Mr Speaker, Sir, they have tried to paint and exaggerate the picture, as if SAJ, Sir Anerood Jugnauth, was the only person who developed this country. Now, let me say to this House what he himself said. It was in 1993, the 25th anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius. From 1976 to 1982, he severely criticised the economic policy of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam and the Labour party and yet had to admit. 1976 to 1982, he did it to win elections having an eye at vote bank. Now, listen what he said, I quote –

“J’ai personnellement réalisé dès 1982 qu’au niveau idéologique nous faisons fausse route.”

This is what Sir Anerood Jugnauth said in 1993. The Labour party was outside; we were not in Government. Can I continue, Mr Speaker, Sir? Who do not recall the contribution of Sir Gaëtan

Duval? Look, Mr Speaker, Sir, what he had to say! *Vous parlez du développement! C'est la vision du SSR qui a permis.* Let me quote, Mr Speaker, Sir -

“Boolell et moi sommes ensuite allés négocier les quotas sucriers. Ramgoolam avait été un visionnaire. Voilà ce qui a permis le développement du pays. Sans cela, il n'y aurait pas de zone franche, pas de développement du tourisme. Rien!”

This is what respected Sir Gaëtan Duval said. Now, let me quote what Vishnu Lutmeenaraidoo had to say. All this was in 1993, Mr Speaker, Sir, we were not in Government. It was on the 25th anniversary of the Independence of Mauritius, and I quote-

‘Parlons de la stratégie de développement dans les années 71 et 80. Monsieur Lutchmeenaraidoo pense que le gouvernement d'alors a eu la sagesse de reconnaître que Maurice était trop petite et adoptait une stratégie économique accès sur l'exportation donnant ainsi naissance à la zone franche et à l'industrie touristique.

Mr Speaker, Sir, one more before I end on this note. 23 août 1987, le Premier ministre Anerood Jugnauth –

«Les projets revendiqués par le MMM datent de Ramgoolam.»

So, you see, Mr Speaker, Sir, on this corner of the House, they have been trying to paint a picture that SAJ, was le *père du développement économique* – we will come later to it - he just sat on what the Labour party did et *récolté ce que nous avions planté.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, before I end, I will say a few things on my Ministry.

Needless to point out, Mr Speaker, Sir, that by setting up a full-fledged Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment in May 2010, this Government has demonstrated its firm commitment and engagement to eradicate absolute poverty in the medium term and empower the vulnerable groups of our society with a view to mainstreaming this

category. As highlighted in the Government Programme 2010-2015, this Government recognises that the human being is at the centre of sustainable development and that equal opportunity to participate in the development is a prerequisite to nation-building. We are, therefore, Mr Speaker, Sir, not paying lip service to poverty alleviation and economic empowerment of vulnerable groups, but rather we have come up with a clear vision and a coherent strategy in this respect.

The vision of my Ministry, as contained in the Programme-Based Budget of 2012 is to eradicate absolute poverty in the medium term and its strategy is to provide continued support for the empowerment of the vulnerable groups so that they can escape the poverty trap. In this respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Empowerment Foundation which falls under my Ministry has been structured along four pillars, namely,

- child and family development;
- placement and training;
- social housing, and
- community empowerment

with a view to providing an effective service delivery to the vulnerable groups.

In addition, the programmes under the child and family development pillar have been consolidated to provide maximum support to ensure the welfare of vulnerable children and their families.

Absolute poverty is a scourge, Mr Speaker, Sir, in any society and this has prompted the UN to come with the Millennium Development Goal in the fight against poverty. In this respect, as a caring Government, in our pledge to putting people first, we have, over the years, given

particular attention to UN Declaration and we are quite advanced in the attainment of these objectives as compared to other countries of comparable standard as Mauritius.

The achievements of my Ministry for the year 2011 are quite encouraging as not only we have met our targets in many cases, but also performed beyond. For instance, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Social Housing Scheme, more than Rs55 m. have been spent for the provision of 850 CIS housing units for the homeless and vulnerable families against the initial target of 500 units. A total amount of Rs48 m. has been spent for the provision of 400 concrete houses with CIS roof in Rodrigues, that is, more than 200 forecasted. In Mauritius, 30 concrete/CIS housing units have been constructed and 36 will be completed by the end of this year. It is to be noted that this scheme was launched in May 2011. The total cost of the unit is Rs165,000 of which Rs75,000 are disbursed from the NEF and the remaining Rs90,000 come from the CSR Fund. The contract was awarded in October 2011 for the implementation of an Integrated Housing Project at Gros Cailloux, Petite Rivière, for 59 families. The total cost inclusive of on-site infrastructure and facilities is Rs48.45 m. 22 concrete housing units are nearing completion at Dubreuil to house the vulnerable families currently living in the old tea factory. They will move to their new houses in February 2012. The total cost of this project including on-site infrastructural facilities is Rs21 m. of which Rs6 m. will come from the CSR Fund. A kindergarten and a Day Care Centre at La Valette will be completed by the end of November 2011 and will benefit some 55 children of the region.

Under the Child and Family Development programme, we have provided education support to around 21,869 needy students, including some 3,956 in Rodrigues. 4 Day Care Centres have been set up at St. Hilaire, Cité La Cure, Quatre Bornes, Résidence Père Laval and

Cité Vallijee. A fifth one will be completed by December this year at Poste de Flacq. Funds to the tune of Rs3.3 m. have been secured under the CSR for the operation of these centres.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, the National Empowerment Foundation has provided meals, transport facilities and *accompagnement scolaire* to some 2,338 children in Mauritius and Rodrigues. Rs17 m. have been spent in this respect. Two learning corners with IT facilities have been set up at Vallée Pitot and La Laura for the benefit of some 62 *bénéficiaires*. Another School Care Project has been implemented in Ste Croix to cater for 25 needy children with the assistance of Shell Mauritius under its CSR. A 'Learn to Earn' project has been implemented at Poste de Flacq to provide training in crafts to 20 needy students aged 16 to 21 years. 4 holiday camps have been organised for 64 needy children from Ste Croix, Triolet, and Tombeau Bay. *École des parents* sessions have been conducted since May 2011 in the region of St. Hilaire, Bois Marchand and Tombeau Bay to cover 58 families. Similar sessions, Mr Speaker, Sir, are being held at Cité La Cure and Ste Croix for 21 families. Life skill training courses are imparted to some 139 beneficiaries in Dubreuil, Sottise, Ste Croix, Tombeau Bay and la Valette, Bambous. Promotion of reading among children in deprived areas through the donation of some 1,726 books by Biblionet to 14 NGOs working with needy children. 6 out of 20 children who are presently taking up HSC examinations this year are being monitored and assisted by the NEF. Eight out of 38 scholarships awarded to laureates will be reserved in 2012 for students from families with a monthly household income, not exceeding Rs5,000. Concerning the Community Empowerment Programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, the NEF since June this year, is spending around Rs15 m. for the construction of drains at African Town and Saint Catherine as well as an access road at La Laura.

Thirteen vulnerable families at Le Bouchon have been provided access to drinking water. Toilet facilities have been provided to 6 families at Argy, Poste de Flacq and Belle Mare, 48 vulnerable families in African Town have been provided with drinking water and the construction of access roads and drains is under way.

Contract for the construction of a recreational centre at Camp La Boue, Terre Rouge, has already been awarded for the benefit of around 20 vulnerable families. Under the placement and training programmes, 3,716 people have been trained in sectors such as childcare project, construction, printing, garment, agriculture, sales and marketing etc. Of these 3,716, some 2,192 had only SC qualification and 810 below SC, 900 have secured employment.

In addition, 50 migrants have been placed in Canada and France. With regard to Rodrigues, Mr Speaker, Sir, over and above 400 concrete Cum CIS housing unit and providing education support to some 3,956 students. We have provided assistance for the setting up of income generating activities to 35 fishermen and unemployed or casual workers to the tune of Rs2.2 million. In addition, NEF have provided support to 6,765 needy, pre-primary and primary students under the eradication of absolute poverty programme, that is a daily balanced meal during school days, payment of monthly fee to the tune Rs 150 to those attending, pre-primary schools.

Under the capacity building, 33 artisans of Rodrigues were provided training in the handicraft sector, pluriculture, training of trainers in life skill management, pigs and goats rearing as well as meat processing.

On the other hand, 213 households have benefited from rainwater harvesting project and 104 persons have benefited from microcredit project to the tune of Rs4.3 m.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we are professionalising housekeeping works and 500 domestic workers will be trained by NEF, in collaboration with other NGOs. We are sponsoring free job training miniature.

There are also the pilot programme to empower vulnerable women through small scale farming project; loan at affordable rates; interest rates for SMEs; abolition of inscription fee leviable on registered loans for SMEs; short listing of SMEs in the list of restricted building procurement; increase in grant-in-aid to special education needs schools by 25%; access to *crèches* for the children of poor families; setting up of children nurseries; computation of CSR on chargeable income; shelter for *Sans Domicile Fixe*; payment of contribution to the NPF by Government in respect of those earning less than Rs3,000; contribution of Rs200 per housing unit per month for the setting up of syndic in all NHDC estates; consideration for family planning; setting up of profit Housing Development Trust; payment of only final third the housing unit to those earning less than Rs10,000; provision of Rs1.5 billion to the social housing development; construction of additional 600 concrete cum CIS houses in Mauritius and 400 in Rodrigues; construction of 600 units under the emergency housing schemes; inclusion of expenditure on campaign of NCD as a fourth priority in the CSR guidelines; putting in place of a Summer School Programme; use of a Social Register of Mauritius (SRM) as a powerful tool to maximise policy effectiveness in fight against poverty and in the application of housing scheme and *crèches*; raising the limit for entitlement to legal aid from Rs5000 to Rs10,000.

Mr Speaker, Sir, to end up it is good to say that the UN recognises those earning less than one US dollar per day as absolute poor, whereas we have increased this to households, those earning less than Rs5,000 which is far higher than what the UN has precised. Recently, India,

though an economically advanced country, has fixed the below poverty line to 32 Indian rupees, which is very low, compared to our situation.

I will conclude by pointing out that the theme “Growth for the Greater Good” of this Budget is most befitting and is not reduced to mere sloganeering as most of the measures proposed are meant for greater good of our population. It is only after we have created wealth that we can distribute it equitably to the deserved ones. The arguments of the other side of the House to the effect that this Budget is made for the *gros paltots* does not hold water as careful reading of the contents of the Budget shows that this Budget is, indeed, for the greater good of the majority of the population and not for a selected few.

Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(5.26 p.m.)

Mr S. Soodhun (Second Member for La Caverne and Phoenix): Mr Speaker, Sir, first of all, I would like to thank you for giving me this opportunity to speak on the Budget. I have to thank my mandates first for the fact that I have been elected and I have been representing this Constituency for the sixth time. As a Parliamentarian, we have to listen to all the views of all hon. Members. I can conclude that Members of Parliament are like lawyers, the Attorney General, we fight our case in the court and then we are friends outside the court case.

This afternoon, I listened carefully to the hon. Minister and I, personally, have been in alliance with the Labour Party since 1987; also we have worked in 2010, and the MSM is there since 1983.

If we listen carefully to the hon. Minister, it is today that they have discovered how the MSM is. In fact, it is not only in Parliament, but also outside the Parliament, that there is a panic

and as we used to say in Creole: *dhar dhari*, they are scared of Sir Anerood Jugnauth. It is written in the wall that Sir Anerood Jugnauth might come, might stand as candidate.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: No, Sir Anerood Jugnauth is, at present, the President of the Republic of Mauritius and whatever his future action would be, he cannot be subject to any debate.

Mr Soodhun: I accept your ruling, Sir. Let us put it like this: in fact, when a statement was made by the President, it has been considered as that. It is not exactly what he is going to do. But the Minister was talking about the Sun Trust, the last general election and the MSM, he said that now the MSM represents less, according to him, than 2%. I know very well - I have been participating in the negotiation with the Labour Party and the MSM - how, the leader of Labour Party urged the MSM to join the team in 2010, and at that time nobody was thinking that the MSM was a small party. It was really well mentioned by one of my colleagues from MMM that due to the participation of MSM today the Labour party is in power. We cannot deny it; this is the truth. If hon. Members fail to agree, it's their responsibility.

Concerning the SunTrust - I am proud, Mr Speaker, Sir, I am the President of the MSM party which exists since nearly 28 years - I am also going to ask the question as people outside there. The Labour Party is present since 75 years and during those 75 years they have not been able to have their headquarters. I don't agree with people telling you that they have a *l'écurie*. Whatever it is, it is the quarters of the Labour Party. We are proud of that.

Many MPs sometimes cross the floor or fight against the hon. Members of the other party. There is a lot of canvassing going on to become Minister. I have been Minister, not for the first time, but we, in the MSM, we were six Ministers who have never thought about our own comfort and our own interest. We have put forward the interests of the country and the interests

of our party. I do not think that many people can do it. I think only Members belonging to the MMM and the MSM who can do it.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it gives me a tremendous pleasure to stand here, on this side of the House, to address this august Assembly on the Budget Speech for the year 2012. On the outset, I will say that since 1983, the MSM has been associated with the Budget Speech for, at least, 20 times and this bears testimony to the fact that we have shaped the economic model of this country and the daily livelihood of our fellow citizens for all those years.

This year, we are on this side of the House whereas last year it was the Leader of the MSM, then vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, who presented the Budget Speech and this is because we were made to leave l'Alliance de l'Avenir for a number of reasons.

I am pleased to mention, Mr Speaker, Sir, that first there was a lack of consideration and a true partnership within the Alliance. We felt it; there is a lack of crucial decision-making for the betterment of the country. We have witnessed it. Lack of commitment to combat fraud and corruption and I am well placed to testify this issue. I'll give examples. Lack of team spirit and of communication with the Leader of the Alliance.

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is clear that history is repeating itself. The Labour Party does not give due consideration to its partner and we have witnessed this over a period of fifteen months. In the past, in 1995, a 60-0 victory of the Labour Party and MMM Alliance gave a historical opportunity for the new Prime Minister to show his leadership, but that Alliance crashed before two years and for the same reason which I have mentioned earlier, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, as far as I understand, from the lengthily press conference, the Government is under the wide misconception that this 2012 Budget has been well accepted by

the population. The Budget was titled: “Growth for the greater good” but days after Budget, people are still wondering for whose is this greater good.

Mr Speaker, Sir, when I took office as Minister of Industry and Commerce in 2010, I took certain initiatives to put some order in some of the institutions under my responsibility. The amount of wastage and incompetence I found was beyond imagination. It was practically impossible to get clear information on certain transactions made at the STC and STCM. Mr Speaker, Sir, I had no choice then to request for a forensic audit to be carried out at the STC and this exercise was done by Insight Forensics Services Ltd. The report submitted by IFSL is damning for some people, Mr Speaker, Sir. Questions have been brought to this Assembly on some of the issues raised in the report and we are still awaiting the conclusion of further administrative studies apparently being done. I hope that appropriate action will be taken and those who have looted will be taken to task. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will fail in my duty if, at this point, I do not mention a few issues that have made the population suffer and in one case, we will get the population to continue to contribute for, at least, next fourteen to fifteen years to come.

The first one, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the hedging transaction. No one in the Government....

Mr Speaker: I will have to draw the attention of the hon. Member to the oath that he had subscribed when he took office of Minister namely whatever information he acquired in his capacity as a Minister is written in this oath and that he should be very careful in divulging it except with the authority of the Cabinet.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am going to say is that this is known in Parliament as well as outside the House, especially in the newspapers. It is common knowledge. It is not only that it has been kept as a....

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member can generally criticise any issues - hedging or whatever he wants to criticise, but he cannot reveal to the House whatever privy information that he has got when he became a Minister. That is clear in this oath and he has to respect it.

Mr Soodhun: Yes.

Mr Speaker: I thought that somebody would advise you on this issue.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, what I am just mentioning has been mentioned in the House through PNQs and PQs.

Mr Speaker: The hon. Member has to follow the rules.

Mr Soodhun: Yes, but let me tell you, Mr Speaker, Sir, according to what has been mentioned in this House, as a Member and citizen of this country I am also suffering. It is not only when I was a Minister. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, I am not going through any report whatsoever. I am just going through what has been said in this Parliament in so many times. Mr Speaker, Sir, as I mentioned, we should not assume that it was one off transaction according to what the information we have in this Parliament and that it was one off mistake. It hurt me, it hurt everybody in this country due to the mismanagement, the lack of responsible decision that the Board of the STC has mentioned in this House, that on 23 July 2008, gave a covering approval for STC to engage in hedging transaction carried out with counterparties Morgan Stanley and Mitsui on 22 July 2008.

Let me tell you what has been said, Mr Speaker, Sir. I also read in the newspapers, many different information that we have outside the House and in the House. Only in September, the first consignment of white oil super unleaded and diesel arrived in August 2008 and was paid for in September 2008 and loss incurred in that month was Rs147 m. in one month and a loss was

sustained in every single month that followed and for December 2008 only there was a loss of Rs629 m. accumulated. What has been said in the information in the newspaper and all that.

Mr Speaker: I will have to inform the hon. Member that whatever has been said in the newspapers cannot be made the subject matter of a debate in the House. He must know how to make his speech.

Mr Soodhun: According to the information that I have, through 16 hedging transactions on Mogas and gasoil, has incurred a loss of Rs4.7 billion between August 2008 to June 2009 and STC had to recourse to the various instruments such as line of credits, terms loan and overdraft facilities to honour its debt to the counterparties by the end of the hedging contract in 2009.

Government provided the necessary guarantees to enable STC to raise those loans. It probably could not afford the risk of a severe hit on the country rating of Mauritius which should have been disastrous to the whole economy. To refund the debt incurred by them, STC increased the hedging provision in the petroleum price structure from Rs150 prior to hedging to Rs3 per litre. At this rate, STC collects about hundred million rupees monthly from the consumer of white oil and to refund the Rs4.7 billion debt. For anyone to come to say that hedging was terminated in July 2009, the STC does not owe anything since then and beyond May what do we do with the debt incurred to pay Morgan Stanley, ask the bank to write off the debt? Mr Speaker, Sir, what I have to say is, there has been no action. No action has been taken against the then people who are responsible for the hedging. I was told that in one day, one person takes the decision to hedge for R4.7 billion without having the approval of the Board of STC. Without having approval from the Government and on top of that, without having advice of the SLO and without the verification of the contract. No action has been taken. And who must pay? It is the population, the consumers. The consumers have to pay and, according to me, it is going to end

in two years, every month Rs100 m. that will make around Rs5.7 billion– no action, nothing. I have not said anything that has been written or sanction has been taken. Nothing! This continues, Sir, and we know. Another jackpot that we know – everybody knows the case of Red Eagle, that is Betamax. We climb on the roof and shout that we are for the good governance. Is it the good governance? And we believe in transparency. I have not seen any provision in the Budget that the Minister of Finance has put to combat the fraud and corruption and the case of Betamax is one example, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a real money pit. To start with the Red Eagle itself, according to the Galbraith's Time Charter Report, a specialist in oil tanker of brokerage renting a boat like RLR1 with the same characteristics as the Red Eagle cost US\$16,500 per day, that is, Rs478,500 per day, Betamax and STC, in a wisdom that defies logic, entered into a lease of US\$17.6 m. per year. So, US\$48,219 per day, that is, Rs1.4 m. a day. And instead of paying Rs478,500 per day for the oil tanker, the STC spends exactly three times. A consultant report had estimated that the cost of construction of the oil tanker would be...

Mr Speaker: Was it all revealed in this House?

Mr Soodhun: Yes, 60 million, Sir.

Mr Speaker: You assume your responsibility.

Mr Soodhun: Yes.

Mr Mohamed: On a point of order. I am just trying to follow what the hon. Member has said. For example, a consultancy report is being referred to. If the hon. Member wants to proceed, in my view, along this line, at least, we would like him to, at least, note and tell us that this was revealed in this House on that particular date, because right now otherwise where did he get the information from? That's the problem.

Mr Speaker: That is a very simple matter. If the hon. Member is saying that what he is talking about has been revealed in this House, he is assuming his responsibility. If that is not true, he can then be taken to task for misleading the House.

Mr Soodhun: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. I just want to repeat that a consultant report has estimated that the cost of construction of the oil tanker would be USD 65 million. How could STC agree to guarantee the annual payment of USD 70.6 m. for 15 years for a tanker costing USD 65 m.? With only the location, we can pay the cost of the ship, and the rest is jackpot. So, it is nearly about Rs8 billion.

Government is bound to acquire the Red Eagle by paying its full price of USD 65 m. in case of any breach of contract. Government could have acquired this tank by itself but, for some unknown reason, Government chose to forego this opportunity and to put only one family instead of putting the whole nation first. According to my information, STC has signed this contract without the approval of the State Law Office, despite the fact that the SLO has been involved in the approval of the cost of affreightment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: Mr Speaker, Sir, what the hon. Member just referred to was never divulged in this House. That's a fact. This was never divulged in the House and if he is referring to, he can't even tell us when this was, because this never was. If he says it was, it is not true.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, but I don't have the record in front of me. I don't know. I have just drawn the attention of the hon. Member to the fact that he was the Minister in that department.

He has taken an oath, and it is clearly mentioned in the oath that he cannot reveal whatever information has come to him in his capacity as Minister, except with the authority of the Cabinet. He said that whatever he is saying in his speech has already been revealed in this House.

(Interruptions)

I don't know. I don't have them in front of me. So, he, as a hon. Member of this House, has to assume his responsibility of what he is saying. That is my comment, and I'll stop there.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Speaker, Sir, on a point of clarification. The hon. Member is talking about a scandal and giving information with regard to that scandal - according to him it is a scandal. Members on the Government side will have the opportunity to reply to what he is saying.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Soodhun said "I was the Minister", and then he started his speech. Then, I drew his attention on this. I said if he wants to speak, he should know how to make his speech. As I said, my only concern is that, if ever any information has come to his knowledge as a Minister and he reveals that in the House, he is committing a breach of the oath that he has taken before the President of the Republic, and that is not correct. But he is telling me that it has been revealed in this House. So, if that is so, the hon. Member can carry on.

Mr Jugnauth: I had myself put a supplementary question to the Minister concerned with regard to whether SLO has been consulted and given its advice with regard to Betamax. I had put this question.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I am not disputing this. This is why I told the hon. Member that he will have to assume his responsibility.

Mr Soodhun: Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you. I am going to continue with the Red Eagle/Betamax scandal. Gradually they received more as the year passed while. For the first year, the amount of the freight was USD 17.10 per metric ton and, at the end of the contract - that is to say the 15 years - the STC will pay USD 21.11, an increase of 19%. STC is obliged to pay the transportation of 64,320 tons per trip. Even if the ship carries less - as an indication - its first trip to the tanker was loaded on 57,500 tons.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the company has been given the sole responsibility to carry the petroleum products for Mauritius. On a PQ on this subject, I had opted to speak the truth and inform the Assembly of my apprehension on various clauses of the contract. Unfortunately, some people in Government could not accept that I speak the truth. Everyone in this Assembly knows of the event that followed my answer to the PQ, and I have no regrets, Mr Speaker, Sir. Today, some of the issues are coming to public knowledge.

Mr Speaker, Sir, today there is a big problem of ration rice. Ration rice is very important, and the price might go up. There was still a contract, and questions were raised in this Parliament about Tycoon Corporation of Thailand. The contract was between Thiayaporn of Thailand and STC. In fact, today, we should not have had this problem on the price and the good quality. Then, they have accepted the consignment which we had with Thailand.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I have been informed that this consignment was cancelled because this Tycoon Corporation has a link with a Member of the Opposition, of the political bureau of the MMM. And for that, today, we are going to suffer; we are going to buy the ration rice at a higher price. This consignment was for one year; it is 20,000 tons. Double policy! This is how, today, when there is political vendetta, it's as if, as we say '*deux éléphants la guerre, c'est l'herbe ki crazer*'.

Mr Speaker, Sir, we have talked about the scandal at the STCM and the loss of Rs50 m. This is due to the lack of seriousness of the management. Everybody knows that there have been three shipments of petroleum products and the contamination of crude oil, which we imported from Oil Mangalore. There were three consignments. This came to Mauritius, we discovered that there was contamination, and we sold it to Singapore. We lost Rs130 m. when we sold it. It was told that the case has been referred to the London Court. I wonder whether the case has been referred there. No action has been taken. It has also been said there has been a loss of nearly Rs180 m.; in the flour of Turkey : Rs280 m. When hon. Minister Jeetah was there, a team went to China and brought together with them the MBC/TV. They had all sorts of shooting. When they came back, nothing, zero! They lost the money. So, what I am telling, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that we had a problem.

Today, we have a problem of petroleum storage. I think that the Minister of Finance could have thought about it. Again, I am afraid that this also is not going to give to only one person. It is a project of Rs850 m.

On the same line, we have the project of LPG gas. Mr Speaker, Sir, today we know that the poor people have to pay about Rs300 per cylinder; there is a problem. Everybody knows that there has been a project where the Petredex, and a company, which is very close to power, came forward to have this contract. Finally, that contract was supposed to be Rs1.5 billion - according to our information.

Mr Speaker: Be careful in what you are saying!

Mr Soodhun: I received that yesterday. What I am saying is that if we are not cautious, the same thing may happen, just like for Betamax, just like for the hedging. The same thing may happen for LPG. The Minister of Finance will have to take precaution so that the STC can, by its

own, have this tanker and this will help the population and be in their interest. It will cost less. This will be the best solution for the STC. Instead of Rs1.5 billion, it will cost Rs380 m. Mr Speaker, Sir, what has happened?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order now!

Mr Soodhun: When we are talking about what to do - I am talking about the Board – if the Board of the STC, with the same members, are governing the STC and these people were there when the hedging transaction was done, were there when this Betamax was done, were there when there was the contamination of the crude oil, so if the people are still there, what can we expect from these people?

I suggest, Mr Speaker, Sir, that it is high time that the STC have a competent Board and not putting people who are very close the Labour Party or to the PMSD because, at the end of the day, the country will suffer. This is what has happened, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a big problem. I myself have suffered for that. Every time I was willing to change the Board, put people but, when we went to the Head of Government: *'pe faire, pe encore faire'*. I am saying that we have to stop *'faire'* and ...

Mr Speaker: There is another thing that you have to respect. Whatever discussions you have had with the Prime Minister as a Minister, you cannot say that in this House!

Mr Soodhun: What I am suggesting is that we have to take a good decision. Let me give an example, Mr Speaker, Sir. This does not only concern one Ministry, the Government is like this.

What has happened to the Minister of Energy? For one year we do not have one Chairman, one General Manager in the CEB.

For one year we do not have one General Manager and one Chairman in the CWA.

For one year we do have General Manager and one Chairman in the Wastewater Authority.

How are we to deliver?

(Interruptions)

It is really impossible. Government cannot come with a new – you cannot put a public officer to preside the CEB Board, which is very important. How can we? The members of the Board are political nominees. The member cannot just bring in his ideas and decisions, because they will clash, he is going to suffer and be transferred. This is the way. The point that I want to make is that it is high time Government thinks about it. If they continue like this, we know what will happen, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am going to end on this note. Many Members of the Labour Party have obviously attacked the President in party rights ...

Mr Speaker: In this House?

Mr Soodhun: Outside.

Mr Speaker: No, you cannot...

Mr Soodhun: What I would like to say – even in the House also they have attacked him.

Yes!

Mr Speaker: So far, I was presiding the House, that did not happen.

Mr Soodhun: No, I am not telling that it was you.

(Interruptions)

Let me say a few words, the President is wise enough to know when

Mr Speaker: No, you are joking!

Mr Soodhun: What to say about the sad state of the country which he has built over the years? Mr Speaker, Sir, the writings are on the wall. This Government stands the pressure of the Opposition on this side of the House. There is a growing uproar in the country and the outcries of the people are out there. Government has a very frail majority, all Ministers are on the defensive because they know that the Prime Minister does not trust them - as he has mentioned. He has even said that he doubts their ability to stand up in Parliament to answer the Opposition. And over the days, since Parliament has resumed, we can see how Ministers have been uncomfortable and not able to reply properly to our parliamentary questions. They know that their days are counted. The country needs a new leadership ...

(Interruptions)

...and a new vision to provide our next generation with the experience, the competence and sincerity that we need in these difficult times to take Mauritius to a new destiny. They are going to try thousand times to bring *la zizanie* between the MSM and MMM. They are going to fail!

(Interruptions)

Do not try! This is what you are doing, but you are not going to succeed.

With these words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I thank you very much.

Mr Speaker: May I ask the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair, please?

At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(6.08 p.m)

The Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology (Dr. R. Jeetah): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I quote –

“Suppose someone were to describe a small country that provided free education through university for all of its citizens, free transportation for school children, and free health care, including heart surgery for all. You might suspect that such a country is either phenomenally rich or on the fast track to fiscal crisis.

After all, rich countries in Europe are increasingly found that they cannot pay for university education, and are asking young people and their families to bear the costs. For its part, the United States has never attempted to give free college education for all, and it took a bitter battle just to ensure that America’s poor get access to health care – a guarantee that the Republican Party is now working hard to repeal, claiming that the country cannot afford it.

But Mauritius, a small island nation off the east coast of Africa, is neither particularly rich nor on its way to budgetary ruin. Nonetheless, it has spent the last decades successfully building a diversified economy, a democratic political system, and a strong social safety net.’

Many countries, not least the US could learn from experience. These comments, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, come from Professor Joseph Stiglitz, a Columbian University Professor and a Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics, who was in Mauritius recently. He made these comments in an article in New York Times. I think this is what matters.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to quickly go through the fundamentals of the Mauritian economy. I think these are important issues that we have to discuss, since we are discussing the Budget. Currently, our GDP *per capita* stands at \$8,600. Here, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Professor Stiglitz did say that this country has managed to prove Nobel Prize Winner, James Meade, wrong who, in 1961, did say that Mauritius was a basket case and that we

have no future. From a low of \$100, today our GDP *per capita* stands at \$8,600 and the GDP growth rate for 2011 would be +4.2% because these days we save for difficult times, given the state of affairs in Japan, Europe and the US.

Investment rate, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, stands at +24.4% and net job creation, including foreigners in the year 2011, is 5.5% and employment rate stands at 7.8%. When the whole world is facing crisis, here, we have an import cover of 38.4 weeks, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Another very important figure that we have to monitor and control is the budget deficit. Budget deficit has been brought down to 3.8% and total public sector debt as a percentage of GDP stands at 54.2%. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this country has been blessed to have a Prime Minister and his team in Government for the last six years or so and these are the results that we have to show. Whether we like it or not, these figures are not fabricated by the Labour party or PMSD agents. These are official statistics that anybody can – like my good friend hon. Kee Chong Li Kwong Wing – look into.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is another element in this Budget that I have to share with my hon. friends in this House. For the first time, in the economy of this country, hon. Xavier Duval has been able to allocate 55% of total spending excluding contingencies and public debt transactions, on social services. Let me make my point, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Hon. Xavier Duval has been able to provide for Rs42.38 billion social spending out of a total expenditure of Rs76.2 billion and this is being geared towards housing and community amenities, education, social protection and so on and so forth. Let me make it clear. Whatever the Opposition says, whether it is not for the middle class, it is for *les gros capitaux, ainsi de suite*, the fact remains

that 55.6% of total expenditure goes towards social services. This clearly shows the philosophy of this Government and what is being done.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to just compare what happened between 2000 and 2005 because there has been talk of remake and so on and so forth. I think it is good for people to know what actually happened and what could be happening if this remake were to happen. In the year 2000, unemployment stood at 6.5% and in 2005, it increased to 9.6%. GDP plummeted from 9.7% in year 2000 to a low of 2.3% *en l'an* 2005. This is when hon. Bérenger saw *l'état d'urgence économique* and we were losing jobs à *une vitesse vertigineuse*.

EPZ export declined from Rs31 billion in 2000 to Rs29 billion in 2005; FDI dropped from Rs7.2 billion in 2000 to Rs2.8 billion in 2005. The EPZ sector recorded a negative growth during four consecutive years with -6% in 2002 and peaked at -12.3% in 2005. I recall that we brought back growth straight up after we took power. Public debt, as a percentage of GDP, escalated from 49.8% in year 2000 to 58.8% in 2005. Every time we have this sort of remake. We had a major disaster hitting the country. We lost, between the years 2000 and 2005 - 57,593 jobs when these gentle people were in power and the same happened between 1991 and 1995 where we lost 55,561 jobs. So much for the remake 2000, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! We know what would await the nation if such an event were to happen.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget has provided us with 65 measures for middle income owners. Much has already been said about the measures and I don't propose to go through all the 65 measures, but I would like to talk about a few of the measures that are of very close interest to me. First of all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I know all the efforts that we made between years 2005 and 2010 to increase entrepreneurship in this country. That is why we became number one in Africa, in terms of ease of doing business. I suspect that this is the first

time in a country that would-be employers will be paid a salary of Rs20,000 to start a business. This, in itself, will increase the mass of middle-income earners in this country. I do not have any doubt of the extra benefit of having 8.5% interest rate, that is, about 4% to 6% lower than commercial rates would bring to these SMEs. Also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Rs87 m. have been earmarked for the training of pre-registered medical doctors. We will recruit 375 qualified medical graduates from both local and foreign universities. This is very important for my Ministry as we are in the process of opening medical schools. We are providing training to 500 young persons in the marine safety, fire-fighting and first aid at the Mauritius Maritime Training Academy. We are providing sports scholarship and so on and so forth.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to try to see what might be the speech of the hon. Leader of the Opposition. Should he be here next year to read his speech after he had listened to the hon. Minister of Finance? *M. le président, l'heure est grave. The economy is in trouble. La locomotive tombe en panne. Le chauffeur perd les pédales. La récession menace. Le pays est à la croisée du chemin. La récession menace. Est-elle imminente comme l'on dit certains, y compris -* now I am reading the speech that was made by hon. Bérenger in 1995. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been through most of his speeches and the same rhetoric, year in year out. Every time it is a doom and gloom scenario. I think this should stop. He speaks of *enfantillage*, way back in 1983, when he was addressing the House.

I would like to quote the Leader of the Opposition, hon. Paul Bérenger, that was on the 10 June 1983, and I quote -

'Mr Speaker, Sir, since the Prime Minister stood up, I listened and I heard only childish remarks that are not worth even commenting upon. I shall look at the Bill

before us in a historical perspective and I am afraid that I should be rather lengthy.’

He goes on and on like this. Every single year we hear the same singsong and I think this should stop.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to quickly just respond to my hon. friend, hon. Soodhun, who had certain issues which he wanted to raise and which he did raise before I get to issues relating to my Ministry. Hon. Soodhun wants us to take him seriously and let’s see whether we can. He had a few things to say on hedging. Allow me to quote - maybe this would be of interest to hon. Uteem as well, he might wish to listen – P.Q. No. B/244 that hon. Li Kwong Wing asked and this is what hon. Soodhun had to state –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody is against hedging. We should not forget that hedging had started when the hon. Leader of the Opposition was at the Prime Minister in 2004”.

This is history and this now reminds me - because I have been quiet for quite a while. Now I have realised that hon. Uteem could not make the difference between policy and implementation and operation issues. The policy started in 2004 and this had clearly been said and, I repeat it, by hon. Soodhun –

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nobody is against hedging. We should not forget that hedging had started when the hon. Leader of the Opposition, that is hon. Bérenger, was the Prime Minister in 2004”.

That is the policy to conduct hedging started in 2004 and you well know that the operation aspects of this process is not taken care by the Minister. In any case, the hon. Minister does not

have the capability to do any form of transaction of that kind. Let me quote hon. Soodhun again

–

“Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have gone through the report”

I think he was referring to a DOBSON report, that was commissioned by the then Minister.

“It has been clearly stated that the decision taken for hedging were the right one at that particular time”.

The report clearly mentioned it.

How can we take hon. Soodhun seriously? He always says one thing when that suits him and I think he's going to be in some serious difficulty after what he said earlier on. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me quote hon. Soodhun again when he was answering hon. Bérenger, Leader of the Opposition, on 15/06/ 2010. It is interesting to know, I went through the literature to find out what he had to say –

“Mr Speaker, Sir, let me explain to the hon. Leader of the Opposition. He asked a question with regards to the costs of hedging losses. It has to be calculated, it's started from the year 2004 when I and the hon. Leader of the Opposition then were part of a Government. It will now have to be calculated, it will take time, it cannot be prepared in two hours and so on and so forth”.

He clearly stated that he was part of the process of creating this instrument that led to this whole mess and now when the policy failed, he comes and complains about it.

(Interruptions)

You should not have done it then!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I need to refer to hon. Utem as well. I think he mentioned the Med Point which I would like to talk about as well, time is permitting. He mentioned that there

was an e-mail sent to the then Minister of Health, which happened to be myself by Dr Malhotra. Then I try to think whether – does he have any control on e-mails that are sent to him. Suppose I write to all the Members of the Opposition and through an e-mail I ask them to join the Labour party, would that mean that you are no longer members of MMM or MSM I am not going to do it, rest assure! But you have to understand ...

Mr Deputy Speaker: Address the chair!

Dr. Jeetah: I understand, he is a lawyer and he has to understand that people don't have any control on who send or do not send e-mail to you. On the hedging issue again, I would like to tell the hon. Uteem that this is not a simple process of sending SMS messages with regard to election expenses or whatever problems he had. It is a very sophisticated issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Please make your point!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am tempted before talking about tertiary education, let me talk about the Med Point issue. I think the question that everybody wants to know and people are interested to hear is that on the 22 December 2010 who was the Minister of health? On 23 December 2010, who was the Minister of Finance, who, on the same day, with five officials approved the grant of Rs144,701,300 to be made available ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo please!

Dr. Jeetah: ... by departmental warrant the acquisition of land and building for the setting up of a geriatric hospital that is Med Point. This is what people need to know, who the Minister was when the price was doubled, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Who was the Minister who wrote: the 'dear Pravind' letter?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Khamajeet please!

Dr. Jeetah: On the 9 July 2010 - and I must say Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have been consistent throughout I only had these questions to ask, this is what people want to know. Who actually wrote the letter 'Dear Pravind, prepare Rs150 m. to buy a geriatric hospital'?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Hanoomanjee please!

Dr. Jeetah: There is something that people need to know, a letter was sent from the Ministry of Health on the 22 December 2010 notifying the Director of Med Point that – “*zafair korek' Tou korek la!*

The Deputy Speaker: Address the chair!

Dr. Jeetah: I am addressing you, Sir. But what I found unusual now that I have started reading all these letters and all these wonderful things that happened, on the 22 December the Director of Med Point was informed that he has got the jackpot as you said and now when do you think he said to prepare the cheque to be deposited in Med Point Ltd current account 610..... I won't read the account number, what date do you think the letter was obtained? They sent the letter on the 22 December 2010, it normally goes through the posts and you know how the system works. It takes a few days - it is Christmas time and it takes time etc. They got the letter on the 22 December 2010 itself, *mem zour la*, exactly the same day. This is how the system operates.

The Deputy Speaker: order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: You know Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I don't want anybody to shout!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Who is talking about pizza, who wants pizza?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please continue!

Dr. Jeetah: On the 23rd

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Dr. Jeetah: On the 23 December when the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Finance

...

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee please there is no need to supplement what is saying.

Dr. Jeetah: Let me explain to our friends up there

The Deputy Speaker: No, you're talking in this house

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am talking to you .

The Deputy Speaker: Up there in the sky?

Dr. Jeetah: Will I be allowed to speak, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The Deputy Speaker: Yes! You are speaking in this House - to us and addressing the Chair!

Dr. Jeetah: Yes and our good friends are listening.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, continue!

Dr. Jeetah: When you handle a file in Government, it has to go through, let's say for example, an analyst, a budget coordinator - normally they sit and look at the file and make sure that everything is in order. It takes a few days, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Here, we had people lining up outside - "*Entrer mo frère ! Signe ene ti coup la!*" Okay, the guy signs. The next guy

gets in and he signs, again. The next person signs, the Director comes in and he signs, and the next chap comes and signs, and the Minister signs there and then. That's the way this has been proceeded. You know why people need to know about this system that was in place, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? I know for a fact that Government had decided to build three hospitals. In fact, it's not three hospitals that we built. We started the Dr. A. G. Jeetoo Hospital which is going to be inaugurated soon. We started the Cardiac Centre in Rose Belle, where my good friend was even allowed to speak, that was inaugurated by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee. We started the Blocks C, D and E in Central Flacq.

(Interruptions)

At Montagne Longue, it was not me, and the SSR Accident and Emergency. We did projects to the tune of billions of rupees and no problem took place and also, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Li Kwong Wing, please! Hon. Obeegadoo!

Dr. Jeetah: My good friends from the MMM need to know that we wanted to build three hospitals; one, a geriatric hospital because there were reports that showed that we would have 130,000 elderly people in so many years and that the hospital will crumble if you don't provide geriatric services. Then, the hon. Prime Minister requested us to set up an Institute for Women and a specialised hospital for kids and thirdly, a Specialised Care Centre for Rodrigues. I think that it is only now that we are hearing about this Specialised Care Centre and money has been disbursed to start doing this project.

In the process of setting up a geriatric hospital, people need to know the kind of wastage; I don't know how to call it; what are the stuffs that were bought. I know for a fact that it is not the Ministry's policy to buy rotten second-hand stuffs - photocopying machine - 1995's *s'il vous*

plait; computer and CPU: the date of acquisition was 1995; fax machine, would you believe that a fax machine dating back to 1995 was purchased! I'm not going to list all of it but I have got the whole comprehensive list.

(Interruptions)

'Thermos, aussi!'

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: Small fridge; paper tray, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has been bought; telephone sets, a clock, chairs, tables, filing cabinets, standby generator dating back to 1994 to the tune of Rs400,000.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee, please!

Dr. Jeetah: It goes on like this. I am not going to repeat it - bookshelf, would you imagine, Government buying 1995 bookshelf? "*Ki pays pe vini sa!*"; view box; two 1995 cupboards. It goes on like and you know, when I looked at it the first time - office table, chair, a water tank, toaster; seriously, they bought a 2005 toaster, they bought a 2005 kettle, test tube racks.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo! Please, show some decency when I am talking to you! At least, you respond!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, you might be interested to know why Government wanted to set up a geriatric hospital; it is because the old people have some special needs. They have certain ailments that are only common to elderly people. However, when I was going through the list of equipment, I saw incubators. Since when do geriatrics elderly people need

incubators? Since when do they need maternity inventory? Baby cots, 'ber zenfant'; ten 1995 TV sets ; « *ti encore couleur ou blanc et noir sa l'époque la?* » Wheelchair: dating back to 1995; a stethoscope - adult paediatric stethoscope, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: You are listing a long series of equipment! Make your argumentation!

Dr. Jeetah: I think people need to know!

The Deputy Speaker: You gave examples, it's okay. But, I don't want you to read the whole list. You stated that you are going to make reference.

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: With your permission, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am getting towards...

The Deputy Speaker: I do not have control on what you are going to say!

Dr. Jeetah: Of course, I know that!

The Deputy Speaker: I should be able to know! You have been listing a long list; try to do your argumentation well so that I can participate also and know where you are!

Dr. Jeetah: As you wish, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Let me finish by saying that through that deal there was purchase of a microwave as well as a kettle, a fridge, bins, thermos, forceps...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Dr. Jeetah, you are repeating again! I heard thermos. It was at the beginning of the list! You are coming back to it! Please!

Dr. Jeetah: It was in another ward.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! I will inform the hon. Minister that he has got latitude to talk on the Budget speech but this does not mean that he is going just to go over the list ward by ward. You want to make a point, you make reference, you take some examples; that's good, but we move forward!

Dr. Jeetah: You would agree, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it's a very painful process.

The Deputy Speaker: It is painful also for me. We have been here for over one week. Please!

Dr. Jeetah: I would have finished by the time...

The Deputy Speaker: Please, you understand what I mean, you are very intelligent. I also, I made my point and I will appreciate if you could just take note of it. Please!

Dr. Jeetah: Thank you, it's very kind of you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, my parents would be very happy to hear, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the last four points! Labor room, labor beds, baby scales, gynae couch and normal couches for a geriatric hospital. So, this is where we have come to in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and I hope that we will see some light out of all this.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to get to the topic that is of interest to me.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister is lost, I think! You are not lost! Okay! Please, proceed!

Dr. Jeetah: Sorry, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

The Deputy Speaker: I don't know: you give us a list and then, please, continue..

Dr. Jeetah: With the list?

The Deputy Speaker: No. Continue with your argumentation!

(Interruptions)

You were so absorbed in the list that I think that you are missing your point!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I want to make a final point on the business of Med Point. I think there have been a lot of things that we questioned! The hon. Member was questioned by the lawyers of this House and the scandal came to light through the letter; I think when you talked about the scandal...

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair!

Dr. Jeetah: I must admit that it was only when hon. Bérenger talked about that the 'Dear Pravind,' letter that we got to know about this process.

(Interruptions)

"Be oui!" C'est bien! We have common files.

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Dr. Jeetah: The last thing that I want to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is 3900 square metres equal to 4500 square metres? It is not! Yet, the sale was done so quickly and so on and so forth, but we will see some light pretty soon.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now, I want to come to my sector. I am in a flourishing sector which is doing well and I would like to quickly talk about a few issues such as planning...

I know quality is of interest to many of us here.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo!

Dr. Jeetah: Access to new public tertiary institutions is being facilitated through infrastructural development, relevance of courses, research and new courses that we are proposing to offer for the building knowledge hub.

I don't want to take much of the time of the House; I know time is limited. I think it is important to know that if we were to compare 2005 and 2010; in 2005 we had about 413 programmes. Today, the number of programmes stands at 700 and the gross tertiary enrolment rate has gone up to 45%. I think I have to bring some clarification here, since there was a question, here, in Parliament where hon. Obeegadoo asked me about student numbers. Basically, what I want to say, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that it is not only school going students who go to university. Today, 95% of students who passed their HSC are able to pursue tertiary education. However, about 60% of all the students in the sector come from other sources. Why am I saying so? Because previously, it was very difficult to get a seat at the university. Today, the University of Mauritius has nearly 12,000 students. So, there is a backlog of people wanting to get into the Tertiary Education Sector. This is working out quite nicely because we have now started a programme to build new university campuses. I need to respond to the query of hon. Bérenger who wanted to understand what the plans are. I wish to inform the House that the MBC building is being vested to my Ministry and we are going to offer courses in Curepipe. I am not going to listen to hon. Obeegadoo who has suggested that we build a swimming pool in that building. We are not going to do that. The courses are going to start in January.

We also have started working at the Bel Air site where we would like to set up a medical school. Works are going to start in Montagne Blanche next year. A consultant has already been appointed to work on the Master Plan. We will have the same sort of campus in Pamplemousses. In the medium term, we would like to have campuses in Piton and Rose Belle. What the Government is trying to do is to provide access to each and every person in this country should he or she wish to join the tertiary sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in 1968, we only had one single institution. In 2004, we had 42 education providers and today we have 66 and, as I said, we are offering about 700 programmes. I have requested TEC to scout around the world to see what courses exist that we are not offering presently. In fact we have started a whole range of courses.

Allow me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, to inform or maybe to report to the House of our pride that the Master's Degree in e-Business at the University of Mauritius has been included among the top 100 Masters Degree in the world. I know very often there are concerns about quality, but I can assure the House that we are doing everything possible with the means that we have to make sure that we address the issue of quality as well. What other argument I have for quality is that we have now completed the first quality audit cycle and we are starting a second cycle of quality audit of the public funded institutions. This was not done before but now we are taking this very seriously.

We have a framework for postgraduate medical education. We have already finalised the clinical training framework for medical, dental and nursing education. We are reviewing the 2008/2009 regulatory framework. We have started a process of credit transfers to facilitate mobility of students.

As I mentioned, we have a project where we would like to upgrade the qualifications of all existing academic staff to Ph.D level. This is the target that we have set ourselves, for a period of 10 years. Presently, it stands at 40% at the University of Mauritius and 22% at the UTM. We do appreciate that we need to have higher figures and we are working towards that. We have come up with a Student Charter which will be operational as from next year and would clearly explain the responsibility of staff, students and the institutions which will be used by all tertiary education institutions. As I said, it would be mandatory as from year 2012. We are

providing technological support for teaching and learning to the PFIs, that is, the Public Funded Institutions. Facilities such as Laptops, LCD projectors, upgrading of science and IT labs and so on and so forth are being taken care of.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to say a few more words on our collaboration with Bordeaux. I know that we have started doing Master M1, that is, the year IV in Mauritius and soon we will have a full MBBS Degree in collaboration with the University of Bordeaux. Next year, we are going to start an English medium medical school with the University of Geneva, Switzerland.

Internationalisation is another issue that we are taking very seriously. I did mention that it is expected that about 8 million students worldwide would be travelling abroad for tertiary education by the year 2025 and we are hoping to capture a small part of this market. I would like to respond to hon. Dr. S. Boolell, on the other side of the House, who was a bit worried about international students coming to Mauritius. It can't be taken seriously if in a classroom you only have local citizens. I think all the hon. Members, here, many of us studied overseas and we have gained a lot from this experience. We would like to open up our institutions to allow students to come here, work if they so wish. Provisions have been made in the Budget to allow for a student visa system where students will be able to work and study. I am sure benefits will accrue from that.

Another important aspect of the tertiary education sector, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is research and we have taken a number of actions to boost up research. The latest that I am particularly proud of, in collaboration with the MRC, is a research in the field of cultivation of seaweeds which we have started in Rodrigues and in Mauritius in a small way. I am going to

collaborate with hon. Cader Sayed-Hossen and hon. Jim Seetaram to explore the probabilities of engaging SMEs and industry to explore the economic benefit of this particular activity.

As far as Rodrigues is concerned, we have had a number of sessions of work. We go there not only to discuss about ways and means to encourage students to take science as a subject, but also I hope in the medium term, to set up a campus in Rodrigues. Land has been earmarked. TEC is working on the feasibility of such a project and what is important is: for the first time now, we have started offering degree courses that are being taught in Rodrigues itself. I think it is very important to start.

As far as research is concerned, we have set up National Research Chairs and we have launched a number of centres for applied research. We are now, in Mauritius, offering Research Fellowship Schemes to people from overseas so that they can come and conduct research here. I did mention that we are upgrading the qualifications of academic staff to Ph.D level.

We have started collaborative Mauritius network, which is a platform for enhancing interactions between researchers and industry. We have set up business incubators, business engineering forums. We would like to start a science park, which is mentioned in our Government Programme.

With regard to science and technology, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is a very important issue that we have to take care of, because whatever we do today will affect us in 10-15 years time. We have to make sure that there is more and more interest in science among the children and the public at large. One initiative that has gained a lot of popularity is astronomy. The Rajiv Gandhi Science Centre is going out to the public and trying to inculcate them into considering, understanding what goes round the world. There are a number of actions that we do through our *caravane de la science* as well.

The introduction of the free bus transport has helped the Tertiary Education Sector at large. This has enabled many students to join the tertiary sector, and it is good to know that we are in the process of conducting a graduate tracer study because we want to know what is happening to our graduates. We have also updated our list of indicative priority fields of study.

So, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have taken a number of actions to make sure that we address all the pertinent issues of the tertiary sector. One of the most important to my mind, as I said earlier on, is quality. I did say that we have taken a number of actions to make sure that quality gets instilled in the way we do our business in the Tertiary Education Sector. As I said, we have now a Masters programme offered by the University of Mauritius which is among the top hundred in the world. So, I would like to encourage other departments to go through the same route.

I was hoping that I will have a chance to hear hon. Obeegadoo, but I didn't get a chance to hear him. But, I must say that people in my Constituency were a bit hurt by his **facetious** remarks when I mentioned that we had plans to build a university in Montagne Blanche. People are even putting questions as to why should people in villages or other parts of the country not have university campuses? We are going ahead with this, and construction works will start as from next year. I have already said that I do not agree with what he said. I quote hon. Obeegadoo-

'Un dernier point. Par exemple, une piscine municipale que nous appelons de tous nos vœux de longue date à Curepipe, une fois que l'Open University sera installé ...'

The Deputy Speaker: You did mention that point earlier.

Dr. Jeetah: I have to read it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is important; I have to say this.

The Deputy Speaker: But you mentioned earlier that you are not agreeable to building a *piscine* there, and that you are going on with your project. You mentioned it.

Dr. Jeetah: Yes, but it is important to know. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to quote this.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, please.

Dr. Jeetah: ‘*Donc, j’adresse un appel qui se veut à la fois pressant et solennel au gouvernement de reconsidérer cette décision si la décision a été prise, sinon de consulter les habitants(...)*’.

I think this is very serious. I never expected it from a hon. Member who was Minister of Education himself. I know he will talk about education tomorrow. Facts are facts; we never had so consistent results. When hon. Obeegadoo was Minister of Education, consistently from the year 2000 to 2004, the pass rate in CPE went down; every single year. I must say I have not seen any initiatives to improve both the secondary or tertiary sector.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to respond to one of the points made by hon. Mrs Hanoomanjee with regard to drug trafficking, and I want to quote, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Mrs Labelle, please! I am hearing your voice.

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am going to end after this, and I hope we keep on smiling after this. Every time an election is over, I take pleasure in listening to hon. Bérenger, who keeps on saying that *elections derrière la porte*.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Continue now, you got your notes.

Dr. Jeetah: Let me quote the speech of Sir Anerood Jugnauth in 1995, when he was talking about - I think somebody mentioned rice to feed animals and dogs and so on. I quote -

“Some people are talking of election. I like this you know; I like the *franchise*”.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please address the chair!

Dr. Jeetah: You rub your nose on the ground! This is what hon. Anerood Jugnauth said about “asking for election so often”. You rub your nose on the ground; wait for the next election. It is exactly the same *propos* made by hon. Bérenger as far back as 1982 and, today, they try to come and fool us, making us believe that they will bring a change for the better in the life of the population. We have seen that every time the MMM has been given the opportunity, the chance of showing its metal, of honouring its promises, they have betrayed. I did not say that; it’s hon. Jugnauth. I need to finish by quoting what hon. Bérenger said again in 1995 -

‘Des policiers étaient transférés à l’autre bout de l’île parce qu’ils osaient s’opposer aux trafiquants de drogue. Ils se faisaient gifler à Plaine Verte, parce qu’ils essayaient de s’opposer aux trafiquants de drogue’.

The Deputy Speaker: This has been quoted, I understand. This does not mean that you can't quote it again. You have control on your speech. There is no problem in repeating what you say.

Dr. Jeetah: C’était l’époque où le service d’ordre du MSM était organisé par des trafiquants de drogue pour le 1^{er} mai, les élections et à chaque occasion.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: I think this is serious. You have to listen to this.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Hon. Jhugroo, please! I drew your attention that this has been quoted. There is no objection that you quote it again. But you should contribute to the debate and not repeat.

Dr. Jeetah: Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, hon. Jhugroo!

Dr. Jeetah: *‘C’était l’époque où les trafiquants de drogue avaient taken over, hijacked des compagnies comme UBS et d’autres compagnies de cette importance. C’était l’époque où Sir Anerood Jugnauth prenait de l’argent dans son bureau.’* I am not saying this. I am just quoting this – pour le passer à d’autres supposément dans une tente, un attaché case ou un *briefcase*.

(Interruptions)

Mais il a admis avoir pris de l’argent des trafiquants de drogue et cela explique ainsi de suite. C’était l’époque, où le Premier ministre a osé traiter les chefs religieux de *‘tangué’* qui sortent à chaque fois que les élections arrivent.

(Interruptions)

Pourquoi? C’est parce que ces chefs religieux et chef de l’église catholique, de la religion hindoue, de la religion islamique avaient osé parler du problème de la drogue. Ils furent traités de *‘tangues’* par le Premier ministre d’alors et d’aujourd’hui.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Dr. Jeetah: That was stated in June 1995. I think it was on the Constitution of Mauritius (Amendment) Bill No. VI of 1995.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I'll quote again -

« Un pays aussi puissant, immense avec une histoire comme celle du Mexique, est devenu *a narco democracy* et c'est cela qu'avec Anerood Jugnauth comme Premier ministre, l'île Maurice est en train de devenir (...)»

That is, he is referring Mauritius as becoming a narco democracy. I am not saying this. I did not even know that...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Make your point!

Dr. Jeetah: I am quoting. Hon. Bérenger was making his speech on Anerood Jugnauth.

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Please, don't play the innocent. We all understand, we are all adults!

Dr. Jeetah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have to conclude because I am running out of time. What I can say is that it is the first time in my short career as a MP, Minister or whatever that during Budget time, we are not getting PNQs on the Finance Sector.

The Deputy Speaker: No, you cannot make reference to that.

Dr. Jeetah: This is my feeling, I have to say it.

The Deputy Speaker: Please!

Dr. Jeetah: I think that there is not much to say about the Budget because it has been so well accepted. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the country is in safe hands. It is not me saying that. Eminent professors around the world today have started saying: what is it that happens in this country, when the whole world is failing; here we still manage to survive. We still manage to

provide for a resilience fund of Rs7.3 billion. *Ça c'est de la prévoyance* and I know there is more to come. We have challenges. We have seen how Europe and the US are in difficulty and yet, as I said, here we have been able to save some money to make sure that we have enough funds for difficult times, should that be the case. The Welfare State has been reinforced, unlike what the hon. Member said on the other side of the House.

Education is still free in this country, from pre-primary, primary, secondary to tertiary. We are building university campuses - whether people like it or not on the other side of the House. We are going to achieve our 70% enrolment rate whereby each and every family will get a chance to have a student at university. The health care system is still free and will remain free. If somebody cannot get medical treatment here, provision is made for that - it has been increased to Rs500,000. Where was the MSM then? Why didn't they do it? They managed to find time in a week to sign a cheque of Rs145 m., but they could not take measures to save people's life.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

(Interruptions)

Dr. Jeetah: Transportation to schools is still free. I would like to remind you - *c'est en 2003 que cela s'est passé.*

The Deputy Speaker: Address the Chair, please! You are reminding me, no problem. You have to address the Chair. Don't interact towards Members.

Dr Jeetah: Transportation is free in this country, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I hope you know why because in 2003, we had by-election in Rivière du Rempart. There was a child who could not go to school every day. This is the kind of politician that we need.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please order!

Dr. Jeetah: That is the reason why we have free transportation. Economy continues to grow. Mauritius still remains the safe destination where we are going to have one million tourists visiting Mauritius. Public infrastructure is expanding like never before and for the first time in the history of SMEs, we are now going to pay entrepreneurs to start a business. This is a responsible Budget that will no doubt support economic growth and it is going to prepare our citizens against the harmful effects of external forces. We have no option than to prepare ourselves to bounce back.

Before I end, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to thank you for your indulgence. I do not have any doubt that we are going to overcome; I was there with the team of Ministers: hon. Duval, hon. Prime Minister, hon. Dr. Boolell and everybody sitting here. We have been through some tough time and I do not have any doubt that this time, we have a good team. The way the hon. vice-Prime Minister handled the process of consultation is something that did not happen just a year ago. It was a master stroke. With the leadership that the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. N. Ramgoolam has shown, I do not have any doubt that this Budget will continue to be a platform for much stronger and more ambitious Mauritius.

I thank you for your attention.

(7.06 p.m.)

Mr C. Fakeemeeah (Third Member for Port Louis Maritime and Port Louis East):

Praises be to Almighty God, peace, guidance and blessing be among all of us.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am thankful to Almighty and to the House to have been granted the opportunity to address this august Assembly on the current Budget 2012.

I would like to start my intervention by a humble reminder. First of all, I will like to remind myself and all hon. Members as well that we have been elected to serve the people. Our election is a pledge to the people of this country to work with all sincerity for their betterment and the betterment of the coming generations. We are, therefore, the trustees of God towards the people of this country. We are paid by the public money to correctly manage public funds. We are, therefore, accountable to the people. Our actions should be a realisation of this pledge with the purest possible intention.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, man will not earn except what he makes effort for. However, the people cannot read our intention and as man is created weak by nature, chances of doing actions for self and vested interest will always be there. But, Members of this august Assembly will agree with me that intentions and actions should corroborate in the realisation of the pledge to the people. The Members will also agree with me that although the people cannot read our intention yet the Divine authority from whom all of us seek help in our initial oath of allegiance we all said: 'So, help me God!' We have to keep in mind that we are accountable to Him and he is pretty well the ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order please! Order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Almighty God is surely supervising the whole debate in this august Assembly where no single word is being uttered, except that it is being recorded in his divine knowledge.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, following the presentation of the 2012 Budget by the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I understand that we are called to debate on the Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, allow me to speak my mind in a complete state of freedom. This is my second Budget speech since my election to this House and I still feel perplexed. I am surprised and astonished to see, *je veux dire je m'étonne toujours à témoigner le bafouement de la démocratie parlementaire*. We are as if already in an electoral campaign: this one accusing the other and in reply the other accusing this one and even insulting. Au lieu de débattre le budget directement, on a l'impression d'assister à des meetings publics dans des angles des rues. At a certain time, believe me, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I felt as if we are not in Parliament which is eventually our highest institution in this country that deserves very special respect.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker: Hon. Sayed-Hossen, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mais vous êtes tous mes amis. En fait, *nou pas lors ene caisse savon, nou bizin compren sa bien. Quant même, vous autres, nou dans ene Parlement et nou besoin debate budget la directement.*

Should I not recall, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir: is this our pledge to the people? Is it in this way that we are going to fulfill the pledge to the people? L'essentiel pour nous est d'accomplir notre devoir envers le peuple dans le respect et la sérénité.

So, I will start by talking on the philosophy of the Budget presented by our hon. Minister of Finance. A first reading of the Budget shows many social measures as well as other measures, *visant très certainement à relancer notre économie. Très bien!*

However, a budget should not be a mere accounting exercise neither should the economic system be drawn in the light of arithmetical calculations and capacities of productions alone. Rather, it should be drawn and conceived in the light of a complete system of morals and principles.

A budget, certainly, should take into consideration, the prevailing global economic situation, as we are already in the globalisation era, and the Budget should also consider the local realities as its measures will be applied locally.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the world is witnessing today a clear downfall of the capitalist economic order. We are witnessing today an undeniable ongoing economic crisis in our traditional markets....

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Quirin, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: ...namely the euro zone, and the United States also; and causing huge damages to the economies with drastic consequences: massive job losses, downfall of Governments, leading to people exasperation. What a tragedy we would say - this capitalist economic world order!

More tragic even is the pessimism of most of the world great economist predicting the crisis to be deep even and long with no soon recovery. Many of them are already calling for an alternative world economic order that would bring stability, equitability and that would be non-oppressive.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this current Budget has not set a new economic paradigm to address the prevailing world economic turmoil, but instead, there is, in my opinion – I maintain in my opinion - there is a smell of Masonic touch electorally concocted to appraise the masses.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Please, order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Still I will not blame the Government.

(Interruptions)

Après to jwoin mwa mo pou dir twa.

I will not hold this Government of ours responsible, but will lay emphasis on the complete failure of capitalism globally. That very system which decides on people's life though we were not part and parcel of all decisions that led to the international economic crisis and downfall. Because, in my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, be it in Roche Bois, Vallée Pitot, Plaine Verte or even Agalega, they do not play huge amounts of money on Wall Street there or other financial places, yet they are made to suffer from the injustice of that same capitalism. How long, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are we going to allow our people to suffer? Is it not high time to take bold action and decision to shape our people's destiny and future? When the formal system has failed, we need to empower the informal sector.

The Budget seems to have been set on the same dying capitalist economic order. This makes me worry profoundly, as it does not project hope for a sustainable economic development.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I do appreciate that the present Budget has made provision for tapping the Asian market. But I am convinced that still it is not sufficient and I cannot understand why we are not tapping for the vast and rich Middle East market. I, here, appeal to the Government - and in the presence of our Minister of Foreign Affairs, I thank Almighty that he is present - to speed up with the procedures to open an Embassy in Saudi Arabia as well as in other Middle East friendly countries in view of tapping those markets as has already been done by you in Turkey. Based on my exposure and my contacts in the Middle East, I am at the disposal most willing to contribute for our national interest. In the same trend, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I feel it is high time to review our air access policy to allow more flight from Africa and SADC countries, where there are emerging rich Africans and Asians residing and they want to explore our market. We should tap them also. We cannot continue anymore in the field of...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Ameer Meea, hon. Henry and hon. Assirvaden, please!

(Interruptions)

No cross-talking! The hon. Member should be listened to carefully. He deserves it.

(Interruptions)

Yes, please! You know what I mean.

(Interruptions)

If you want to meet eye to eye, you have some other venues. Yes, please, continue!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we cannot continue anymore in the field of protectionism. We need to open the skies to low cost companies that shall bring many more tourists to our country.

We want also from the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Utilities, concrete answers on the situation of water crisis and climate change. Will *Maurice Île Durable* still exist or shall we do away from this concept? This is no clear indication either way.

I shall now talk on the Local Government. La déception est immense. M. le président, les collectivités locales meurent à petit feu. C'est le drame qui se joue aujourd'hui au sein de l'administration régionale. Les municipalités jadis, les fleurons des villes connaissent une rapide descente aux enfers avec des conseillers indignes d'assumer les fonctions municipales. Les conseils de district sont dirigés par certains potentats qui ne sont pas élus démocratiquement. At the FSM, let me tell you that we have the solution for the local administration.

(Interruptions)

I already talked to him! I will meet him tomorrow!

We want to have an honest Government for an honest future. We need to breathe and to take up a fresh start. Not only we need Municipal elections, we also need general elections; the sooner, the better for each and everyone. Even if many persons have expressed their satisfaction at the bold measures taken in the 2012 budget to restore confidence among the entrepreneurs and investors, there is still room for change and improvement, especially for those at the lower rung of the ladder.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I find it very shocking that the current budget does not address the issue of corruption and the last damning Audit Report concerning mismanagement of public funds. I must also point out, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the Budget does not also address the very sensitive issue concerning *la crise alimentaire*, and there is no concrete food security policy. *Ainsi, je me demande si la sécurité alimentaire est vraiment une priorité pour ce gouvernement. Qu'est-ce que représente alors la futile somme de R 128 millions pour adresser une crise d'une telle envergure ?* I sustain my arguments by the fact that there has been a substantial increase of 33% in the importation of food products, that is, from Rs15 billion in 2006 to Rs20 billion in 2009. It is really shocking, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that out of the 650 tonnes of *produits alimentaires consommés par notre peuple*, 75% are being imported. I raised this concern in my previous speech on the Budget last year. *Ti piment zot faire nou importé - R 28 millions!*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is heartening to witness the people who have already lost their *pouvoir d'achat*, facing continuous difficulties in their lives. On the one hand, we have the world economic crisis already affecting our purchasing power and on the other hand, the prices of food products going up on the international market due to drought and flood in producing countries.

Cela me fait mal au coeur to see the population having much difficulties pour joindre les deux bouts. What does it worth tape l'esomac avec 4% croissance quand zenfant pas pé gagne dilait pour boire et pe alle dormi avec dithé pir ?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member should address either in French or English, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: Alright, thank you! I have one question, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. *Jusqu'a quand allons-nous laisser la population subir la hausse continue des prix alimentaires? When will the Government show genuine commitment and bring forward a strong policy to counter the crisis et apporter un soulagement à bane dimoune misere? Vous aurez à me donner raison pour avoir initialement proposé une baisse des allocations parlementaires pour subventionner l'importation afin de soulager la misère des enfants surtout. M. le président, en tant ki enn papa, ki papa pou capave guette so zenfant alle dormi sans dilait ?*

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Continue with your argumentation, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: I am trying. Since my engagement in politics, I have lived by the poor people of this country; I smell, I breathe the suffering of these people.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: We need another approach to this problem. Government should be in a position to help those at the lower rung of the ladder. There are several ways. We should have introduced a luxury tax on valuable items which will serve to help the poor. We should have had dedicated shops for the poor to help them to survive.

Une fois le temps des discours terminés, place aux chocs réels. Les infirmiers également accueillent favorablement les décisions du ministre des finances concernant le secteur de la santé. Ils ont toutefois émis des réserves quant à la mise à exécution de ces résolutions par le ministère de tutelle. Pour les pêcheurs, ces mesures ne traitent pas vraiment les besoins des pêcheurs. Elles frôlent l'effet d'annonce. Les petits planteurs sont, quant à eux, dans un désarroi total. *Even, Mr Somduth Dulthumun has had the courage to express his feelings on this issue.*

C'est pourquoi nous, au FSM, nous sommes engagés à soutenir les opprimés, les déshérités et les sans voix. Nous croyons fermement qu'il n'existe d'acte plus élevé que de servir les déshérités, notre fête sera le jour où les déshérités, les démunis et les opprimés parviennent à une vie correcte et aisée et à une éducation saine et humaine. Et c'est pourquoi au FSM, nous accordions à ces gens la priorité.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the FSM has been mandated by the people and entrusted with the responsibility to collaborate for all that is positive and prosperous for our society and to disapprove all that is negative and harmful to our society. The FSM has always been an aggressive advocate for equality and justice for all, which resulted in our historical victory - behind the bars. And in the last general election, *nous positionons comme une force politique déterminante dans le pays et l'avenir nous le dira.* I am pleased today to speak in a complete state of freedom that I enjoy after being democratically elected to be a Member of this august Assembly.

The FSM, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, has emerged in the midst of the poor people and stands by the side of these people with a commitment to alleviate their poverty and to bring social justice and inclusion. *C'est ce côté-là du budget que j'approuve ici officiellement. Je félicite aussi le Leader de l'opposition qui a eu le courage d'approuver bien des mesures dans ce*

budget et pas comme les membres du gouvernement qui ne trouvent rien à dire contre le budget
as if it has been divinely inspired.

The Budget sets quite ambitious objectives in terms of macroeconomic and fiscal performances. I also went through the 178 measures mentioned in the Budget that are projected to meet a growth of 4% next year despite growing global economic difficulties. In the FSM, we perceive the economic system differently. Unlike the ultraliberal economy of capitalism, the FSM believes in an economic model where the State plays a crucial role in preventing and correcting the likes of ultraliberal tendencies, and we are profoundly for a non-oppressive, equal and stable economic system.

The social measures in the Budget are laudable. I congratulate the Minister of Finance particularly for increasing the amount of money on overseas medical assistance. I also welcome the contribution to a Pension Fund for those earning less than Rs3,000.

Government is also aiming to aggressive privatisation plan that will see the State disinvesting from some businesses. In the FSM, we are not against disinvestment, but we cannot disinvest in strategic enterprises such as the Cargo Handling Corporation, the airport and the Mauritius Telecom.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has recognised the difficulty for our youth and women to find a job. I am pleased that he is now encouraging companies to provide proper training to our youth, to our future. I would request an appropriate study to identify the skills need to avoid mismatch and to provide the market with appropriate human resources. I also request the hon. Minister to give a special attention to women training in view of empowering the women folk that will also help in alleviating poverty.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I welcome the measures taken to support the SMEs as many of my constituents are SME working formally or informally. But I hope that all the SMEs will have easy access to these measures and that all the stakeholders, especially the banks and other financial institutions, will be advised to show commitment to support these SMEs for, very often, the SMEs complain to me that either the procedures are very heavy or the financial institutions are unwilling to finance their project. We have also to note that the backdrop of the financial crisis, the SMEs which are among the major job creators, *sont réellement dans des situations précaires*.

We have also to note that if the SMEs are not properly supported by Government it could result in social disintegration starting by the family because it is the family initially which work together for the SMEs and that will reach the locality and we know what will be the outcome and consequences.

Dans ce même sillage, M. le président, *I make a solemn appeal to the Deputy Prime Minister* Dr. Rashid Beebeejaun a ne pas augmenter le fardeau de ces personnes qui luttent pour leur survie en augmentant le tarif d'eau prévu pour janvier 2012. *I appeal to him*. Je propose aussi au ministre des finances d'apporter des mesures pour faciliter les *SMEs* à exploiter les marchés africains.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like also to point out to the House that although Government has come with a lot of cures for the symptoms of poverty, little has been proposed on how to alleviate the causes of poverty and, as we know poverty breeds poverty, we should have looked at the cause of poverty, first of all. Many of my constituents from poor backgrounds blame the lack of opportunities, *marchants ambulants*, they feel victimised and yet they are

trying hard to survive. We put a lot of effort in good schools and yet good performing schools are seen as 'no go area'.

Although we mentioned a social contract we have not yet looked at what causes poverty. Poverty is region specific and the causes vary from region to region. The FSM is the voice of these *defavorisés et je veillerai à ce que ces mesures budgétaires et les promesses gouvernementales arrivent jusqu'à ces gens défavorisés.*

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, housing is a basic necessity and not a luxury. I welcome the measures to give ex-CHA tenants the opportunity to become owners, and construction of new houses where buyers will pay a third of the cost. However, for some in poverty, finding a third of the cost is still a burden. I propose to Government that we go further to help them obtain the remaining one third. I am ready to help by our contacts.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I welcome the measures to maintain solidarity on banks and telecom companies. I would propose that we come forward strongly and firmly with a wealth tax.

Finally, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget has promised a lot and I hope that the measures will be implemented for the benefit of the population as the success will certainly depend on the degree of implementation.

The hon. Minister of Finance says he is confident and that his Budget will be judged within six months. Almighty knows if Government will be still here in six months!

(Interruptions)

This is my conviction and I am expressing my mind.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order!

Mr Fakeemeeah: He says he is also confident in reducing the size of the Government debt to 50% of GDP. But, we, in the FSM, we feel the duty to appeal to the House and to the population at large to place our confidence and complete dependence on Almighty God alone after having consciously turned every stone as a mean to achieve our goal.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in fact, man does not live by bread alone...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Order! Let the hon. Member conclude, please!

Mr Fakeemeeah: We are composed of physical skeleton with the spirit operating within. Ultimately, we are spiritual beings no matter how blessed we are economically; a life with no joy in the heart is in vain.

These measures are important certainly if we are to avoid our country to get into the mess that the European countries are facing. We cannot continue to live beyond our means; this in itself is a tragedy. We also must educate our compatriots to live within their means if we are to have a prosperous nation.

I reiterate that in spite of social measures, this Budget does not bring any new economic paradigm. It fails to address the major issues of corruption, mismanagement of public funds and the sensible issue *de la crise alimentaire*. And also it does not bring about a shift in economic paradigm to prepare the country to face the challenges of the global economic crisis. But, let's not despair and be courageous and stand together to face any circumstance. It is not time to criticise neither to insult nor to lower in view to take advantage. But it is the most convenient time to join hands and shoulders in a reconciling spirit to fulfill our pledge to the people, to face emerging challenges resulting from ongoing global crisis.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Obeegadoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be adjourned.

Mr Bhagwan rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move for the adjournment of the House to Friday 18 November 2011 at 3.30 p.m.

Dr. Boolell rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTERS RAISED

(19.39)

ALBION – DEAD WHALE

Mr R. Bhagwan (First Member for Beau Bassin & Petite Rivière): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to raise an issue which is of urgent nature and requires the attention of the Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues and the Minister of Health and Quality of Life, although I know that there are some actions which have been initiated and we would like to know what is the present situation. *Cela concerne la baleine morte* in the region of Albion which is in my constituency. Sir, the hon. Minister will tell us later on what is the situation but, from what we gathered and from the representations that we have received myself and my two colleagues hon.

Li Kwong Wing and hon. Quirin concerning *l'odeur nauséabonde et infecte qui s'est abattue sur la région depuis quelques jours déjà, suite à ce problème de baleine.*

M. le président, l'honorable ministre doit nous dire exactement ce qui a été fait, parce que la population demande à être informée. Je le sais que tout le monde, a été bloqué ici, y compris l'honorable ministre de la pêche et celui de la santé, mais au niveau de la population de la région, les *fishermen, they are all worried*. Ils sont en attente de réponse.

M. le président, le ministre a dit qu'il y a un comité interministériel, *which has been set up to look into the matter, and which was supposed to meet today. Will the hon. Minister tell us whether this baleine is still there, whether it has been removed, and what sort of actions have been taken, especially concerning materials used?* Nous avons été informés qu'il faut mettre de la chaux sur cela. Malheureusement, *officers from the Ministry of Health – from what I understand – came there and put another solution, and the people of the region of Albion are a bit scared of the side effects of same.*

There is another problem, Mr Speaker, Sir, concerning the fishermen. They have said '*nous pas comprend ki bane autorités pe attane pu tire sa. L'odeur là li insoutenable*'. They are unable to work, and there is an ecological problem as well from what I gather. I would also appeal to the hon. Minister of Health to make a follow-up, because the region of Albion is the one of the most, I would say, populated regions these days.

C'est une région qui est en plein développement. Il y a pas mal de morcellements. Mis à part la plage public d'Albion, il y aussi pas mal de Mauriciens qui vont y faire un tour ; ils font des balades, et il y a pas mal de curieux. Comme nous sommes dans un période de vacances, pas mal d'enfants, de collégiens, prenant connaissance de ce problème de baleine, vont y faire un tour, et il risque d'y avoir un problème de contamination. *This is the issue I wanted to raise. We*

are also expecting the Minister to issue a communiqué le plus rapidement. Au moins on peut utiliser la MBC à des fins plus positives que de faire de la propagande. M. le président, j'attends la réponse des deux ministres, surtout le ministre de la pêche.

Il y a aussi un autre point. Nous avons reçu des requêtes concernant l'effet que cela a eu sur les touristes, surtout au Club Med. Il y a pas mal d'interrogations, et nous avons été informés qu'il y a des inquiétudes au nouveau de l'établissement d'Albion. J'espère que l'honorable ministre du tourisme fera un *follow-up* à ce niveau.

Merci, M. le président.

SPERM WHALE CARCASS - ALBION

The Minister of Fisheries and Rodrigues (Mr J. Von-Mally): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, though I was here, I have been following the sequence of events all through. This is why I would like to thank the hon. Member for giving me the opportunity to give some more information concerning this whale carcass.

In fact, it concerns a sperm whale carcass of about 15 metres long; it is very big; voluminous. My Ministry received information concerning the disposal of this whale carcass. It was in an advance state of decomposition already, at about two nautical miles off the coast of Albion; right in front of the Albion lighthouse. This information was received on Tuesday last, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Officers of the Fisheries Protection Service and the National Coast Guard undertook a visit there. Since then, officers of several Ministries were involved. They have been busy working together, in order to get rid of this carcass. This includes my Ministry, the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of

Local Government, the National Coast Guard, the Beach Authority, the MPA and the SMF. In fact, two options have been examined -

- (i) to dispose the carcass, at least, ten nautical miles in the open sea, and
- (ii) to slash, cut or dispose the carcass at a dumping site.

The first option has been retained, and the operation has started today since 2.45 p.m. Four boats were involved in this exercise. According to the latest information I have gathered, neither the National Coast Guard boats nor that of the Fisheries Protection Service have been able to dislodge the carcass from the rocky coast of Albion. The Mauritian Ports Authority is sending a truck to tow the carcass tonight, because the carcass was lodged on the rocks of Albion. It was very difficult to remove it. It has been put in netting materials, and will be towed in the icier. This exercise will start at 7.30 p.m. - I think it has already started – and is expected to be completed by midnight. Officers of the Fisheries Protection Service, the SMF and the National Coast Guard are present right away at the site.

I would like also to inform the House that the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life has disinfected the place - *la solution qu'on a utilisée* - at Albion with Lysol, a product which is environmentally friendly and that will have no effect on the marine life.

I thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(7.47 p.m.)

CIRCONSCRIPTION NO. 3 - IBRAHIM ABDULLAH MARKET FAIR - RENT

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Le problème que je vais soulever aujourd'hui concerne le Ibrahim Abdullah *market fair* qui se trouve dans ma circonscription, notamment la circonscription No. 3.

Il y a deux catégories de marchands qui y travaillent. Il y a une catégorie qui travaille à l'intérieur du bâtiment, et une autre catégorie de marchands qui travaille à l'extérieur. Mais, le problème est qu'ils payent tout les deux le même loyer. Ils payent tout les deux R 800. Les gens qui se trouvent à l'extérieur y travaillent depuis 2009, et on leur a fait signer un contrat, tout en réclamant les arrérages depuis 2009 à ce jour. Donc, ils doivent payer la somme de R 800 mensuelle plus les R 800 depuis 2009 à ce jour. Il n'arrive pas à payer ce loyer. Ces gens-là sont venus me voir, en temps que député de la circonscription, et j'ai écrit une lettre au lord maire de la capitale. J'ai écrit une lettre officielle au lord maire le 16 octobre, réclamant un rendez-vous pour discuter de tous ces problèmes et essayer de trouver une solution.

M. le président, je trouve cela regrettable que le lord maire ne m'a même pas répondu ; il ne m'a même pas appelé, et ne m'a même pas reçu jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Je trouve cela déplorable. C'est un manque d'égards à l'encontre de ces gens et la plupart sont des gens honnêtes, qui travaillent pour avoir une vie meilleure. Donc, aujourd'hui, je saisis cette occasion pour soulever la question à l'honorable ministre des collectivités locales, l'honorable Hervé Aimée.

Ce problème est un problème humain, et il faut trouver une solution humaine. Aujourd'hui, je vais relayer la proposition qui a été faite par ces gens, c'est-à-dire, la foire a été prévue pour 400 étals. Aujourd'hui, je ne sais pour quelle raison, il y a environ 800 marchands qui y travaillent.

Donc, leur requête est qu'il faut baisser le loyer. Ils sont disposés à payer un loyer de R 400 au lieu de R 800, comme c'est le cas généralement à travers le pays.

J'espère que cette requête va être considérée par l'honorable ministre et, éventuellement, on pourra trouver une solution à ce problème.

Merci M. le président.

The Minister of Local Government and Outer Islands (Mr H. Aimée): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, depuis le début de ce mois-ci, c'est-à-dire le 02 ou 03 novembre, deux membres du gouvernement, l'honorable Shakeel Mohammed et l'honorable Abdullah Hossen, nous ont rapporté ce cas. J'ai immédiatement informé la municipalité concernant la première partie de l'intervention de l'honorable membre.

Pour ce qui des 800 *stalls holders* qui payent actuellement R 800, l'honorable membre veut avoir un rabais, c'est-à-dire, la moitié, comme il vient de mentionner. Cela doit se faire par la municipalité. J'ai les ai informés, mais *they are autonomous and have to take a decision for that*, tout en tenant compte que si on réduit le coût qu'ils ont à payer à Cité Martial, il faut s'en doute prendre en considération le fait qu'on a d'autres marchés à Port Louis. Alors, il faut faire pour les autres aussi. Je laisse le choix au *Council*. Assez souvent, vous dites que les ministres mettent leur nez dans toutes les affaires. Donc, je vais attendre que le *Council* nous fournisse l'information. J'attends une réponse de la municipalité de Port Louis pour décider ce qu'il faut faire.

CITE MANGALKHAN – TERRAIN DE FOOT – PROBLEME D'ECLAIRAGE

Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas & Floreal) : Mercie M. le président de m'offrir l'opportunité d'attirer l'attention de la Chambre, particulièrement le ministre des Infrastructures Publiques à propos d'un problème auquel font face les habitants de la Cité Mangalkhan, principalement les jeunes. Je parle ici, M. le président, de l'éclairage sur le terrain de foot à Mangalkhan.

D'après les informations que j'ai reçues, cela fait trois jours que l'éclairage n'y est pas. Il y a l'équipe de la deuxième division de Mangalkhan qui prépare un tournoi dans une ou deux

semaines, et ils sont assez embarrassés pour leur entraînement. Donc, comme je suis leur représentante, ils m'ont demandé de faire entendre leur voix pour trouver une solution, afin qu'ils puissent faire leur entraînement dans de meilleures conditions pour participer à cette compétition prévue dans une semaine ou deux.

Je vous remercie, M. le président.

The Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructures, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the matter has already been looked into.

At 7.54 p.m., the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Friday 18 November 2011 at 3.30 p.m.