

No. 23 of 2012



FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

PARLIAMENTARY

DEBATES

(HANSARD)

SECOND SESSION

FRIDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2012

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| Dr. the Hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, GCSK, FRCP | Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues |
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| Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK | Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development |
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| Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin | Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare |
| Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia | Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms |

Members

Members

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MAURITIUS

Fifth National Assembly

SECOND SESSION

Debate No. 23 of 2012

Sitting of 16 November 2012

The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis,

At 3.30 p.m

The National Anthem was played

(Mr Speaker in the Chair)

PAPERS LAID

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

A. Ministry of Finance and Economic Development –

- (a) Financial Services (Consolidated Licensing and Fees) (Amendment No. 2) Rules 2012 (Government Notice No. 189 of 2012).
- (b) Private Pension Schemes (Licensing and Authorisation) Rules 2012 (Government Notice No. 190 of 2012).
- (c) Private Pension Schemes (Governance) Rules 2012 (Government Notice No. 191 of 2012).
- (d) The Customs (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 196 of 2012).
- (e) The Excise (Amendment of Schedules) (No. 2) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 197 of 2012).
- (f) The Statutory Bodies (Accounts and Audit) (Amendment of Schedule) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 198 of 2012).
- (g) The Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Bank of Mauritius for the year ended 30 June 2012 (In Original).

B. Ministry of Local Government and Outer Islands –

- (a) The Local Government (Alteration of Boundaries) (Municipal Town Council of Curepipe) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 195 of 2012).
- (b) The Village Council Elections (Polling Stations) Order, 2012 (Government Notice No. 199 of 2012).
- (c) The Annual Report and Audited Accounts of the Local Infrastructure Fund for the 18 months period July 2009 to December 2010 (In Original).

C. Attorney General's Office –

The Legal Assistance Rules 2012 (Government Notice No. 188 of 2012).

D. Ministry of Industry and Commerce and Consumer Protection –

- (a) The Hire Purchase and Credit Sale (Charges) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 187 of 2012).
- (b) The Consumer Protection (Scrap Metal) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations 2012 (Government Notice No. 192 of 2012).

ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION

MADAGASCAR - ROSEWOOD - ALLEGED SMUGGLING

The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger) (*by Private Notice*) asked the Prime Minister, Minister of Defence, Home Affairs and External Communications, Minister for Rodrigues whether, in regard to alleged case of smuggling of rosewood from Madagascar in June 2011, he will -

- (a) for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Commissioner of Police, the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Financial Intelligence Unit and the Mauritius Revenue Authority, information as to if the inquiries carried out thereinto have now been completed and, if so, the outcome thereof, indicating if any arrest has been effected in connection therewith and, if not, why not;
- (b) state the assistance, if any, that has been received from the Malagasy and Chinese Authorities;
- (c) state where matters stand as regards the inquiry carried out by the foreign Forensic Customs Fraud Investigator in connection therewith, and
- (d) state if the World Bank has agreed to give assistance to Mauritius to curb the illicit smuggling and trade of rosewood from Madagascar and, if so, give details thereof.

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I stated in my reply to the Private Notice Question on 10 July last on the alleged smuggling of rosewood from Madagascar, it is our wish that the enquiry comes to an end and that we get to the bottom of the matter.

Government sought the assistance of the World Bank to curb illicit smuggling and trade of rosewood from Madagascar and to have a forensic audit to trace back those involved in the shipment of rosewood from Madagascar. They initially responded positively subject to approval by their Board. In the meantime, to speed up matters and to avoid undue delay in getting to the

bottom of this matter, I decided to enlist the services of a foreign Forensic Customs Fraud Investigator.

In regard to parts (a) and (b) of the question, I am informed that in the course of an official mission to Madagascar by the Police from 22 May 2012 to 27 May 2012, information was obtained to the effect that there was an exchange of telephone calls between one Mr S.U.S. a Mauritian national who was in Madagascar and a former Minister.

(Interruptions)

Records, Mr Speaker, Sir, confirm that these calls were made on 27 May 2011. Police is pursuing its enquiry and on completion of its investigation, the case file will be referred to the DPP for advice.

As regards ICAC, the Director-General has informed that in the process of its enquiry, it has received certain information on 09 and 12 October 2012 from the Director-General BIANCO and is awaiting confirmation of same in writing. According to the information received from the same source, eleven Malagasy suspects were arrested.

Out of these 11 suspects, five of them have been convicted.

Regarding the FIU, it has on 12 November 2012, received sensitive financial information from a commercial bank in Mauritius on a company connected to a Malagasy national. The FIU has indicated that it is awaiting other related information with a view to pursuing its own financial investigative analysis. Thereafter further dissemination will be made to the appropriate investigatory authority.

Mr Speaker, Sir, in regard to part (c) of the question, as I have stated previously in the House, the services of special forensic auditors have been enlisted to assist the Mauritius Revenue Authority in the enquiry.

The Forensic auditors had extensive consultations with the MRA, the FIU and the Police and thereafter proceeded to Hong Kong where they had working sessions with the Hong Kong authorities from 25 to 29 June 2012.

After several exchanges with the Customs authorities of the People's Republic of China, they have proceeded again to Hong Kong and then to Beijing to pursue the enquiry from 08 November 2012.

In regard to part (d) of the question, I informed the House in my reply to the Private Notice Question of 10 July 2012 that the World Bank had agreed to take up the matter, in

principle, but was awaiting approval of the newly appointed Vice-President for Africa and the Board. And, I read out, *in extenso*, email exchanges on this subject between the Financial Secretary and Mrs Haleh Bridi the World Bank Country Director for Mauritius in my past answers.

In the meantime, the World Bank informed the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development that their rules do not allow them to identify all those who may have been involved and benefitted from this specific illegal transshipment of rosewood.

However, they would review, as also requested by the Malagasy authorities, the chain of illicit smuggling and trade of rosewood. I am now informed that on 15 November 2012, Mrs Bridi has emailed the Financial Secretary to confirm that the World Bank is going ahead with its investigation of the matter which will cover the following areas -

- A feasibility study on stock inventory concerning, *inter-alia*: assessment of the procedures required to carry out the stock inventory.
- A legal analysis comprising: an in-depth legal analysis of the forestry legal framework, evaluating the legality of extraction, exploitation and export permits granted by the Ministry of Environment since 2000.
- A stock disposal feasibility study consisting analysis of costs, benefits and risks associated regarding the disposal of rosewood.
- A feasibility study for the labelling of precious wood comprising assessment of the costs and benefits of various marking techniques to select the most appropriate methodology to label the logs.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House as well as the nation will surely appreciate that such enquiries do unavoidably get protracted especially when there are not just internal but also external elements have to be verified and necessitating the cooperation of their respective countries.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the House would also surely appreciate that it is contrary to the public interest to give a running commentary on the progress of such a sensitive criminal investigation involving local parties and having international ramifications.

Such information is exactly what those who are being investigated would like to have. At a risk of disappointing them, I am certainly not going to oblige!

Notwithstanding this, let me reassure the House of my unflinching determination to ensure that every line of enquiry is diligently pursued not only in this case but also in other cases currently under investigation.

Mr Bérenger: Mr Speaker, Sir, I heard the hon. Prime Minister say that it is the wish of Government to see that the enquiry is completed as soon as possible. The enquiry was started on 19 June 2011, that is, one and a half years ago. On 10 July, the hon. Prime Minister said, and I quote –

“The preliminary report has been sent to the Director of Public Prosecutions.”

Now that the enquiry is going on and on, can I ask what has happened to this preliminary report? Has the DPP taken a decision? Is a copy of that preliminary report available?

The Prime Minister: The preliminary report has been sent to the DPP as things were moving, but, as I said, there has been new evidence. I believe that they have been told that there is new material that is going to do so, they will not, I suppose, finish. They would want to have everything before they take a decision.

Mr Bérenger: Can I know where that rosewood is to be found at present? Is it in Mauritius at the Customs, at the Embassy or has it been sent back to Madagascar?

The Prime Minister: No, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are still impounded at Customs.

Mr Bérenger: Can I remind the hon. Prime Minister that as far back as May 2012, that is, some six months ago, he stated categorically in reply to a PNQ on 22 May, as I said, he said, and I quote -

“According to information that we have received that people, here, in Mauritius have participated in this traffic *de bois de rose*. There is a *gérant de la Société* Princewood Ltd and her former husband, a resident of Mauritius. And then there is the PDG of Group Sodia who has activities in Mauritius.”

That is more than six months ago. Can I know how it is after that statement from the hon. Prime Minister that there has been no arrest at all?

The Prime Minister: Because it appears that they were not involved, Mr Speaker, Sir. The enquiry is still ongoing, I must say, because they are looking at everything. I understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition has said it has taken the time it has taken, but it takes time because we need the cooperation of other countries as well.

Mr Bérenger: On the other hand, Mr Speaker, Sir, on 10 July – if I can find my notes - the hon. Prime Minister was quite categorical and if I can quote him again, he said –

“I am going to table it. There are suspicious people who have travelled to and from Madagascar. I am tabling the list of those people here and also, as far as Parliamentarians are concerned, I can table the list as well.”

Can I know why he is undertaking to table the list of people who have travelled to and from Madagascar under suspicious circumstances? He said he was going to table it. Why has that list not been tabled and can we have the names involved?

The Prime Minister: We can have, Mr Speaker, Sir. The advice was that we do not want to publish the list officially at this point because the enquiry is going on and these people have moved away from where they are. So, it is better not to publish it at this point, but this list will certainly be laid on the Table of the Assembly as soon as it is possible to lay it, but it might prejudice the enquiry.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister stated that he is tabling the list and then he changed his mind. Can I know whether the enquiry has looked also into the possibility of money laundering through IRS property and other property, here, in Mauritius? That is, people from Madagascar, money laundering proceeds from illegal exports of rosewood through IRS and other property purchases, here, in Mauritius.

The Prime Minister: The enquiry is quite extensive, Mr Speaker, Sir, they are not just looking at one section, but also at money laundering and all this. I can say, but, again, I say this with precaution. So far, there doesn't seem to be a link between X or Y or Z by IRS and involved in the rosewood or money laundering, but they are pursuing the enquiry.

Mr Bérenger: I didn't catch all the details of what the hon. Prime Minister in reference to what he said that evidence having emerged of telephone conversations. Can I know who has provided us with that information? Is it BIANCO, that is, the equivalent of ICAC in Madagascar? Which authority has provided us with that information and the date on which that information was provided to us, here, in Mauritius?

The Prime Minister: I don't know whether it would be prudent to say, but let's say the authorities...

(Interruptions)

I can say, but you put the life of the guy in danger there. Is that what the hon. Leader of the Opposition want?

(Interruptions)

Because when the Director of the Intelligence of Madagascar came here, he said certain things to our Police officers, that is, not free to say everything that he would like to say and we know there are certain things. I said that before. I have to protect people also. I can't just put people at risk, but if the hon. Leader of Opposition wants to know, it is from the Intelligence of Madagascar.

Mr Bérenger: Did I hear the hon. Prime Minister say that the Head of the Malagasy Intelligence came here and said that he is not free to say all that he wishes to say? Did I hear that?

The Prime Minister: That's precisely what I said, Mr Speaker, Sir. There are certain things you do not want to reveal to put people in danger. He said that he will not give answers to certain things because he is not free to say it.

Mr Bérenger: So, from what I understand, it is supposedly the Head of the Malagasy Intelligence who has informed the Police, here, that they have evidence of telephone conversations. Have we been provided with the recordings of those conversations?

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: Recordings, no. Not recording.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

(Interruptions)

Proceed hon. Prime Minister!

(Interruptions)

The Prime Minister: I have said clearly, Mr Speaker, Sir, that once we got this information...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! No cross talking!

(Interruptions)

Proceed hon. Prime Minister!

The Prime Minister: Once the information was received, we had to go and look whether that actually is the case. Not the recording, but the fact is that there has been telephone calls, as I said, on the date and records confirm that these calls were made on 27 May 2011.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order!

Mr Bérenger: I take it that this information has been provided as stated by the hon. Prime Minister by the Head of the Security Service of Madagascar. Is that the case?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, as I explained, we have to be careful of what we say in this House so that we do not put in danger the lives of other people there, in Madagascar that I am talking about. But we have had this information, I have just said from where and we have confirmed that these conversations did take place.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: Well, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is easy to just say that like that without producing any evidence.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order!

(Interruptions)

Order, please! Order!

(Interruptions)

I say order! Allow the hon. Prime Minister to answer!

The Prime Minister: I don't understand the hon. Leader of the Opposition! Does the hon. Leader of the Opposition want the truth or does he want to protect some people?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Order! Order!

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister knows very well that I am not out to protect anybody to establish the whole truth, Mr Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order! Proceed hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: Will the hon. Prime Minister agree with me that it is just too easy to throw mud like that without any evidence.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order! Order!

The Prime Minister: The hon. Leader of the Opposition himself does that every time. But he does that all the time; he throws mud on people every time. But, Mr Speaker Sir, I am not saying that just lightly. We have got the information, we have confirmed it and I can confirm again that the records confirm that these calls were made on official telephones we are talking about.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bérenger: We will reach the point...

Mr Speaker: I say order!

Mr Bérenger: ... where we will request the evidence, because just saying like that is one thing, Mr Speaker, Sir. If I can move on to the World Bank issue...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order! Allow the question to be put, please! Enough now!

Mr Bérenger: Eight months after the Cabinet took the decision to ask for assistance from the World Bank, I take it from what I heard, that eight months later, no such assistance - as to date - is forthcoming.

The Prime Minister: That's precisely, Mr Speaker, Sir, when they said they have to wait for the new vice-President, I think, who was travelling somewhere. He was just nominated in that post. They said, in principle, they would be agreeable, but they will have to wait for the Board and the vice-President. Because of that, I decided precisely not to lose time and I appointed these special forensic auditors; especially not to lose time. I think I didn't mention that they have said on 15 November, that is yesterday, that Mrs Bridi has e-mailed the Financial Secretary to confirm that the World Bank is not going into the details of the things that we had hoped - but we are doing it anyway - that the World Bank is going ahead with the investigation of the matter in the following areas. I don't have to repeat the following areas that they are doing, including a legal analysis, the feasible study on how they are cut, how the stocks are kept, who has the permits and all these things. They are looking into that.

Mr Bérenger: The hon. Prime Minister has just made reference to the Foreign Forensic Customs Fraud Investigator, which he appointed some time back. Has that investigator produced a report and is it available?

The Prime Minister: There is no report that would be available, because we want to proceed with the inquiry, but they have not done yet. As I said, they had gone to Hong Kong and then they had come back; they had first of all talked to the people in the FIU, the MRA, the Police, then they went to Hong Kong. They came back to talk to them again with more detailed information. Now, they have gone back to Hong Kong and Beijing and they are about to return.

Mr Jugnauth: With regard to the telephone conversation, may I know if up to now there has been any statement taken with regard to that gentleman SUS and other Mauritian nationalities, whether the authorities have taken any statement with regard to these people?

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: I say order! I say order! Hon. Boolell and hon. Soodhun! I want some order, if not I am going to suspend the sitting. The question has been put and allow the hon. Prime Minister to answer now. Please quiet!

The Prime Minister: The inquiry is going on. In due time, I am sure, statements will be taken by whoever has to be taken.

(Interruptions)

Mr Bhagwan: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister whether the FIU has been enquiring with regard to the relationship of one Mr Mami, a Malagasy national, the main character behind the Bois de Rose *saga*, with offshore companies here in Mauritius? May I know whether this aspect is being verified?

The Prime Minister: That is why you have to be very careful, Mr Speaker, Sir. Already the hon. Member is saying that Mr Mami is guilty. He has a relationship.

(Interruptions)

You are asking, but you are throwing mud at the same time, exactly what the Leader of the Opposition has said!

(Interruptions)

You don't have to worry! You are throwing mud! That's what you are doing: insinuating, innuendos, insinuation. Everything is going to be done to get to the bottom. Nobody is going to be ...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Uteem, next question! Order please!

(Interruptions)

Next question, hon. Uteem!

Mr Uteem: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. The hon. Prime Minister just mentioned the Forensic Customs Fraud Investigation Team.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Well, let's have some order! Let the hon. Member put his question! Silence!

Mr Uteem: May I know from the hon. Prime Minister how much money has been paid to the Forensic Customs Fraud Investigation Team so far and how much is their budget for this inquiry?

The Prime Minister: We will pay whatever has to be paid so that we get to the bottom of this.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Yes, hon Ameer Meea!

(Interruptions)

Mr Ameer Meea: Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. Can I ask the hon. Minister...

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Let us have some silence! Please quiet! You may put your question, hon. Member!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister the name of the forensic firm..

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Member, put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: I am putting the question, but there is no silence in the House.

Mr Speaker: Put your question!

Mr Ameer Meea: Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister the name of the forensic firm that has been selected and also its terms of reference?

The Prime Minister: Mr Speaker, Sir, we do not want to give additional information. I hope the hon. Member wants to get to the bottom of this. In what way the name is a problem? In what way?

(Interruptions)

I have taken a reputable firm.

(Interruptions)

You wait and see!

Mr Speaker: I want some silence so that hon. Members having questions, may put them freely and in peace, please.

Mr Ameer Meea: Mr Speaker, Sir, I asked the hon. Prime Minister the name of the firm just to ensure that there is no conflict of interest.

(Interruptions)

And also the firm is being paid out of public funds! We have the right to ask this question.

The Prime Minister: Let me reassure the hon. Member that there is no conflict of interest. We have not just picked a firm like this that we don't know. We have gone through a procedure and we have taken one of the top firms in the world.

Mr Speaker: Any more questions! Yes, hon. Leader of the Opposition!

Mr Bérenger: With your permission, Mr Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether he is aware that these two or three weeks, there had been a lot of events in Madagascar.

There have been convictions of people convicted for smuggling of rosewood. There have been arrests of people who have made allegations, accusing *untel et untel*, of having being involved in that. There has been a very important statement on 05 November by the present Prime Minister of Madagascar. In the course of all these, the names of Malagasy firms that are alleged to have been involved in that smuggling and the names of businessmen have been mentioned. Can I ask the hon. Prime Minister whether our Embassy in Madagascar has kept us fully informed and what action, if any, has followed at our end?

The Prime Minister: Our Embassy has kept us fully informed Mr Speaker, Sir, and we have transmitted the names to the authorities which are doing the investigations, including the foreign auditors.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Silence, please!

(Interruptions)

Silence! I say order! Order! Now, the hon. Prime Minister may come to the Motion, please.

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.

Second Reading

THE APPROPRIATION (2013) BILL

(No. XXVII of 2012)

Order read for resuming adjourned debate on the Second Reading of the Appropriation (2013) Bill (No. XXVII of 2012).

Question again proposed.

(04.00 p.m.)

The Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare (Mrs M. Martin): Mr Speaker, Sir, I associate myself with the other orators on this side of the House, to congratulate the Vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval for this Budget. It is pragmatic, achievable and, at the same time, it is a visionary budget.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mauritius, like many other countries, has been affected by the successive financial and economic crises. This global turmoil has redefined the world economic landscape. Amidst all this turbulence, Mauritius, under the able guidance of our Prime Minister, has been able to show remarkable resiliency.

This 2013 Budget comes at an opportune time, Mr Speaker, Sir, for Mauritius, like other countries, is at a turning point.

I have listened carefully to the different speeches in the House, Mr Speaker, Sir, regarding the Budget, but I must say, hon. Dr. Bunwaree rightly underlined the other day that even if there are signs that we are moving out of the economic turmoil, the situation remains difficult. In this world in transition, our Republic is bracing itself to the challenge through this Budget.

Our people, Mr Speaker, Sir, are no different from other people of the world. Despite economic difficulties, they aspire, and legitimately so, for an enhanced quality of life, social inclusion and cohesion. In this Budget, Government is paving the way for better days.

Hon. Duval, translating the vision of our Prime Minister, has provided a set of measures which will benefit both men and women of our Republic. This is where I must say I am very disappointed by the observations, the other day, of hon. Labelle as regards this Budget. She said: *“il n’y pas une seule mesure qui est annoncée pour la femme Mauricienne dans ce budget...”*

Mr Speaker, Sir, I beg to disagree. I am surprised that such a remark has been made by a lady politician with experience such as herself because she has failed to read between the lines of this Budget and between the lines of all the measures announced last Friday.

For, despite the fact that the Budget does not explicitly refer to women, the work being undertaken by my Ministry to mainstream gender in all Ministries is bearing fruit. I wish to highlight that the Ministry of Finance has been involved since last year in the process of gender-mainstreaming, including the importance to have a gender-responsive Budget. Moreover, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development has already formulated its sectoral gender policy and we can see that this exercise has significantly influenced the measures enunciated in

this Budget, for this Budget focuses on our strength and opportunities to identify and activate levers of economic and social change, rolling back unemployment and poverty.

Government has remained steadfast in addressing the challenges of creating jobs, reducing poverty and developing the economy. These endeavours in themselves benefit the most vulnerable. We all know that women constitute the larger percentage of the unemployed. They are also the most affected by the scourges of poverty and addressing those two issues will undoubtedly improve the lot of our womenfolk.

A series of measures, enunciated in the Budget, reaffirm the central role of public policies and actions with a view to preparing our country for the future.

Hon. Duval has presented an honest, realistic and achievable Budget. The sterile and negative criticism from the Opposition does not surprise me. After all, criticising is all they ever do. As you know, we are *'à la veille des élections villageoises et municipales'*, so how can they recognise the merits of this Budget?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is typical of the Opposition to criticise just for the sake of criticising, but this current Budget has been presented to the population, laying down all the facts and figures presenting a true picture of our economic situation. As a responsible Government, we are living up to our reputation through the measures enunciated therein.

While addressing the issue of financing and empowerment, we are, at the same time, strengthening our people's sense of responsibility and upholding their dignity. We are ensuring that the basic principles for equal enjoyment of men and women's rights prevail.

Government has been constant in its ongoing process of economic and social transformation. This can be seen in all our endeavours to develop participatory approaches for an increasingly gender-inclusive society. The 2013 Budget is adding on to the well-being of our people.

Youth unemployment, Mr Speaker, Sir, is a major concern for Government because it is especially unfair when, after having completed tertiary studies, a young graduate finds himself or herself unable to secure a job because he lacks what the company asks, that is, experience. The requirements of enterprises for work experience indeed constitute a vicious circle for a newcomer on the labour market. Youth are thus barred from the possibility of putting their skills and talents to the service of the economy. The special provisions contained in this Budget to

encourage enterprises to employ young graduates are commendable. Government is investing Rs330 m. to address the issue of youth unemployment and this provision speaks for itself.

Again girls stand to gain from this measure. We all know that, in terms of academic performance, girls do consistently better than boys. In a highly competitive environment where enterprises search for the best, women thus stand a better chance of being recruited.

The strengthening of the Youth Employment Programme can, in this way, change the dynamics regarding equal opportunities for women to accede to jobs and gain this much sought-after experience that can improve their prospects for professional mobility.

Moreover, the setting up of the “Skills Working Group”, a joint venture of the Ministry of Finance and the Joint Economic Council, also provides for an effective mechanism to contribute to the design and implementation of programmes responsive to the profile and needs of our youth.

I wish to acknowledge the decision of the Minister of Finance to increase the number of new graduates under the “Service to Mauritius Programme”. This programme, Mr Speaker, Sir, has multiple outcomes and they are very positive.

- It helps our young men and women become versatile and gain solid work experience.
- It relieves them from waiting years before joining the labour market.
- It also gives them an opportunity to understand the machinery of Government; instil in them a deepened sense of patriotism through service to their country.
- In addition, it provides our Republic with a pool of talented local human resource.

The former US President, John Kennedy said - and this is a famous quote – that:

“you should not ask what your country can do for you, but you should ask what you can do for your country.”

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government is giving a concrete opportunity to our young professionals to contribute effectively to the development of their country.

In my Ministry, we presently have six such graduates working under this program. Their commitment and professionalism are highly appreciated and we intend to recruit some more next year.

The Prime Minister has consistently reiterated his long-term vision for the youth of this country, thereby ensuring that young boys and girls have equal access and opportunities. It is this vision which is well reflected under the Youth Employment Programme. Government is sending a strong signal to our youth, ensuring that they form an integral part of development because we believe in their potential.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this is why Government invests so much in education because education is the basic foundation that constitutes the core of employability of our labour force.

Concurrently, the knowledge dividends reaped from education, contribute significantly to poverty alleviation.

This Budget also reflects Government's long term vision to provide a conducive environment for both local and foreign students. The setting up of three additional campuses is an effective means to give access to all those willing to pursue further studies.

The Student Loan Scheme, targeting young Mauritians whose parents have difficulties to afford university fees, is yet another measure that addresses the issue of social inclusion, in a bid to bridge social divide.

I find it important to highlight that by opening new avenues for our youth in terms of employment and educational opportunities, we are also addressing a gender issue.

The need to redress all disparities are critical variables, which will contribute, in the long term, to reposition the ranking of Mauritius in terms of its Global Gender Gap Index.

Our vision is to rank up Mauritius from its 95th position in 2011 to the 80th position in 2022. To attain this target, we have the obligation to give equal opportunities and access to both young boys and girls. As we have said before, the girls often outperform boys in educational domain. But, however, they are often barred from accessing higher studies due to financial constraints.

Mr Speaker Sir, technology has become an important means to broaden the scope in the educational sector.

On Wednesday last, the Minister of Education has aptly elaborated on the benefits thereof. Indeed, it is a matter of pride for our Republic that ICT is so present in our daily lives.

Aligned with the national initiative aiming at increased interconnectivity of Mauritius to the IT world, my Ministry has undertaken to equip all Community Centres, all Welfare Centres and Women Centres with Net PCs.

The 2013 Budget further promotes this vision of a wider dissemination of IT facilities, namely through provision of computer tablets to students in Form IV. The price of internet connection is also being brought down by a further 15 per cent.

Those measures come as a relief to the public at large. The innumerable advantages and facilities of connecting people of all age-groups, academic and social background, constitute an effective means to disseminate the policies and programmes of my Ministry.

We have revived, for example, the e-services that enable women to enroll online for various trainings offered in Women Centres. Child abuse and domestic violence cases can now be reported online also. Similarly, Day Care Centres can be registered online. So can women-led enterprises. Moreover, as a marketing strategy, the National Women Entrepreneur Council has launched its website, thereby enabling a number of women to access its services.

All these are concrete measures that my Ministry is implementing for the benefit of our clientele. These services are cost effective and efficient.

To further promote IT amongst the women's folk, we are encouraging a larger number of women to join computer clubs. To date, the 50 Social Welfare Centres, 85 Community Centres have already set up their computer clubs. 48 additional computer clubs will be set up in the remaining Community Centres. This will, indeed, contribute to the democratisation of the access to internet to the community at large, including children, youth, men and women.

Mr Speaker Sir, the main thrust of our empowerment programmes for women, children and families is effected through ongoing awareness raising campaigns on a gamut of issues ranging from legislation, human rights instruments, family-related problems as well as children's rights.

In my Ministry, we are convinced that sustained awareness-raising campaigns will bring about transformational changes in mindsets and attitudes. We have over the last three decades been raising awareness mainly through talks and seminars. And the simple fact that people now talk more and more openly and act on issues that are of concern to them, is proof that these campaigns are bearing fruits.

We are fully aware that technology can broaden our scope of intervention. As such, we are using CDs, DVDs and other open and distance-learning materials as an innovative support to conduct awareness campaigns.

For example, we have produced DVDs on various topics such as legal literacy, information pertaining to the set-up of enterprises amongst others. Our officers have been trained to disseminate the contents thereof. The results have been very positive.

I wish to share with the House that, for instance, the DVD on Legal Literacy, launched in 2011, has been used to sensitise more than 4,000 people. This project was funded by the Commonwealth of Learning which has acknowledged the success of this project and the Mauritian model is now being used as the best practice to be replicated in other countries. In light of this success, the Commonwealth of Learning has agreed to include Mauritius in its three-year plan 2013-2015 for further assistance in regard to the open and distance-learning education.

We will be signing memorandums to sustain this project. The 2013 Action Plan will comprise of production of DVDs on the thematic of the African Women Decade.

We are also, thanks to the provision of this Budget, investing in the purchase of relevant softwares that will facilitate the design of ODL materials by our own officers in contrast to outsourcing for informative materials. This, once again, testifies that technology allows us to broaden our outreach programmes.

Mr Speaker, Sir, some have tagged this Budget as not being innovative! Those who say so have purposely chosen to ignore the potential of this Budget. One major project is the consolidation of the concept of e-government.

For example, reducing 25 % of each Ministry's stationery may appear trivial, but it will not only help Government to save Rs43 m. annually, it is also an environment-friendly initiative and accelerates the use of technology for service delivery.

My Ministry has already initiated actions to set up two computerised systems for domestic violence cases and cases of children in distress, those with protection concerns, namely what we call the Domestic Violence Information System and the Child Protection Register.

These two elements will constitute important tools to guide and influence policy formulation. The introduction of these two systems will contribute to reduce to a large extent the mass volume of paperwork, harmonise our data collection and be an effective record system for follow-up of cases.

As regards the Child Protection Register, tender documents have already been launched. IT equipment for DOVIS is currently being purchased.

Mr Speaker Sir, in a bid to mitigate the effects of the economic crisis, Government is implementing strategies for faster and more inclusive economic growth. The list of incentives for tourism sector, including those that speak of employment, is a concrete example thereof.

Our tourism industry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is the second largest foreign exchange earning sector. It contributes to nearly 14% of our GDP and employs around 100,000 persons.

Its sustainability is, therefore, crucial and very much linked to policies and strategies to be implemented.

The success of the industry relies mainly on the quality of services and facilities offered to tourists.

So, modernising our malls, high retail shops and restaurants will significantly improve the image of Mauritius as an excellent shopping destination, coupled with entertainment facilities.

Notwithstanding the multiple benefits that an enhanced tourist industry will contribute to boost our economic growth, it will also open new paths for our womenfolk.

Tourism is a highly gendered-industry. Yet, there is horizontal and vertical gender segregation as regards the occupation of men and women in this sector. Usually women occupy lower levels of employment in this sector, and their career prospects are very limited.

If we want to see a significant change in this current situation where gender inequality prevails, it is important that the gender implications of the tourism sector be well understood.

The Ministry of Tourism, I am pleased to say, has been supported by my Ministry to finalise its sectoral gender policy this week itself.

The implementation of the recommendations contained therein will constitute promising avenues for women's employment and empowerment.

Mr Speaker Sir, entrepreneurship development is yet another key sector that can significantly contribute to economic growth. It is another means of creating more jobs, and it is a sector that has been tested by a number of great nations, including the United States of America, whose success is greatly attributed to the entrepreneurship culture of its people.

I am happy to note that to enable our people to develop such a culture, entrepreneurship studies will occupy a prominent place in the current school curriculum. There is need to inculcate the spirit of entrepreneurship amongst our youth.

Mr Speaker Sir, we want our people, especially our young people to be independent and confident in their capacity to make a future for themselves. We want them to explore avenues of

employability other than those in the traditional sectors, other than those in enterprises in which they will mainly find employment and not be the employers themselves.

In this 2013 Budget, Government has once again invested considerably in strengthening support for the growth of the business sector. This is an opportunity of which women can avail themselves.

An investment of an additional amount of Rs250 m. annually to micro and small enterprises can help boost up women-led enterprises also. It is a well-known fact that one of the main constraints for women in the development of their business is access to finance, namely through loan facilities. This is particularly true for those who are at start-up phases.

The guarantee of the 50% of losses and the non-submission of a Performance Bond for contracts of up to Rs5 m.; an increase of the refund of participation costs in international fairs, and the grant of Rs20,000 for freight expenses; the waiving of processing fees and outstanding loans of the Development Bank of Mauritius are laudable initiatives from which our women entrepreneurs can also benefit.

Our women are creative, dynamic and talented. They should be given full opportunity to grow their enterprises and thrive in the business world.

So far, the National Women Entrepreneur Council has been able to support some 3,500 women entrepreneurs. Capacity-building programmes are being organised regularly. To keep existing and aspiring women entrepreneurs abreast of up-to-date schemes, the Council will soon publish a Guide for women entrepreneurs.

My Ministry remains committed to sustain the promotion of women entrepreneurship development. Very often, the economic empowerment of women has a direct effect on family income. The National Women Entrepreneur Council will strengthen its support services to its affiliates aimed at empowering them economically.

If I take the example of the fisheries sector, Mr Speaker Sir, here is another avenue with great potential for women. Indeed, the fisheries sector offers a new window of opportunities for both men and women.

It is always a challenge for a society to ensure that the benefits of an emerging sector are equitably distributed among both men and women. However, the situation is definitely different in our context because of the obvious disparity that exists between the two sexes in this field.

This situation, Mr Speaker Sir, can nevertheless be addressed. I am envisaging to engage dialogue with my colleague, the Minister of Fisheries, to examine the potential that this sector offers for women. I am, here, thinking on how best women can set up micro enterprises in adding value to the fish catch of their spouses, by engaging in fish processing products.

Similarly, the concept of aquaculture needs to be disseminated amongst women, as it has the potential to provide them with a source of income. We can also encourage women entrepreneurs to engage in ornamental fish enterprises. The technical support of the Ministry of Fisheries, another Ministry which owns its sectoral gender policy, can help us to mainstream gender in the fisheries sector.

Mr Speaker Sir, families and neighbourhoods are the building blocks of our nation. This Budget recognises the importance of family leisure activities as a means to strengthen family ties.

The provisions in this Budget, in fact, reflect the work of my Ministry in helping families to adopt a balanced work and family lifestyle.

Making leisure activities more accessible and affordable for the Mauritian families is already a concept which has been tested by my Ministry, and which has been widely appreciated.

For example, in the context of the celebration of the International Family Day, my Ministry organised a Family Fun Day, where Mauritian families were provided with the opportunity to visit places of attractions at rebated prices. This initiative was a resounding success.

Mr Speaker, Sir, providing our families with affordable leisure facilities has a positive effect that leads to social cohesion. This is also a factor to be taken into consideration when we talk about enhancing quality of life for our citizens.

In a bid to preserve the social fabric, my Ministry has sustained actions to combat the scourge of domestic violence. The areas of interventions have been mainly geared towards preventive campaigns, capacity building programmes of our stakeholders, the consolidation of our *Zero Tolerans Clubs*, and financial support to NGOs to end gender-based violence.

In parallel, we have started implementing the short term measures contained in our national action plan to end gender-based violence.

We have conducted training with the help of UNODC for Police Officers. 112 health personnel have also been trained on how best to deal with gender-based violence cases.

Our next step is to enlist the support of NGOs working in that sector, in collaboration with MACOSS. Contacts have also been established with the Council of Religions to develop a holistic approach to combat the problem of gender-based violence.

An NGO which has been actively involved in providing support to survivors of gender-based violence is SOS Femmes. The decision of the Ministry of Finance to grant Rs1 m. to this organisation is very much welcomed.

Mr Speaker Sir, family disputes are very sensitive. Often, confidentiality and privacy are required to avoid further trauma to family members. Presently, numerous cases of family disputes are settled openly in courts.

The setting up of the Family Court, through legislation, can open up new avenues for couples to find solutions for their family disputes in a more conducive environment. The concept of reconciliation and mediation will be maximised, thereby helping to preserve unity and mutual respect between family members.

There is no doubt that Government has at heart the well-being of its most vulnerable citizens. We know that women comprise a majority of this group and, by extension, so do their children.

As the Ministry responsible for the welfare of women and children, my Ministry welcomes the measures announced to ensure that the poor and vulnerable have access to facilities that will enable them to live with dignity.

Removing of exemption of VAT on infants' cereals not containing milk, upgrading of Child Day Care Centres, providing a hot meal daily to all children of ZEP schools, constructing more spacious social housing units, to name but a few, are testimony of Government's determination to address the issue of poverty holistically.

The decision of the Ministry of Finance to grant a one off grant up to Rs200,000 to Child Day Care Centres for improvement of their facilities will go a long way to helping women to leave their babies in a secure environment. This measure has the dual purpose, it also allows women to take up employment and move out of the poverty trap.

I wish to highlight at this point in time the difficulties of my Ministry when it comes to licensing of Child Day Care Centres. We have been facing situations, Mr Speaker, Sir, where it is practically difficult to issue a licence to crèches because they do not comply with the minimum required norms. We have, however, recently set up to an inspectorate with the available

resources to continuously monitor the situation. The managers of the care centres have been advised and encouraged to expedite matters to regularise their situation in the interest of the child because, Mr Speaker, Sir, when it comes to our children, we cannot compromise on the quality of service and play with their security.

This new measure of Government coupled with the review of the CSR guidelines to encourage companies to finance the construction and upgrading of Child Care Centres will undoubtedly help the crèches upgrade their standards so that they can be registered at the earliest.

Mr Speaker, Sir, each action, measure and policy of this Government reflects our concern for the well-being of our citizens. The provision of a daily hot meal for children in ZEP schools forms an important element of Government's policy to ensure full attendance of children at school in the best possible conditions. The granting of child benefits upon condition that the child attends school regularly is strategic in ensuring that parents fully assume their responsibility and that the right of child as regards his access to schooling is respected.

In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Child Development Unit has been very active in implementing the Parental Empowerment Programme. We have set up a number of *écoles des parents* and some 500 people have been reached. These programmes also provide the opportunity for our officers to track down cases of child abuse and thereafter take up remedial actions. Other ongoing initiatives being implemented with the support of the National Children's Council include, *inter alia*, creativity activities, child protection clubs, and community child watch committees.

It is a matter of great concern to my Ministry, Mr Speaker, Sir, that about 5,000 children of school age do not attend school or fail to head to school regularly. The Memorandum of Understanding that we have just signed with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources as well as the Police pertaining to the Working Together Committee will clearly define the responsibilities of each stakeholder involved. This mechanism provides space for a multi-sectoral approach wherein each stakeholder will be called upon to address this issue from a perspective that falls within its purview. Just to inform the House that my Ministry has already signed MoUs with five additional institutions, namely the Civil Status Department of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Attorney General's Office and the National Children's Council.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Budget is reiterating Government's commitment to sustain the promotion of Gender Equality. Gender Equality remains central to human development, including supporting human rights. Equal opportunities for men and women in social, economic and political spheres are pre-requisites for sustainable development. We welcome the decision of Government to double the financial provisions of the Equal Opportunities Commission. This measure is an add-on to strike the right balance so that men and women are able to enjoy equal rights and opportunities. It can help my Ministry to further ensure that women's rights are not violated.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Gender Unit of my Ministry is fully involved in conducting sensitisation campaigns targeting the public at large, government officers and students amongst others, to inform them on the implications of addressing gender issues. These campaigns have been extended to Rodrigues also where we will be shortly training a pool of officers thereby ensuring sustainability of our programmes.

We have conducted several empowerment programmes for women, be it in leadership, adult literacy, addressing the issues of climate change as well as an increased participation of women in politics. This year technical assistance has been extended to four additional Ministries to formulate their sectoral gender policy, namely the Ministry of Tourism and Leisure, the Ministry of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development; and the Ministry of Business, Enterprise and Commerce and I note with satisfaction that the exercise of mainstreaming gender has been well received. I am looking forward that this concept be internalised by our stakeholders.

However, in mainstreaming gender training is essential. Experience has so far revealed an acute shortage of technical expertise on this matter. My Ministry will sustain capacity-building programmes of all stakeholders on gender related issues as well as human rights instruments. We recently organised two sessions, one on CEDAW and the other on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development targeting senior officers of all Ministries. Next year, we will be assisted by the UNDP under its country programme.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will never cease to stress that the status and opportunities given to our citizens are the surest indicators of a healthy society. Where women prosper, children are happy, societies prosper. With two years left to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Mauritius needs to accelerate progress and come up with innovative solutions. This Budget is

paving the way towards attaining the set targets. At continent level, in view of the preparations for the Beijing +20 event, we shall be proud to present our *'bilan'* to the African Union.

We have been innovative on policy matters and Government has proven its commitment to human-centred development, gender equality and social inclusion. Our supreme goal is investing for the good of our people. We must continue to offer new perspectives to the nation; we owe this to ourselves; to our collective future and we are all bound by this endeavour. This Budget is a major step in this direction.

With these words, Mr Speaker Sir, I thank you for your attention.

(4.38 p.m.)

Mr J. C. Leopold (First Member for Rodrigues): Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me from the very beginning to congratulate you for your nomination as Speaker as it is my first speech since then.

M. le président, présenter un budget est un exercice délicat compte tenu des défis et des *challenges* à relever et en même temps pour répondre au mieux à l'attente de la population. Si pour Edgar Morin (2004) dans la Méthode et Ethique 'la politique est le plus difficile des arts', l'exercice présent l'est d'autant plus. L'on considère que le contenu ne concerne pas que le ministre des Finances mais toute l'équipe dirigeante, les officiers du ministère de tutelle, les *inputs* de tous les *stakeholders* et par extension l'aspiration de toute la population.

C'est ainsi que pour moi, en tant que parlementaire, intervenir dans le débat budgétaire revêt d'une importance capitale et ne peut en aucun cas être ni banal ni farfelu. Nous sommes des élus du peuple et nous avons le devoir de respecter l'opinion de tout un chacun mais en même temps de tout mettre en œuvre pour être à la hauteur de leur espérance et de pouvoir conduire le pays vers le bonheur et la prospérité. Sinon, pourquoi fait-on de la politique ? Est-ce uniquement pour marquer l'histoire ? Pour passer à la télé ? Ou encore pour narguer/taquiner ses amis de l'autre côté de la Chambre ? Ou pour apporter sa contribution aussi petite, voire insignifiante qu'elle pourrait être pour la construction de notre nation, aujourd'hui une République ?

M. le président, dans notre hymne national, nous disons: "*One people, One nation*". Ceci dit, tout citoyen de la République s'attend à une considération équitable du gouvernement, quelque soit son lieu de résidence, qu'on soit à Rodrigues, à Agalega, à St Brandon ou Port Louis; son opinion politique, sa religion ou son appartenance ethnique, son statut social, voire même son orientation sexuelle. C'est l'ère de la tolérance, d'ailleurs nous sommes dans l'année

de la tolérance décrétée par les Nations Unies; donc, une bonne dose du respect de soi et de l'unité n'a jamais fait de mal à personne. Je crois fermement, M. le président, dans l'unité, la prospérité et le bonheur de tout un chacun quelque soit notre idéologie politique, quelque soit notre ambition politique, notre positionnement, notre *sitting position* au sein de l'Assemblée, être présent ici, c'est un honneur et un privilège que nous devons saisir pour servir le peuple et ceci nous devons en tenir compte à chaque fois que nous en franchissons le seuil.

La politique se fait avec le peuple, pour le peuple. Il va sans dire, M. le président, que chacun de nous, ici, a un rêve, des idées plein la tête et des ambitions; mais avec chacun sa capacité, ses différences, mais avec un point de convergence indiscutable : l'édification d'une République de Maurice forte. Cette République composant d'un vaste océan et ses îles, maintenant que ce concept d'état océan soit fermement ancré dans notre *mindset*, nous avons le devoir *to leave no stone unturned* pour la rendre accueillante, en bref de la façonner à un paradis où il fait bon vivre. Nous avons la capacité de le faire, M. le président. *Yes, we can, Mr Speaker, Sir!*

C'est précisément le but du ministre des finances de nous présenter un budget, et, ici, pour l'année 2013, je crois que ce faisant il ne s'attendait pas à ce que tout le monde lui saute au cou. C'est impossible! Au contraire, il s'attendait bien évidemment à des réactions diverses, des pour et des contre comme c'est la base même de notre démocratie, mais avec modération et élégance. Tels sont les ingrédients, des esprits fertiles, ouverts, cohérents, en état de sagesse et tournés véritablement vers l'avenir et le bien-être de tous. C'est pourquoi je trouve que la richesse de notre République repose sur cette liberté d'expression, d'agir, de rêver, de proposer, de critiquer dans la mesure de la tolérance et le respect de soi. Etre ici, c'est être un modèle pour les jeunes, pour ceux qui nous écoutent, qui nous font confiance et qui attendent que nous soyons vraiment la fierté et la lumière de la nation. Ce serait immoral, M. le président, d'attendre uniquement que nos représentants hors frontière fassent la fierté de la République. J'ai en tête nos athlètes. C'est un devoir de tout citoyen responsable et cela passe nécessairement par ici.

Ainsi, les propos et les critiques démesurés, humiliants et sans fondement ne devraient pas trouver preneur ici. Tout excès est mauvais ici, M. le président. Je ne suis pas là en tant que donneur de leçon, mais en toute humilité, *to voice out* mon opinion et ma préoccupation, je sais pertinemment que nul n'est parfait, mais cela ne doit pas nous empêcher d'épouser un idéal. Nous ne sommes pas dans une foire commerciale. Quand même!

M. le président, je trouve que compte tenu du contexte mondial difficile, le budget 2013 jette les jalons pour le progrès social et économique. Je suis d'avis que l'on ne peut concilier modernisation et progrès économique si le social est laissé en souffrance. Ceci passe bien évidemment par l'éducation de la population.

Qu'on soit pêcheur, planteur ou entrepreneur, personnel médical, éducateur ou autre, je suis d'avis que tout le monde trouve son compte dans ce présent budget. Les mesures fiscales et incitatives destinées au PME en passant par l'entrée à l'ère de l'informatique, ne vont que renforcer le dynamisme du développement soutenu de notre République. Aujourd'hui, quand le monde est davantage orienté vers les produits bio et le développement durable, ces concepts furent aussi considérés à juste titre dans ce présent budget.

Ainsi, je trouve, M. le président, que ce présent exercice budgétaire comporte beaucoup d'éléments sociaux, que j'accueille favorablement et c'est une preuve que l'État est à l'écoute et que le gouvernement est pleinement conscient que le développement s'accompagne des collatéraux et dans la plupart des cas les plus faibles et les plus vulnérables de notre société en font les frais. Comment qualifierait-on un gouvernement qui ne tend pas la main aux pauvres? Même si certains 'démagogues maisons' appellent cela '*l'assistanat*', je le qualifierais plutôt en un geste noble et humain envers ceux qui se sont pris dans les tourbillons de la misère et du désespoir. Si l'État ne vient pas au secours des pauvres, qui le fera? Comme on le dit très bien dans notre langage populaire: '*c'est dans la baise qu'il nous faut de l'aide; car 'poule ki pone ki cone so douleur*'. Mais, malheureusement, M. le président, certains, une fois installés dans leur confort deviennent aveugles et sourds. Moi, je dis bravo à Xavier, notre ministre des finances, d'avoir tendu la main aux nécessiteux à travers des mesures énoncées à la construction des logements sociaux au paragraphe 296 et cette fois-ci pour plus de décence et de dignité en faisant provision pour des facilités de toilette et autres.

Au paragraphe 287, on peut lire, je cite –

“Government is allocating Rs130 m. for the provision of a hot meal daily to each and every child in every ZEP school in Mauritius”.

M. le président, c'est tout à fait en conformité avec la théorie en psychologie, proposée par le psychologue américain, Abraham Maslow, en 1943, où au bas de l'échelle nous retrouvons les besoins psychologiques de l'individu soit les *basic human needs*, comprenant entre autres l'eau, la nourriture, le sommeil et l'air pour respirer. Ne disons nous pas dans le langage courant

‘*ène sac vide pas tini deboute*’? Ou encore ‘*ène zom ki faim reste emmerdé*’? Je trouve que c’est une mesure sans précédent qui rejoint ce qu’on avait l’intention de faire à Rodrigues depuis le début de cette année, après qu’on avait introduit les livres gratuits au secondaire en début 2007.

Je peux vous dire que tout comme le transport gratuit aux étudiants, cette mesure a fait ses preuves en donnant des résultats au-delà de nos espérances. L’idée, c’était d’offrir une version locale de la cantine scolaire, qui existe déjà dans d’autres pays. Ainsi l’on s’attendait à ce que suivant les normes d’hygiène alimentaire en vigueur, les PME, surtout les associations des femmes impliquées dans *l’agro-processing* et l’alimentation, allaient être les moteurs de cette innovation. Surtout au moment où l’accent est mis sur *l’empowerment* des femmes. Alors qu’on était avant-gardiste, ayant compris la nécessité d’encourager les parents à scolariser leurs enfants et ayant également pris en considération les réalités locales, certains tournaient cette mesure en ridicule. Je suis heureux aujourd’hui que le ministre des finances ait adopté cette même école de pensée pour venir en aide à ceux au bas de l’échelle sociale, permettant ainsi de parler de manière plus rationnelle de l’égalité de chance dans nos écoles. Cependant, cela me fait de la peine car Rodrigues aurait été pionnière dans la matière et tous les enfants auraient été les heureux bénéficiaires, sachant qu’une seule école répond à la classification ZEP dans l’île, alors que la misère est partout. Voilà des fois où cela mène la démagogie! Oui, M. le président, toutes les statistiques et les sondages démontrent *year-in, year-out* que Rodrigues est, et demeure la partie la plus pauvre de la République. Je voudrais quand même attirer l’attention du ministre des finances à l’effet que bien que la misère ne soit pas une fatalité en elle-même, quand elle frappe, elle ne fait pas de quartier. C’est pour dire que dans les autres écoles non ZEP des enfants pauvres de bonne volonté, des *genuine cases* existent et dans un esprit républicain de la fierté de ‘*one people one nation*’, cette mesure devrait s’étendre vers ces nécessiteux, tout en employant des mécanismes pour éviter des abus.

Concernant Rodrigues, M. le président, j’applaudis les mesures spécifiques annoncées pour l’île, surtout aux paragraphes 66, 324 et 325. D’abord, je suis heureux que le Premier ministre ait effectué une visite dans l’île, il y a quelques semaines en sa capacité de Premier ministre de la République et de ministre de Rodrigues, comme c’était le cas en 2007. Mais, j’étais écœuré à l’effet de la rapidité que certains ont dû tourner casaque de manière spectaculaire en si peu de temps. La même personne qui débarquait en 2007 et dont on se moquait ouvertement, qu’on qualifiait de tous les noms, qu’on diabolisait dans les journaux et les

meetings était tout à coup le saint des saints. Incroyable, M. le président! D'aucun me dira que c'est de la politique, moi je dis qu'il faut un minimum de décence et de dignité. Cette histoire de yeux doux et main dans la main me ramène à la moralité des fables de la Fontaine – qui ne connaît pas les fables de la Fontaine - plus précisément de l'histoire du renard et du corbeau.

Dans l'histoire on convoitait le fromage et ce n'est guère différent car il s'agit aussi de la nourriture. A un moment donné, je me croyais en plein feuilleton à petit budget dans cette générosité soudaine en termes d'accolades et à quelques centimètres près des embrassades sur la bouche. J'ai mesuré mes mots, M. le président, à des centimètres près ; je vous garantis. C'est vrai qu'avec l'âge on devient plus câlin mais, en ce moment, il faut dire qu'il y en a certains qui sont friands de bisous et d'accolades, surtout devant la caméra. C'est vrai qu'un savant français disait –

« Le normal, c'est l'anormal à un facteur près».

Je répète, M. le président –

«Le normal, c'est l'anormal à un facteur près».

Mais je considère que tout a une limite. Me basant sur le propos de Jean Rostand (1954), dans 'Les Pensées d'un Biologiste', je cite –

«En politique, on ne flétrit le mensonge d'hier que pour flatter le mensonge d'aujourd'hui».

M. le président concernant les subsides sur le riz et la farine et autres denrées de base au paragraphe 324, je trouve que cela a été une bataille de longue haleine et ne datant pas d'hier. Donc, il était grand temps. Déjà dans cette Chambre, nombreuses ont été les interpellations allant dans ce sens. De mémoire, je m'en souviens que depuis l'année dernière cette cause était plus ou moins acquise, mais que le *timing* était défavorable pour 2012 car le budget avait été prononcé en pleine campagne électorale régionale.

Autrement, on savait quelle démagogie cela allait provoquer surtout que l'appellation de 'bribe électoral' est très en vogue. Du coup c'est un coup d'épée dans l'eau pour certains. C'est pour dire que des fois il faut laisser le temps au temps car ce qui est prédit va arriver. Tout comme dans la citation de Joseph Joubert qui dit, je cite –

«En politique il faut toujours laisser un os à ronger aux frondeurs».

Cependant, M. le président, je dois attirer l'attention du ministre des Finances pour que des mécanismes appropriés soient déployés pour que les subsides sur le fret *at the end of the day* se traduisent en des bénéfices nets aux consommateurs, mais pas aux importateurs.

En ce moment on fait du n'importe quoi et Rodrigues est devenue l'endroit le plus cher de la République avec les conséquences que cela donnerait sur notre industrie touristique agonisante. Je vous laisse imaginer !

Rien que pour le dernier voyage du 'Mauritius Pride' à Rodrigues plus de 34 conteneurs sont restés au quai à Port Louis. Renseignement pris : le *Mauritius Shipping* ne transborde pas les conteneurs non remplis. Ainsi, il devient très difficile aux commerçants de convoier des marchandises à Rodrigues et ceci depuis quelques mois. Pourtant à pareille époque ces six dernières années, la marchandise pullulait sur le port alors que les conteneurs manquaient. Aujourd'hui l'économie du pays, M. le président, selon des observateurs, est au ralenti. Même les banques tournent au ralenti. En pleine journée, congé public ou pas, on peut jouer au foot dans les rues de Port Mathurin. Du jamais vu! C'est peut être l'effet de faire des choses autrement! Qui sait!

Concernant la connexion rapide à l'internet, je trouve que les dirigeants actuels ont raté ce qui était prévu dans le budget 2012. A vouloir tout faire autrement pour rassasier l'orgueil et l'arrogance, c'est le pays qui en sort perdant. Déjà, comment faire une connexion de fibre optique autrement? Je l'ai entendu, mais je n'ai jamais compris !

En faisant ce discours, je suis attristé, M. le président, par le nombre de Rodriguais qui ont perdu leur emploi récemment avec l'arrivée des messieurs *cone tou* surtout en cette fin d'année. On vient d'avoir un exercice budgétaire similaire en septembre dernier à Rodrigues, mais rien n'a été fait pour préserver l'emploi. Alors que nous connaissons la réalité économique du pays, l'on s'attendait à ce que plus d'effort soit déployé pour recruter. Mais c'est le contraire, on fait tout volontairement, sur une base politique, pour nettoyer les adversaires qui sont aussi des humains avant toute chose. Comment peut-on être aussi sans cœur? Pourquoi n'aide-t-on pas les pauvres ? Ils parlaient de gaspillage des fonds publics et ont fait auditer et ré-auditer les comptes de l'Assemblée Régionale en vain. C'est pourquoi je fais encore un appel au Premier ministre en faveur de ces 243 travailleurs qui ont travaillé sur contrat pendant plus de cinq ans et dont les 'propriétaires' de l'Assemblée Régionale, les 'propriétaires' de Rodrigues, vont les mettre à la rue le mois prochain.

Ces 243 familles sont aussi des mauriciens à part entière et ne doivent pas payer le prix de l'arrogance et de l'orgueil politique. Ils se doivent être traités en humain et en citoyen de la République as '*one people and one nation*'. Donc, je réitère l'intervention du Premier ministre, en sa capacité de ministre de Rodrigues, pour empêcher la déchirure et la désolation dans le tissu social de l'île comme je l'ai plaidé tout récemment pendant notre rencontre à l'Hotel Tecoma à Rodrigues. Que le bon sens et la sagesse soient les principes qui nous guident dans notre mission pour raffermir l'unité, en espérant que tout un chacun mange à sa faim et que ces familles retrouvent la joie et la dignité humaine en cette fin d'année. Il est dit que la République va tendre la main aux plus pauvres et vulnérables, en voilà une occasion de passer à l'action!

Merci M. le président.

(4.55 p.m.)

Mrs S. B. Hanoomanjee (Second Member for Savanne & Black River): M. le président, je suis entièrement d'accord avec mes collègues de ce côté de la Chambre quand ils disent que le budget est fade et sans imagination, c'est-à-dire sans de nouvelles idées. Au fur et à mesure que le ministre des finances élaborait son budget vendredi dernier, je faisais déjà une liste des items qu'il a repris des précédents budgets.

Par exemple, le loan pour les étudiants, IT in school - last time it was a computer for each student, this time it is a tablet computer to student of form IV, sports inter-collèges, TAX Amnesty Scheme, equipment for the detection of drugs, Melrose prison, relocation of gaming houses and nightclubs to shopping malls, incentives for fitting out shops and restaurants, maintaining of Freight Rebate Scheme, minimum qualification of HSC for those who wish to pursue medical studies, examination for Medical Officers after they have completed pre-registration etc.

M. le président, la liste est longue and at the end of his speech I was wondering why important issues qui touchent la population directement such as water problems, le pouvoir d'achat, social problems affecting children and the family, arts and culture and above all women have not been given any consideration. Mr Speaker, Sir, I will dwell on four issues only: agriculture, health, women and my constituency. I will start straightaway with agriculture.

Several times, I have myself come with questions to this House on abandoned lands. It is a fact that the small planting community, especially those in the sugar sector, is suffering so

much that most of them have not survived. From 40,000 small planters that we had in the sugar sector, there are today only some 20,000 small planters. How many times has the hon. Minister of Agriculture met them to find the root of the problem? Does this Government want *la disparition pure et simple de ces petits planteurs qui ont tant contribué à l'économie de ce pays*? Metayers have had to give back land to sugar estates. Small planters who used to do interline cropping have been ripped off of their rights and in the actual circumstances even those who have been almost compelled to join regrouping have completely lost control of their land. In most cases control is once again in the hands of the sugar estates which decide which herbicide to apply, when to plant, which varieties of cane to plant, when to harvest, etc? The experience of the planters who are themselves owners of their land is totally ignored. Even when they see that bad decisions are being taken in several cases, the bad varieties of cane are being planted and less insecticides and herbicides are being applied, they are totally being ignored, Mr Speaker, Sir.

I am surprised that after so many years in spite of our repeated requests to compile information on abandoned lands, it is now that the Mauritius Cane Industry Authority will compile such information and provide same to others. I wish here, Mr Speaker, Sir, to refer to a PQ which I addressed to the hon. Minister of Agro Industry in June last on abandoned lands. The Minister then confirmed that such an exercise had been carried out by the SIFB.

I will quote what he said. Replying to my question he said -

“Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed that the Sugar Insurance Fund Board carried out a survey last year on the abandonment of cane lands for the period 2001 to 2010. It is noted that 4,412 hectares of land as at the end of crop 2010 made up of 9,875 plots of land and involving 7,586 small planters were no longer under sugarcane during the ten year period.”

This is what the hon. Minister said and I cannot understand why once again we see it as a measure in this Budget. Mr Speaker, Sir, the information is, therefore, available. It needs only an updating and I cannot understand - the information is available, the information is there, but why no action has been initiated so far to lease these abandoned lands to others.

Furthermore, Mr Speaker, Sir, in the same PQ, I asked the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, whether, I will quote -

“...small planters would not have abandoned their lands if revenue would have been more equally distributed?”

Meaning that there should have been a more equitable sharing of proceeds of sale of sugar, bagasse and molasses.

The hon. Minister replied and, I quote, he said -

“That is a fact, Mr Speaker, Sir.

There is a committee which is working on this.”

I assume when he replied that the committee must have started its work well before my PQ, but six months after my PQ, no sign of the recommendations of that committee. In fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, I was expecting the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to give a *bouffée d'air frais* to the small planters and announce a new sharing of proceeds with regard to bagasse and molasses.

My colleague on the other side of the House, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell, knows surely what I am talking about and he knows how the small planting community has, all the time, been asking for the sharing ratio to be reviewed; but, up to now, nothing. There should have been new policies devised and the ratio of distribution between millers and planters should have been reviewed.

M. le président, les petits planteurs sont désolés. The cost of production of sugar per tonne is actually Rs17,500 and revenue obtained is Rs15,000. Can you imagine how they will survive? Do we want *la mort lente des petits planteurs? C'est cela le sort des petits planteurs de canne.* And now, the Minister of Finance and Economic Development has stated that the FORIP scheme will be extended to vegetable, flowers and fruit growers. I wonder whether the hon. Minister has made a survey of where such lands are situated and what is the acreage of such plots? We all know vegetable planters grow their vegetables on small plots and most of the fruit growers have got their fruits in the backyard. How will he implement the FORIP scheme, I wonder? And, I am just thinking aloud, I am just thinking whether this is not a plan once again to snatch these planters of their lands and put them in the hands of few others or otherwise, is it *un effet d'annonce?*

Several times, Mr Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security has spoken of increase in the production of potatoes and onions. He has mentioned that several times in replies to our PQs. I will not mention names, but he had some time back engaged an Adviser - in agricultural matters - who has been at his Ministry for more than two years as

Adviser. That same person gave an interview some time back in one of the dailies to state, and I quote -

« Le secteur agricole est très malade. Maurice n'a aucune stratégie de sécurité alimentaire et ce ne sont pas 18,000 tonnes de pomme de terre et 70,000 tonnes de légumes qui nous mettront à l'abri d'une éventuelle crise alimentaire.

Le secteur agricole primaire non-sucre est très malade pour la bonne et simple raison que la volonté politique n'y est pas. »

Can we imagine, somebody who has been Adviser to the Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, who has been there for two years, - I assume he has been advising on policies to be devised for agriculture - why is it then that now he is coming with such statements? He, himself, says that *'la volonté politique n'y est pas'*. Mr Speaker, Sir, I leave this to the appreciation of the House.

We have, times and again, suggested the need for a Market Intelligence Unit and a Market Information System to ensure that there is no overproduction of any vegetable resulting in an imbalance in price over a period of time. Mr Speaker, Sir, this would have guaranteed small vegetable growers, a bigger profitability with the elimination of intermediaries. The wholesale market also has been a project which has been dear to us. Up to now, there is nothing.

Finally, Mr Speaker, Sir, on this agriculture chapter, to sum up, I would make some suggestions. Government should, first, come up with a coherent agricultural land policy, Second, should proceed with a more equitable sharing of proceeds of sale of sugar, bagasse and molasses, third, review the FORIP scheme *de fond en comble*, Fourth, set up a Market Information System and a Market Intelligence Unit, Fifth, set up a wholesale market and, sixth, reinstate the electricity rebate scheme for agricultural purposes which was helping small planters a lot.

Mr Speaker, Sir, our agricultural policy, urgently needs an overall reform and unless this is done, the small planting community will continue its downward trend, and I am sure it will disappear.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on Health, the hon. Minister has several times said that diabetes is one of the non-communicable diseases which top the list in Mauritius. 23.6% of the population between the age 25 and 74 years have diabetes in Mauritius. I was really disappointed to see that the only measure which has been mentioned by the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic

Development is the increase in the price of soft drinks. *A moins, encore une fois, que le ministère de la santé est à court d'idée.* There are a host of measures which could have been included in the Budget and, sometimes, these measures would not have entailed additional funds.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister usually gives long replies to our PQs on this subject.

(Interruptions)

I know he has it at heart. He must surely know that there is a need to intensify the information campaign. He has just said - I listened to him some time back - that the information campaign is being intensified, but for information to reach the population, for information to trickle down to the population, we need to talk a layman's language.

When you say to people that they should or should not drink so many grammes of sugar, they should not take so many grammes of salt, they do not understand. You have to tell them how many spoons of sugar they can take, how many spoons of salt they can take per day. The hon. Minister has himself said some time back that per capita cigarette stick consumption has dropped from 1071 in 2009 to 759 in 2012. I will attribute this mainly to the fact that on all cigarette boxes, there are pictures which are shocking, pictures which show how a liver is infected by cigarette. *Comment un poumon qu'on est en train de percer peut produire du goudron.* Why is it that we cannot discuss with producers, and clearly indicate on each litre of soft drink, in bold character, the number of spoons of sugar contained in one glass of soft drink? I am sure, Mr Speaker, Sir, this could have brought down the consumption of soft drinks.

Diabetes is also a result of consumption of fats. I was watching a programme recently; I think it was on BBC. It was being said that consumption of a small packet of crisp is equivalent to consumption of two litres of oil, and this is the result of research which has been carried out in UK. Can you imagine! People would be shocked if they knew this. Do you know how many packets of crisps are consumed by children? Fast food, Mr Speaker, Sir, the consumption of which has increased considerably, contributes to a large extent to diabetes. Whilst we are trying to have controlled canteens in schools on one side, there is a growing tendency of children to consume fast food on the other side. Once, I recall, during the course of a meeting with Mrs Margaret Chan, the Director of the WHO, I raised this issue, and we came to the conclusion that there should be regular meetings with fast food producers and policy makers of the Ministry of Health, so that healthier foods are proposed to consumers. That decision was recorded. I don't know whether the hon. Minister is aware of that decision, but I know that it was recorded. But,

up to now, I haven't heard any development on the matter. At the same meeting, I requested for assistance for a national salt survey, and whilst I was discussing with Mrs Chan, she immediately told me that she is giving the green light, and I am glad that the study has been completed. I have heard about it, but I am eagerly waiting for its implementation.

Further, Mr Speaker, Sir, most people in Mauritius, whether they are diabetic or not, consume white flour and rice. As a budgetary measure, I was expecting, and I think that the hon. Minister of Finance should have come forward with the introduction of a subsidy on brown flour.

(Interruptions)

There is no subsidy of brown flour in the Budget. If the hon. Member says there is, I wonder where he found it! But I can say that the subsidy now is on white flour and not on brown flour. *Ce n'est pas sur la farine de blé.* I can tell you that the returns would have been visible. Discourage people to consume white flour and encourage them to consume brown flour, and coupled with this to address our sedentary way of life -we all know that most civil servants travel by car. People just get to their car and travel to the office, get back home, eat and sleep. We have a sedentary way of life. To address this, the hon. Minister of Finance could have come up with the setting up of gyms in all Ministries and para-statal bodies, to start with as a first step, and then encourage the private sector also to do this, so that after office hours such facilities would have been available.

M. le président, les diabétiques qui sont traités à l'hôpital, ne reçoivent pas jusqu'aujourd'hui les services d'un diabétologue et d'un podologue. I am not blaming the hon. Minister of Health for this. I know how difficult it is to find *diabétoles* and *podologues*, although I was being criticised by my own colleagues for this, but *l'honorable ministre lui-même a parlé des amputations de la jambe.* Mais quels sont les efforts qui ont été faits jusqu'à l'heure pour donner des bourses à nos médecins et infirmiers pour se spécialiser ?

In a reply to a PQ recently, the hon. Minister of Health stated that nurses are following courses. But, can we know whether these courses will lead to a degree or a diploma?

Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a pity to see cancer patients sitting under the veranda of Victoria Hospital, waiting for their turn to undergo chemotherapy.

Mr Speaker: I suspend for half an hour.

At 5.21 p.m. the sitting was suspended.

On resuming at 6.02 p.m with Mr Speaker in the Chair.

Mrs Hanoomanjee: Mr Speaker, Sir, I was on the health chapter, and I was addressing *le sort des patients qui sont atteints de cancer*. It is a pity to see cancer patients sitting under the veranda of Victoria Hospital, waiting for their turn to undergo chemotherapy. When I took over in May 2010, my first reaction was, at least, to provide them with a temporary protection from the cold wind and rain, especially in winter, and to provide them with, at least – that was the least that could be done - comfortable chairs instead of benches whilst they were waiting for treatment. This was a purely temporary measure, and very quickly I had identified a new space to accommodate the Unit. Provide the cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy a certain level of comfort while waiting for their turn for treatment, and beds to recuperate after treatment before they go back home.

Mr Speaker, Sir, cancer patients are vulnerable persons who need much care and affection. I cannot understand for what reasons the whole project was stopped when I left. Today, the cancer patients are still sitting under the veranda, and Government is spending millions on health.

The health budget is today Rs8.4 billion and yet no solution has been found for those undergoing chemotherapy right now. I have heard the hon. Minister saying that he is coming with a project for chemotherapy, he is coming with an infrastructure, but what happens to those cancer patients pending the fact that his project materialises.

I note at page 531 of the estimates that the Ministry has said that it will extend screening programmes to improve the early detection of NCD's. I wish here to draw attention to the fact that a colposcopy machine which was to be used pour *détecter et localiser une lésion qui peut causer un cancer du col de l'utérus* is scarcely used. When so many women are losing their lives why is it that such a sophisticated equipment lies idle?

Mr Speaker, Sir, an action plan to deal with cancer both preventive and curative had been prepared. I believe the hon. Minister must be aware of it. Since July 2011 till now, I don't know how many of those measures have been implemented and according to me most of the measures have not been implemented, and now I see in the estimates that there will be the development of new infrastructure for treatment of cancer at Victoria Hospital. When will this infrastructure be ready? How long will it take and, in the meantime, will the cancer patients, some terminally ill continue to suffer? For that structure to be constructed there will be need for a feasibility study.

You know, feasibility studies are done only when Ministries have projects. Everyone has to go through a Project Monitoring Committee, but when the Ministry of Public Infrastructure constructs roads, I do not understand why there is no feasibility study. Everything is fine, no feasibility study, projects go ahead.

On the same issue I see, once again, in the estimates that feasibility study will be carried out for the Institute of Women's Health, Pediatric hospital and National Health Laboratory Services. The terms of reference for those feasibility studies were ready when I was at the Ministry. Sometime after I left, I know that tenders were issued. I know the hon. Minister is aware of this, because the tenders were effectively issued; the terms of reference were all ready when I left. But still some 18 months after, *nous sommes au même point zéro et je vois, encore une fois, dans le budget* that they will be having feasibility studies on those projects.

For primary health care, a project had already been prepared for expanding and modernising the health sectors and needed to be finalised by one Dr. Tuomelito, consultant and expert in the matter. I don't know where we have reached. *D'après moi rien n'a bougé, pas de progrès. E-health, c'est encore un autre projet que j'avais à cœur. L'informatisation de tous les services hospitaliers* which I was following very closely so that the whole system, the whole hospital system be computerised before 2015. *Avec l'informatisation des données il n'y aurait pas eu des dossiers perdus, des données perdues et les données auraient été disponibles d'un hôpital à l'autre. Là aussi, j'ai entendu le ministre parler de ce e-health mais moi j'espère bien que ce projet se concrétise puisque tout avait déjà été mis en chantier.*

Mr Speaker, Sir, to close on this chapter, allow me to say that with a budget of about Rs8.7 billion each year for health there is a need to establish priorities and especially to see to it that the amount of wastage of public funds be wiped out so that the ultimate beneficiaries remain the people. A glance at the Director of Audit's report shows that funds which are earmarked and spent for cleaning and security services are not well spent. Sophisticated equipments which can save lives remained idle in stores, quality of food given to patients *laisse à désirer*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I am just drawing attention on these issues. I know the hon. Minister is aware of these issues, but if there is no close follow-up things will remain the same.

I think that there is a need for a decentralisation of services. It is urgently required. For the time being, all services like urology, cardiology, chemotherapy, and radiotherapy all these

are crammed in Victoria Hospital. There is a need to decentralise these services to other hospitals also, and this could surely bring a solution to the problems of beds in Victoria hospital.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I will now say a few words on women. As some orators before me have mentioned, *toutes les femmes parlementaires de ce côté de la Chambre déplorent le fait que rien n'a été prévu pour la femme dans ce budget*. I have just listened to the Minister of Gender Equality; she gives the impression that everything is fine, lots being done to women. Women which constitute 52% of the population, women who represent the backbone of the economy, the pillar of the family have today been relegated to the back seats with the new Minister. *Elle est tellement dépassée par les événements, les problèmes concernant les enfants, les cas de violence*, that women issues are not given importance. There is a complete lack of vision from a holistic perspective in order to fulfill her mandate *in toto*. I assume that the hon. Minister either lacks advocacy skills to fight for her Ministry or she feels she has landed there only to travel and attend conferences and seminars even in circumstances when her officers could have done the job.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker, Sir, *je ne fais pas de la politique politicienne. Je suis en train de faire la constatation de ce qui se passe et vous allez remarquer que mon discours n'est pas un discours politique, c'est un discours constructif où il y a des suggestions. Je ne suis pas en train d'attaquer qui que ce soit*. When her officers could have done the job, the Minister attends seminars, she attends conferences, otherwise, Mr Speaker, Sir, she should have mastered the implications of each and every project and thereafter lobby for additional funds for implementing innovative projects.

(Interruptions)

You just look how many times I have gone abroad on mission! Mr Speaker, Sir, I am in regular contact with women's associations and I am having feedback. Mr Speaker, Sir, let me tell you that when I was Minister of Health, I was not interested in participating in missions when my officers could have done the job, and most of the time it was my officers who were going on mission and not myself.

I am in regular contact with women's associations and I am having feedback from my constituents *que les choses ne sont plus les mêmes depuis l'arrivée du ministre à ce ministère*. Nothing new is happening for women at the level of these associations except for some talks here

and there and outings which are being organised. Previous Ministers, who had been responsible for women's issues know, that regular contacts and dialogues with women's associations are extremely important, and is a *sine qua non* condition to understand women's concerns and needs. I have, myself, been a policymaker at that Ministry for thirteen years and I can say that, unless there is constant interaction, the traditional role of women as passive beneficiaries of talks, outings and social events will be perpetuated.

M. le président, le ministère de l'égalité du genre est en panne d'idées innovatrices. Le National Women's Council qui regroupe les associations féminines n'a plus de rôle.

In contrast to Women's Council in India, in China where such Councils are in the forefront on all issues which further the cause of women, our National Women's Council has been posted to the backseat with absolutely no dialogue between the Minister and the Council.

I am afraid that we are backpedalling because I was, myself - unfortunately Mrs Bappoo is not there - together with her when we created the National Women's Council and we know fully what were its objectives. Today it has been relegated to the backseat.

Now, the Minister had talked about the Women Entrepreneur Council. *C'est un autre éléphant blanc*. This Council could have been a very strong institution and one of the pillars to boost up the economy. It should have had a prominent place in the Budget Speech, but there is no clear-cut orientation for this institution. This, once again, reflects the poor vision of the Minister. The Council is located in Phoenix where it cannot attract any clientele. The incubators set up for women entrepreneurs remain most of the time unoccupied.

The present Chairperson of the Council has, herself, acknowledged in a press interview of the poor management, the lack of interaction between the different institutions and the failure to have a coherent strategy for women entrepreneurs. Here again, lack of vision, no proper mechanism!

The Minister of Gender Equality went to India recently. I am sure she must have seen the Government Emporium in India. Women entrepreneurs work in collaboration with the Ministry of Tourism, the tourism authorities. The Minister of Finance has spoken in his Budget Speech about modern infrastructure, shopping malls, but women entrepreneurship remains a nonstarter very limited in terms of varieties of products and quality.

I will now make some comments on the Child Development Unit which is in a complete mess. I recall trying to contact some time back officers of the Unit for an incident which

happened in my Constituency, but they failed to respond to my persistent calls. There is a hot line which nobody answers. You call an officer, no one replies to the phone. All the time the Minister keeps saying that there is a lack of human resources and adequate trained personnel, but I am just asking her a question. Has she made a complete audit of human resources at her Ministry? Has she tried to put the right person in the right place? Has she looked into the possibility of redeploying personnel to respond to the needs of the society? We have seen through the numerous parliamentary questions that the Minister is unable to ensure follow-up on cases of child abuse, child prostitution.

The shelters, I should say, are in a chaotic state, and I have information that, in a recent past, one senior Minister landed in a shelter at Pointe aux Sables and he was shocked to see how it was overcrowded and the conditions in which the children were accommodated. Once again, there is no leadership at political level to chart out a proper planning on how best to address this issue. The Minister, through replies to parliamentary questions, has shown us that she has no plans to solve the problem. One centre which was ready since the previous Minister was there is still closed, not being used, whilst there is overcrowding in other shelters *avec des bébés d'un à trois ans pêle-mêle avec des grands enfants. Ce n'est pas possible, M. le président.*

The National Children's Council, which was a dynamic organisation since the time I was at the Ministry, is at status quo. This important institution is now limited in its intervention and new addition to its membership. Once again regular dialogue with the new Minister is totally missing, no coordination also with NGOs working for children. They are simply being ignored. I am a person, Mr Speaker, Sir, who believes in dialogue and I am convinced that such an exercise with all parties concerned would have been constructive in influencing policy decision.

Now, regarding family issues, there are no concrete policy measures to address the fragility of families which are faced with multiple problems. The Ministry has started tackling the issue of family values some time back, but now since the arrival of the new Minister there seems to be a sudden halt on this front. The programme of inculcating family values should have been extended to schools, youth centres, NGOs amongst others, but unfortunately this is not the case. When, in 1994, the UN had proclaimed the International Day of Families, this event had mobilised dedicated persons from different institutions and there was an *élan de solidarité* to march towards the welfare of families. Unfortunately, things are different today. There is no holistic approach to address family welfare issues. Once in a year, we hear of International Day

of Families and then families go back to their usual routine with no consistent and coherent family policy.

Mr Speaker, Sir, infrastructure exists. I would say human resources also exist. If the political will is there, the Minister of Gender Equality can revamp her services. The Social Welfare Centres and Community Centres, which she has just talked about, and all the staff working in these centres can be put to better use and the Minister would no longer have to put everything she's doing on lack of funds or human resources. A glance at these centres would reveal that they are *dépassés*. These centres were good for the time they were created when there were sugar camps, but now if you look at those centres, and if you look at activities going on in those centres, you will see that they are completely *dépassés*. As I have said, the political will is essential to bring reforms.

Mr Speaker, Sir, allow me now to say a few words on my Constituency Savanne/Rivière Noire before I resume my seat. Savanne/Rivière Noire *est la circonscription la plus négligée de toute l'île*. If we just compare with other Constituencies – I take Flacq for example which has all it needs and still huge sums of money are being injected. I have gone through the Budget. I see that it has football grounds, crematorium, children gardens, schools, hospitals, post offices and what not. What about Savanne/Rivière Noire?

The inhabitants of Bassin, which is a huge town, has been requesting for years for a football ground. The Ministry of Public Infrastructure is fully aware of this as he, himself, during the last Municipal Council Election, promised to give them one. He is aware. He knows about Bassin and the football ground.

(Interruptions)

I hope so. Seven years after, nothing has been done. I made a personal effort and I had identified 2A of land in Bassin which is owned by Médine S.E. I obtained the sugar estate's agreement to swap land.

(Interruptions)

They refused. I have got the letter. I can table the letter if you want.

(Interruptions)

On Monday, I can table the letter.

(Interruptions)

I can table the letter. I have got a copy of the letter where they agreed to swap land under the land conversion issue 2:1, I have got that letter. I will not mention names, but some in Government opposed that the scheme be applied with the result that the project *n'a pas eu de suite*. Youngsters in Bassin are very bitter that in other localities, a football ground exists, but they are deprived of such facilities.

Still in Bassin, I made a case to the Minister of Information Technology for a post office. People in Bassin have to travel a long way to Quatre Bornes to post their letters, pay their water and electricity bills and fetch their old age pensions. If the Minister has any doubt about the distance these people have to travel, I would suggest that he has a site visit. I would not ask much of him, but he only walks along Jawaharlal Nehru Road from its far end to Quatre Bornes and he will no doubt understand what I am saying.

Regarding l'hôpital Yves Cantin, I made a case and worked out a whole project when I was Minister of Health so that Yves Cantin Health Centre can become at least a regional hospital. The project, according to the Minister of Public Infrastructure, required to go through the Projects Committee. That was done and a sum of Rs75 m. was estimated for the project. *Je n'entends plus parler de ce projet. Les habitants de Choisy, Baie du Cap, Le Morne, Rivière Noire, La Gaulette, Tamarin, all have to attend Victoria Hospital. Mr Speaker, Sir, I see, once again, in other constituencies where there are all amenities, expansions are still going on. Money is still being injected, but why is it? People do not realise the distance that inhabitants of these regions have to travel, either to go to Victoria Hospital or to go to Souillac Hospital, the more so that people in these regions are very poor people, they cannot afford a taxi. Whenever women have to give birth, they are having labour pains, can you imagine what is the problem that they have to get a taxi and travel either to Victoria Hospital or to go to Rose Belle Hospital? I do not know why Government is not giving any suite à cette idée.*

In Chemin Grenier, I have been asking regularly for a market place. Mr Speaker, Sir, one should see in which conditions the fair takes place twice a week, and how the circulation at Royal Road, Chemin Grenier is jammed on those days. At Adjournment Time, I have raised these issues several times. Hon. Hervé Aimée is not here. I have spoken to him about *les agissements du* District Council, which wanted to transfer some of the hawkers to Surinam. There also, Surinam fair is not working. They have built something, but it is not working, because it is *au milieu d'un champ de cannes*, it is not accessible. So, the question of transfer of

Chemin Grenier does not arise, the more so as there are more than 5 kms separating Chemin Grenier to Surinam. There is land in Chamouny Road which can be purchased by Government and the location would have been ideal. I make an appeal to Government to give some priorities to Savanne-Rivière Noire, as there are so many projects that need to be done.

Mr Speaker, Sir, this Government has often said that it is a caring Government. Its motto has always been 'Putting People First'. This Budget has revealed that Government, *peut-être a changé de cap, a changé de direction* and that its motto now is 'putting their people first'.

Thanking you, Mr Speaker, Sir.

At this stage, the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.

(6.29 p.m.)

Mrs. P. Bholah (First Member for Piton & Rivière du Rempart): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me start by congratulating our vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval for championing such an innovative and responsible Budget considering the local and global economic context. I also salute the hon. Prime Minister, Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, for his support, trust and vision.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it's no secret that we are living in a world that is unstable and unsustainable. Economic uncertainties are plaguing many developed countries across the globe. The repull-out effect in turn ends up jeopardising political systems and the international community.

We humbly recognise that we cannot change the euro crisis or the situation in the United States, but we, starting with the Minister of Finance and Economic Development can commit to measures that can help us buffer and adapt to the impact of these changes.

The Minister of Finance has remained committed to providing an honest and effective budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are two types of people: "those who create the future and those who live in a future created by others."

Now is the time that our leaders have, to inspire those we serve by creating a better future through courageous decisions. We have been able to present a budget that will rebalance growth and create new jobs while being socially responsible.

A Budget that has taken on board the hopes of people from all walks of life.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sure this Budget will bear its fruit. This Government is creating the future, a bright and ambitious future for us and our children by laying the foundation for a socially equitable and prosperous nation.

Whilst there has been a positive response amongst the population at large, there are a few Members of the Opposition that are stuck in finding loopholes in minor issues. But, let me inform everybody that since 2010, starting with the NEF and Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare, we have been working at the grass-root level in order to alleviate the problem of poverty, providing decent housing to the needy. Construction materials are being distributed at so many locations, for example, at Panchavati, in my Constituency No 7. And now the Budget is providing for hot meals in ZEP schools, electronic tablets to Form IV students along with the ongoing enhancement programmes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in my speech today I will comment on some of the measures taken by the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development under the five strategic ideas outlined in the Budget. I will also emphasise how the budget is enabling better health care and healthy living in our country, while helping the underprivileged.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, first embracing technology is a laudable concept for making Mauritius at par with other countries as far as technological advancement is concerned. Online transactions, an e-government, digitalised Police information, computerisation of all Government and semi-governmental departments are some examples of this Government's vision for a modern Mauritius. We need our transactions to be processed faster and information stored in such a way that not only does it reduce paper works, but makes it more efficient. Allocating budget to enhance this technological change is important in increasing productivity while remaining green.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, once again, I wish to congratulate the Minister of Finance for emphasising the heightened importance of Africa and the need to strengthen further relations with the African continent.

It is good to recall that at the very dawn of the independence of Mauritius, the Father of the Nation, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, true to his enlightened vision of our nation's future, took the conscious decision to integrate Mauritius with the Organisation of African Unity now known as the African Union. This vision of Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam was fully shared by Sir Gaëtan Duval from the very outset. The latter took numerous concrete measures to further

connect our country with Africa while remaining fully committed to developing our friendship and cooperation with the rest of the world.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, today the African continent is hailed worldwide as the new and ultimate economic frontier of planet earth, as the current economic downturn continues to afflict the industrialised nations and emerging nations.

Africa in recent years has registered an impressive economic growth rate and will continue to grow in the foreseeable future. Many countries of the African continent are rich in valuable mineral resources essential for development, and of which the world is running short.

Mauritius has rightly positioned itself as the gateway for access to these resources due to our successful economy and our membership of the important Regional African Economic Cooperation organisations such as SADC and COMESA. The rest of Africa as well is expected to similarly integrate through Regional Economic Cooperation of their own and in a not too distant future, all of Africa is expected to come together and constitute a single market of more than a billion people. Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir, is destined to be part of this important economic drive and a beneficiary, provided we intelligently follow the course envisaged by our elders and now pursued by our leader and Prime Minister, Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

We are heartened that the Minister of Finance, hon. Xavier Duval, has mentioned in his Budget Speech the grant of 50 scholarships for African students for Financial Year 2013. The opening of opportunities to more African students in our educational institutions is a very bright initiative for asserting Mauritius as a Knowledge Hub in the region. With a country like ours where we do not have an unlimited supply of resources, we have to bank on our human resources and our brains. Sharing and exchanging ideas, information and culture through our Mauritian and international students, not only allow for an educational model that can be a successful business model, but also increase and diversity in Mauritius.

This, indeed, will complement many bilateral cooperation frameworks that are being worked out with diverse African countries. We hope that the scholarships for African students will increase year after year as we now have higher capacity to accommodate a larger number of foreign students.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Minister of Finance has given a new refreshing boost by cutting down red tape procedures for the SME's. The waiving off of backlog interest and

processing fees, the reduction of repayment rates are some of the measures that shall encourage fishermen, farmers, and other SME's to work towards the establishment of guaranteed food security and a new Mauritius. The Manufacturing industry and the local industries shall have a new boost in their investment with the new measures put forward under this Budget through its new leasing scheme. Furthermore, the Ocean industry is obtaining a new boost with a much larger sea area for fishing. Thus the seafood industry will have a potential to expand and flourish.

These are the policies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that will create thousands of additional jobs. It is the determination of this Government to increase job opportunities for the youth and this is seen in the amount allocated for our undergraduates, especially those that have not found work within a year of graduation. Brain drain is a big problem in Mauritius. By ensuring that we can try to find work for our undergraduates, we not only alleviate the problem of unemployment, but we also elevate the self-esteem and independence of our youth while discouraging them from finding alternatives elsewhere. The skilling people programme increased hiring of young people within the Government sector and appropriate apprenticeships are also excellent measures.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not only is the Government trying to create opportunities for the youth, but is also taking smart measures to do so.

We need to congratulate the hon. Prime Minister and the vice-Prime Minister for allocating such a huge budget for the improvement in health services and for having taken such excellent measures for raising standard of health care like introduction of written exam for pre-registration of Doctors, minimum of HSC requirements before going for medical studies, recruitment of more nurses, general doctors and specialists. This Budget has laid emphasis on training of specialised nurses e.g for anaesthesia, intensive care unit, cardiology and obstetrics and operation theatres. And it is important that these nurses work only in the field for which they have been trained. Recruitment of more gynecologists and obstetricians are as important as many among those in service are reaching retirement age.

There is a need for specialised surgeons of international reputation to come to Mauritius regularly to update Mauritian Doctors on new surgical techniques, for example, in field of gynecological oncology and breast surgery as the number of cases of breast cancer is rising.

An adequate health care system of good hospitals and trained medical personnel is a way of relieving people's painful endurance. By earmarking a remarkable budget in the health sector Government is making provision to bring quality health care closer to the population. There are

now increased opportunities for medical studies both at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. With an international reputation in the field of tourism, Mauritius has all the necessary ingredients to become a leading medical hub in the region and become a destination for medical tourism. This will also create thousands of direct as well as indirect jobs.

As a dietician, former teacher and a mother, I commend the initiative of providing hot meals in ZEP schools. Not only does this measure help families who cannot afford to give a proper meal to their children, it also motivates students to come to school. Lunch, which forms one third of our nutritional intake for an entire day, will gear up their metabolism, reenergise them and allow them to perform to their best in school as well as grow and develop successfully and healthily.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as an ambassador of healthy living I was very pleased when this Government had banned the selling of soft drinks in schools to discourage children from consuming increased sugar content and promote the drinking of water. In a similar vein, this Budget is introducing tax to limit sugar content in fizzy drinks at the production level. Therefore, the hon. vice-Prime Minister is taking concrete measures in promoting the drinking of water and preventing the intake of soft drinks while helping local companies producing these beverages. Increasing the price of cigarettes and alcoholic beverages is another measure that shows the Minister's commitment to health. While this might not prevent those who are addicted *per se*, it is a step forward discouraging them and is a statement of the Budget to promote healthy living.

People need to be healthy if they have to learn, earn and lead a productive and fulfilling life. Diabetes Day Awareness was recently carried out and for our small island population, the prevalence of this disease is appalling. The measures outlined in this year's Budget which discourage bad habits, are not only commendable, but necessary and mandatory.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this Budget is therefore proof of the Government's initiative towards the prevention of non-communicable diseases by encouraging healthier habits in society and we desperately need that to grow as healthy society.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no country can boast to be a tourist attraction in the absence of sufficient modern means of transportation. This Government has already invested massively in the road infrastructure. Visible construction work has already been completed in many critical locations like the Caudan Roundabout, third lane at Pailles and more are under execution. The

onus of this rapid development goes to the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Public Infrastructure, hon. Anil Bachoo with the inspiring guidance of our Prime Minister Dr. the hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam.

Speaking of infrastructure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a reality that numerous projects are being implemented in various constituencies, to name Piton/Rivière-du-Rempart where drain works, new roads, traffic lights have been installed at dangerous junctions to enhance security for traffic.

The road leading to Phooliyar Antoinette which was in a very bad state has now been enlarged and upgraded, thanks to the unflinching support of the sugar estate of the region. With the boost given to the private sector by this Government, jobs and opportunities are being formed. Similarly, modern markets in various villages are being constructed with a view to bring a plus to social life and reduce the disparity between the towns and villages.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a lot of development is taking place throughout our country. But, we want to sustain this development by protecting our environment. I am happy to inform the Members of this House that the village of Panchavati in my Constituency has been chosen by my colleague the Minister of Environment for retrofitting as an eco-village, which will transform completely the environmental landscape and works have already started.

While concluding, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is to be noted that the fiscal measures of this Budget, the tax exemption for tax payers, the facilities for housing loans, the basic and retirement pensions, the abolishment of certain taxes, the intrusion of duty-free facilities for utility vehicles, the various new provisions for major infrastructural projects including those for enhancing safety and security in the country as well as those measures ensuring the health of our population, amongst many others have been welcomed and have received positive response from famous economists, consulting firms, big businesses, newspapers, and the public in general. I have nothing else to add for now, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, but to pay ovation to the hon. vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and his team to have produced this admirable Budget 2013.

We, Parliament Members, have a heavy agenda. Let us all work together in a spirit of constructive cooperation for the country that nurtures and supports us.

Thank you for your attention.

(6.45 p.m.)

Dr. R. Sorefan (Fourth Member for La Caverne & Phoenix): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, hon. Dr. Arvin Boolell started his speech on Wednesday by mentioning “this Budget of Dr. Sithanen”. Was that a slip of the tongue? I do not think so because most of the people dissociate themselves with this Budget. I think that hon. Dr. A. Boolell said it from his heart because he is disappointed with this Budget. When the vice-Prime Minister and Minister of Finance hon. Duval said it to the press before the Budget that this is a PMSD/Labour Party Budget, we all know for years it has been a tradition that we call it a ‘Sithanen Budget’, a ‘Lutchmeenaraidoo Budget’, ‘Jugnauth Budget’, etc. Why now is he saying a PMSD/Labour Party Budget? It is because he knows very well that his ‘Duval Budget’ is a *ferblanc vide*.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, one Member...

(Interruptions)

One hon. Minister referred to my friend hon. Li Kwong Wing as a member of *Parti Malin*. We see no harm as long as reference ‘*malin*’ is attributed to him, but what can I say about this Minister? Does he come from a *parti cou..*? I will not complete. Do not try to throw stone in the mud, it does splash on your own face! This remark that I am making about this Minister being in a *parti cou..* does not refer to all my friends in the Labour Party and the PMSD. It goes only to one Member.

(Interruptions)

...because they are all my colleagues.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me talk on health. Regarding health, the primary objective is to improve efficiency and quality in delivering health care and services. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for good delivery of health services, manpower is not the only requirement needed to deliver patient care. It also includes medical equipment and proper relationship among management units at the fifth floor of Emmanuel Anquetil Building including the Minister’s good language to his advisory officers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, medical equipment should be available as and when required and these equipment are used as efficiently and effectively as possible. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, nowhere in the Programme-Based Budget Estimates 2013 mention is made about medical equipment as a priority of delivering health care. Mention is only made for acquisition of medical equipment to the tune of Rs200 m. Is this House aware that the Ministry of Health has

acquired medical equipment to the tune of half billion rupees in the past three years and also received donation by foreign donors?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, would you believe that there is no information system to ascertain the completeness of donated medical equipment on the inventory? About 75% of foreign donated medical equipment was not posted in the inventory list. There is no time target set up for medical procurement, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the length of procurement process for medical equipment from issue of tenders up to commissioning takes on average seven to eight months. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, specifications are normally prepared by medical consultants, and vetting of these specifications is done by a team comprising representatives of the Biomedical Engineering Unit, Energy Services Division and Surgical Technologies.

The Deputy Speaker: No cross-talking, please!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have only one Biomedical Engineer for all hospitals in this country and for Rodrigues. There is no formal guidance and training issued to staff involved in the preparation of specifications at the Ministry. No comprehensive library of generic equipment specifications exists. Lack of knowledge in this field is detrimental to procure high quality and safe medical equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is an urgent need to set up a Central Equipment Information Unit at the Head Office, so that less time is taken from request for purchase stage to delivery and commissioning stage. All regional hospitals should be linked through ICT, so that all newly purchased or donated equipment are captured in the database. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this will undoubtedly improve asset management practices, and prevent misappropriation of medical equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, presently the procurement system is management by crisis. The Ministry does not have a comprehensive medical equipment procurement strategy and policy. None of the hospitals has a comprehensive and up-to-date information about existing medical equipment, details regarding equipment age and obsolesce.

Equipment replacement is done in an *ad hoc* manner, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Many medical equipment are in rooms that are not air conditioned; humidity percentage is not controlled and, as such, electronic equipment is not kept in appropriate environment. In section 179 of the Budget Speech, the hon. Minister of Finance is funding to the tune of Rs721 m. new

facilities at hospitals, mediclinics, as well as new hi-tech medical equipment. As I have just said, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is no proper environment for these hi-tech medical equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding pre-registration of newly qualified doctors, I see no budgetary sum earmarked. What will happen to those newly qualified who need the two years pre-registration training at the hospital, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

As regards non-communicable diseases, I am surprised by the way the hon. Minister of Finance has addressed this issue. In section 188, I quote –

“Non-communicable diseases such as diabetes are a serious challenge that Government wants to face up to. We need to discourage the bad habits that increase the risk of NCDs.”

He goes on to say in section 189 –

“Accordingly, as from the 1st January 2013, we will introduce a new tax of two cents per gram of sugar content on soft drinks.”

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister must be joking! Probably, he does not understand diabetes as a NCD. If he wants to increase his revenues, he should come and say loud and clear that he is taxing sugar for the whole population through soft drinks, and not come and present excuse that he is taxing sugar as a means to address the control of diabetes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, Type 1 diabetes is proven scientifically to be genetic, and the onset of Type 2 diabetes is above 35 years, and more evidence is pointing towards Type 2 to be genetic. Taxing sugar is not the way to address the issue. It is a medical issue to be addressed by the medical profession and not by the hon. Minister of Finance by imposing taxes. Is the hon. Minister contemplating to tax salt because we are having high blood pressure in this country? Will the hon. Minister in the next Budget come and tax cholesterol because we have increased heart disease, and tax the *‘Nita Deerpalsing briani at Quatre Bornes?’* Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he must be joking!

Another issue, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is the delivery first class accident and emergency treatment at all times at the Casualty Unit. Here, the hon. Minister of Finance is addressing the issue differently. New shift system of eight hours maximum on duty is welcomed, but to minimise accidents is hardly addressed in the Budget. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, accident is on the uprise in this country, and the motorcyclists are the most involved ones; some are even fatal. What do we see, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? The hon. Minister of Finance is abolishing duty on

200 cc motorcycles. Probably, the hon. Minister of Finance wants more fatal accidents to keep the casualty department very busy and, at the same time, helping motorcycle dealers to sell more and become richer.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as regards Medical Health Insurance Premium, the hon. Minister is putting forward a scheme, so as to allow deductions, from one net income from 01 January, premiums paid in respect of a medical or health insurance policy. Here, it is a policy favouring the insurance companies which are among many financial institutions that are making huge profits. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this scheme relieves taxpayers only. If you are on the tax list, you are relieved with this insurance. But, what about those thousands of people who are not on the taxpayers list? Don't they deserve a scheme for their health? Is this how caring this Government is for the lower income group, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

The hon. Minister of Finance has mentioned in section 308 of the Budget, and I quote -

“(...) we have a special thought for these workers and their families, for the need to make leisure activities more accessible and more affordable”.

Earlier, he said that people are working longer hours and taking on responsibility for increasing workloads etc. Then he comes in section 309 of the Budget to say -

“To this end, I am abolishing VAT on cinema tickets.”

With the salary they are earning, how many workers can afford to go to the cinema with their family; going and spending about Rs1,000 for one outing? It is a huge percentage on their monthly earning. This budgetary measure is not for the hard workers, as the hon. Minister wants us to believe. It is a measure for cinema proprietors, whose business may be declining, and certainly not for workers, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in section 100 of the Budget, the hon. Minister mentioned -

“(...) the Bank of Mauritius will ensure that commercial banks apply a “Treat your Customers Fairly” programme”.

This, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, should be the number one priority of this Budget. Today, on the newspapers, we see how huge sums of profits banks are making; more than Rs1 billion by MCB and SCB.

It is a fact, they overcharged their customers. One example, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, statistics show that for the last five years the percentage profit between buying and selling on exchange rate of major currencies, for example US, USD, pound Sterling, Euro and others is to

the average tune of 4.5%. Very huge amount, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir! Where in other countries around the world the buying and selling on exchange rate for foreign currency is only about 15 to 20 cents - less than one per cent, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am sure, if corrective measures are taken, this will bring down the cost of living and the cost of manufacturing to allow Mauritians to lead a better life.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister of Finance has proudly announced a hot meal daily to each and every child in every ZEP school in Mauritius. Rs1,500 per child per month, which is about Rs75 per school day, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. I am wondering what kind of *repas chaud* we are going to give to these children and what about those poor children who are in other public primary schools? Will they be given a monthly stipend of Rs1,500 monthly? If not, then ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence, please!

Dr. Sorefan: If not, then ...

(Interruptions)

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

(Interruptions)

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Silence please!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, if those poor children who are in other public primary schools won't enjoy this ...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Baloomoody, do not interrupt the hon. Member, please!

Dr. Sorefan: If those poor people do not get the Rs1500, then this Government *fait dans les 'deux poids deux mesures'* for the same category of children. The hon. Minister said on radio that the PTA will take care of tender launching. He also said that he hopes that a poor person will get the award of this tender. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, catering for school children demands a lot of expertise and know-how. Will the hot meal be prepared on site be hot or will be delivered cool? Will there be quality control, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? Will there be vegetarian food cooked separately, respecting religious beliefs?

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, PTA is an association that can't embark on such endeavours as parents are not present on a daily basis.

Who will be answerable if there is food poisoning or other mishaps? God forbids! This measure is easily said, but difficult to implement properly.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the measure is easily said, but difficult to implement properly in such a short time and without planning. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in section 288 mention is made of free education for all - that was management by crisis. Free transport is still ongoing on a management by crisis. God knows what provision of hot meal to be in the future. I hope it won't cool off.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, now let me deal with the section on infrastructure. In the Budget Speech, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has one little paragraph, out of 363 paragraphs, mainly section 283, about eight lines where the only section where mention is made of Rs28 billion. Just within eight lines! I am sure, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that the hon. Minister of Public Infrastructure will intervene later on. I am begging that the hon. Minister does not come and say the same things as he did in his Budget Speech of 2010 and 2011, mentioning about how many million such roads or such projects have cost. We have it all, don't come and repeat as a tape recorder.

(Interruptions)

All we want to have from him is the extra cost paid for most of the projects and/or will be paid for those claims that have been filed in his Ministry?

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Dr. Sorefan: Mention is made in the Annex that customs duty is being abolished with immediate effect for steel electric polls from 15 to zero percent. This is a measure to benefit the contractors; we would like to know prior to the presentation of this budget how many steel electric poles were in the customs warehouse. This zero customs duty will definitely be a 15% profit to contractors and not to the ministerial projects. The ministerial projects won't benefit and the Minister of Infrastructure can't come and say that the contract price may go lower to the tune of 15%.

In section 284, mention is made, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, of a 15% percent margin of preference to companies employing at least 80% local manpower - it used to be 10%. I would go further - they come and say to the foreign contractors that they should use local equipment, lorries, etc. that they should not allow to import the equipment and this measure will boost up local small contractors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, on the same issue mention is made regarding Public Procurement Act, regulation will be passed to increase deposit for filing an application for review by IRP from Rs75,000 to Rs100,000 for media contractors and 10,000 to 25,000 for other contractors.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, is that a deterrent for contractors not to file towards the IRP? Instead, we must encourage contractors to go to IRP rebuke for transparency sake. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there will be introduction of a non-refundable processing fee of Rs5,000 for all cases. I personally think, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not fair. At least, the amount should be refunded if the IRP shows merit for the case, especially for small contractors. The Act should be revisited, especially for IRP where a section is made where Public Bodies can come with a certificate of urgency to award the contract; even the IRP has not concluded the case. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, no mention has been made about the Jin Fei project

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Assirvaden! Do not interrupt the hon. Member who is speaking! Please, carry on with the speech!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, not a word in the budget regarding the Jin Fei project. We all know that about half a billion rupees have been spent for infrastructure for the Chinese company to come and do business. And on television it was said that 14,000 jobs will be created. Up to now, *zéro plombage*, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The land is just there. Many planters have been moved to other places, a mega project and God knows what dogs probably are doing there!

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another project, Neotown; what have we not heard? Big, big projects coming and so far only minor study projects are going on, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir,

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will start from Phoenix and I hope to end up in Port Louis. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the IVTB bypass; now, they call it the IVTB-Bachoo bypass congestion. It is well-known as Bachoo bypass congestion at Phoenix. I won't elaborate because people have

got the experience how congested this place is at present. A lot of public money on this project has gone down the drain.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming down to the roundabout, the flyover at St Jean, in a PQ that was answered by the Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping, he made reference that this is not a dental bridge, because I am a dental surgeon. Let me remind him, a dental bridge is a mechanical engineering in a biological system. It is more difficult to design.

(Interruptions)

Well, if this hon. Member who is talking does not know about dentistry, it will be better if he goes and read on internet what dentistry is all about.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Henry!

Dr. Sorefan: A dental bridge is a mechanical design in a biological system and it is more difficult to design as compared to a flyover or a bridge, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. The hon. Minister came and said, he guaranteed me that there is a hard shoulder on the left-hand side going down towards Port Louis: a 1.5 metre hard shoulder. I challenge the hon. Minister if he wants to come now; we go there, see if there is a 1.5 metres hard shoulder on the left going to Port Louis on that flyover and people are not using this lane because of this issue. This is too close to the cement wall; they always use the second or the third lane, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I said a lot on the first lane, all the humps and bumps, I won't come on it. I said a lot on Sinohydro at the Colville Deverell bridge. The hon. Minister himself said that the design will be given later on when the project is over. Let's hope we get something good from this company for the sake of safety for the Mauritian people who use the road.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, coming to the ring road Phase I, my colleague said it; spending so many millions and billions and to end up at the mountain. The hon. Minister said: soon, we are launching tenders and we will award. He said that twice in four months.

(Interruptions)

I say it again that we are still waiting. I am praying that you come with it. I am not against it, but at least do it well, but don't do it phase-wise and people are waiting, spending so many millions.

The topographical study did not mention that they should use blasting of this rock there. After giving the tender, one engineer on the television by the side of the hon. Minister said that we have to use a lot of blasting, dynamite and that will cost more money; as if he is telling the people: okay - I don't know exactly how much it is - that this project will cost more for the contractor who will come and claim to the Ministry of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, about the Verdun-Terre Rouge-Ebène project, we have heard so many people claiming...

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Just refrain from cross talking, please!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is claim...

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, from a sitting position, hon. Jhugroo is casting aspersions on my Ministry.

(Interruptions)

The matter being referred to is RDA and RDA falls under my Ministry.

(Interruptions)

Mr Mohamed: He was talking about the Ministry. Obviously, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, he referred to this Ministry, and if it is not true, the hon. Member must say that he did not!

(Interruptions)

Mr Bachoo: He is repeating the word again and we cannot tolerate that!

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Jhugroo, it's a warning I am giving you; from a sitting position, you have got no right to make any remarks, especially when an hon. Member is speaking.... I am talking to you at the moment! Hon. Member, please carry on! I want complete silence in the House. Enough of it now!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, regarding the Verdun-Terre Rouge-Ebène Project, we have seen that the contractor wanted to stop work with claim coming to the tune of Rs700 m. That was mentioned, but, up to now, the Mauritian people don't know whether the claim has been filed to the Ministry or which part of payment has been done. I would wish the hon.

Minister to come and clarify to the people of Mauritius, how much has been paid in extra to these people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there is maintenance of road and minor project to the tune of Rs1 billion shared among three contractors. This is ongoing every year, but until we ask questions, we don't get answers. We don't know what projects, minor repairs are being done; how much is being paid to them, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am not just asking questions to the Vice-Prime Minister, the people should know, it will be fair enough to give answers, even though questions have not been asked.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, concerning the mega Highlands Project, we haven't heard anything about it, all we hear is that the Prime Minister has mentioned that training will be given for drivers and I am hoping that this project goes on for the safety of our people on the road, for those who go and take a driving licence, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I won't elaborate more. I have asked many questions on all infrastructures. We got answers. We need more answers and we will come with more questions, of course. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I made a request to the hon. Minister in person regarding pavement on the Royal Road of Phoenix. It is on, but it is still far away. Two persons have broken their nose, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

(Interruptions)

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I will say it loud and clear '*mo nombril enterré dans Phoenix*'.

(Interruptions)

Quatre Bornes. Patrick Assirvaden, where were you born, where are you staying and where are you going to be buried?

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member, please address the Chair!

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the hon. Member does not know where the Sorefan family comes from.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I don't want to hear any remarks from hon. Members from a sitting position.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there are projects in the beginning of this mandate in Parisot towards Highlands, for the overflowing of the bridge. All the hon. Ministers went after I put my question. The question was asked, but there was no answer before. Even before

the answer, three Ministers went there with camera, MBC and everything, to show to the people that they are going to do it. Up to now, 'zéro plombaz'. But, the Parisot Bridge at Mesnil, be careful, we are not talking on the Highlands side. There are two. At the Mesnil side, they are constructing a bridge.

(Interruptions)

The Deputy Speaker: I am sorry. Hon. Patrick Assirvaden, you will get the opportunity to intervene. During your intervention, you can rebut all the points that the hon. Member is highlighting at the moment. Please, sit down! The hon. Member can carry on!

(Interruptions)

I am on my feet. I am warning hon. Patrick Assirvaden! The next time, I will have to take actions against you.

Dr. Sorefan: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Parisot Road has been divided into two by the motorway; one on the Highlands side and one on the Mesnil side. On the Highlands side, the bridge is *zéro plombaz*. The bridge on the Mesnil side is being taken care of, but people are objecting about the design. I have never seen a bridge where the water flows, we have a middle wall inside the bridge. This will create problems when we have flooding coming, because we enlarge bridges so that we don't get flooding area. The design is very bad.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I think I said quite a lot on this Budget and I am going to conclude with a few lines. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, over the years I have heard nothing, but corruption, corruption, corruption in this House. Now, what do I hear: cover up, cover up, cover up of corruption.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, thank you very much.

Mrs Perraud: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT

The Deputy Prime Minister: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Saturday 17 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr A. Bachoo) rose and seconded.

Question put and agreed to.

Mr Deputy Speaker: The House stands adjourned.

MATTER RAISED

PLAINE VERTE - BOULODROME - HALAWI

Mr A. Ameer Meea (First Member for Port Louis Maritime & Port Louis East): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, j'aurais aimé soulever un problème dans ma circonscription et cela concerne l'honorable ministre des collectivités locales. Il n'est pas présent mais, peut être, un autre collègue peut prendre note. Cela concerne le boulodrome Halawi au jardin de la Plaine Verte. J'ai déjà soulevé ce problème ici il y a quelque temps de cela. Des gens de ma circonscription sont venus me voir. Le boulodrome est complètement impraticable pour diverses raisons. Le boulodrome n'a pas été bien entretenu. Il y a un problème d'évacuation d'eau quand il pleut. Il n'y a pas de vestiaire ni de lampadaires. Les lampadaires ont été cassés et ils n'ont pas été remplacés. Il y a beaucoup de déchets qui sont sur le boulodrome. Donc, les gens qui habitent dans cette région se déplacent à Rose Hill pour pouvoir jouer à la pétanque. Donc, si l'honorable ministre peut transmettre ce message et faire en sorte que le problème soit réglé dans les plus brefs délais.

The vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping (Mr Bachoo): Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, after the Municipal elections, we are going to look into the issue.

At 7.28 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Saturday 17 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.