



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS

**FIFTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**PARLIAMENTARY**

**DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**SECOND SESSION**

**SATURDAY 17 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
Dr. the Hon. Ahmed Rashid Beebeejaun, GCSK, FRCP	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Energy and Public Utilities
Hon. Charles Gaëtan Xavier-Luc Duval, GCSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
Hon. Anil Kumar Bachoo, GOSK	Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Public Infrastructure, National Development Unit, Land Transport and Shipping
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Hon. Mrs Sheilabai Bappoo, GOSK	Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity and Reform Institutions
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Hon. Surendra Dayal	Minister of Social Integration and Economic Empowerment
Hon. Jangbahadoorsing Iswurdeo Mola Roopchand Seetaram	Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives
Hon. Mrs Maria Francesca Mireille Martin	Minister of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare
Hon. Sutyadeo Moutia	Minister of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms

Members

Members

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**MAURITIUS**

**Fifth National Assembly**

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**SECOND SESSION**

**Debate No. 24 of 2012**

**Sitting of 17 November 2012**

**The Assembly met in the Assembly House, Port Louis**

**at 11.30 a.m.**

**The National Anthem was played**

*(Mr Speaker in the Chair)*

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### OBITUARY – BHAYAT, MR ABDOOL KADER AHMED

**The Prime Minister:** Mr Speaker Sir, we have learnt with deep sorrow of the demise of Mr Abdool Kader Ahmed Bhayat yesterday at the age of 76.

After his primary education at the Young Men Aided School, Remy Ollier Street, Port Louis, he studied at Royal College of Port Louis. He worked as a Clerk at the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Fund and later on was appointed as Treasurer. Subsequently, he proceeded for legal studies in the United Kingdom and he was called to the Bar at Lincolns Inn on 16 July 1970. On his return to Mauritius, Mr Kader Bhayat got actively involved in politics and was one of the most prominent Members of the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien*.

He stood as a candidate for the General Elections of December 1976 under the banner of the MMM in Constituency No. 2, Port Louis South and Port Louis Central. In 1977, Mr Kader Bhayat was elected Municipal Councillor and became Lord Mayor of Port Louis. I believe he was the first Lord Mayor of the MMM. In 1982, he was again returned as first Member of Constituency No. 2 and appointed Minister of Commerce, Industry, Prices and Consumer Protection. However, when a major split occurred nine months later in the MMM, Mr Kader Bhayat left the MMM and was instrumental in the setting up of the MSM and the fostering of the Labour Party/MSM/PMSD Alliance.

In August 1983, he stood as a candidate under the banner of the MSM/Travailliste Alliance in Constituency No. 10 and during the Legislative Assembly Elections, Mr Kader Bhayat was presented to the electorate as the future Deputy Prime Minister. He was returned as Second Member of the said Constituency.

Mr Speaker, Sir, on the day the results were proclaimed, Mr Kader Bhayat spoke on television as future Deputy Prime Minister. Unfortunately, the following day, that was not to be. He then agreed to serve as Minister of Trade and Shipping, a post which he occupied until the 06 January 1986 when he had a disagreement on a major issue of national importance with the then Prime Minister and resigned from Government. He then decided not to stand as a candidate in the General Elections of 1987 and reverted back to practising as a Barrister.

Mr Speaker, Sir, Mr Kader Bhayat was made Senior Counsel on 13 September 1994. He was Legal Adviser to several organisations including the General Workers' Federation. In 2007,

I appointed him to the Board of Directors of the Bank of Mauritius where he put his legal and political experience to good use and his logical reasoning and views were highly regarded by the Governor and the members of the Board at that time. He attended the last meeting of the Board at the beginning of this month.

Mr Kader Bhayat will be remembered for his ability to sort out problems as well as his generosity. He was always ready to help people, not only from his Constituency, but also from other parts of the country. He did not hesitate to donate a plot of land in a prime site in Beau Bassin for the construction of a mosque.

Mr Speaker, Sir, with his passing away, Mauritius loses a true patriot and he will certainly be remembered as an eminent *fils du sol*, who leaves behind an impressive track record both as a Barrister and as a politician, who always put his principles above his own personal interest. It is pertinent that in 1989 when the late Sir Gaëtan Duval was arrested on a charge of giving instructions to commit murder, Mr Kader Bhayat was among the very few lawyers who agreed to stand by him and defend him.

Mr Speaker, Sir, may I request you to be kind enough to direct the Clerk of the National Assembly to convey the deep condolences of the Government and of this Assembly to the bereaved family.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, we have lost a great gentleman, a good and courageous man. Late Kader Bhayat will be remembered with genuine emotion by all those who have had the privilege of knowing him. I join, therefore, with the hon. Prime Minister and request you to convey the family of late Kader Bhayat our sincere condolences.

**Mr Speaker:** I associate myself with the tribute paid to the late Mr Abdool Kader Ahmed Bhayat by Dr. the hon. Prime Minister and the hon. Leader of the Opposition and I direct the Clerk to convey to the bereaved family the assurance of our sincere condolences.



**ORAL ANSWER TO QUESTION**  
**MITD - RECRUITMENT**

**The Leader of the Opposition (Mr P. Bérenger)** (*By Private Notice*) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain therefrom information as to –

- (a) the names and qualifications of the persons recruited thereat, since February 2010 as at to date;
- (b) how Mrs Y. M. was recruited thereat despite her prior conviction for having produced fake certificates to the Public Service Commission when she applied for a post at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and
- (c) If one Mr N. C. was re-instated in June 2012 after he had been dismissed in January 2012 following his arrest by the Police, indicating if the Child Development Unit has submitted thereto a report on him, having allegedly had a sexual relationship with one of his minor students.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/559 on 21 June 2011 on recruitment at the Mauritius Institute of Training and Development, MITD, I had informed the House that I would table a full list of officers recruited for the training centres since February 2010. This was subsequently tabled.

Information being sought today on the other officers recruited subsequently is being compiled and will be tabled.

I wish to highlight that the MITD has advised me that the recruitment of officers has been done in line with practice and procedures that have been put in place for the past 10 years or more.

Regarding part (b) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, in my reply to PQ No. B/632, I had informed the House that one Mrs Y. M. had been employed as Instructor (Information Technology) from 01 July 2010 to 11 June 2012. I had also drawn the attention of the House that allegations had been labeled against her at different levels, especially with regard to her qualifications. Following the representations received, it was established after enquiries conducted by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate (MES) that she possessed fake certificates. It has also been found that she had been convicted by the District Court for having produced

false documents to the Public Service Commission. As I indicated in my reply, Police and ICAC were and are still enquiring into the matter. It would appear that the photocopies of her certificates that were produced were tampered with and were not counterchecked against any original. The attention of the then Director of the MITD had been drawn to that fact and to the need to investigate into the circumstances that led to her recruitment in spite of the fact that she had fake certificates. My Ministry has also issued a formal letter dated 09 November 2012 to the MITD for an enquiry to be carried out on the circumstances that led to the recruitment by the MITD of an instructor with fake certificates. It has been specified clearly to the MITD that such enquiry should situate responsibilities with regard to –

- (i) the screening of the application form and verification of information provided by her as qualifications against original certificates;
- (ii) overlooking the fact that she had previously been convicted for a criminal offence and dismissed by her former employer and not taking those elements into account in the recruitment process in spite of the fact that these were declared by her in the application form, and
- (iii) ascertaining the submission of detailed information on criminal offence and dismissal by previous employee.

This enquiry, Mr Speaker, Sir, is being conducted under the general supervision of a committee set up recently by the MITD Board.

I also wish to add that Mrs Y. M. has been fined in a Court case No. 3780/08 in the District Court of Curepipe for giving false information.

As regards part (c) of the question, Mr Speaker, Sir, there is - I must say from right at the beginning - a confusion that needs to be cleared. The way the question is put - I don't blame the Leader of the Opposition, of course - there are a few things and there has been mixing of issues and I am trying to clear this.

The contract of Mr N. C., instructor, was terminated in January 2012, following information received that Mr N. C. had been arrested on 24 January 2012, for the offence of breach of Protection Order sought by his wife against him, a matter pertaining to his personal family life. However, the case was subsequently withdrawn by the wife in April 2012. Following consultation, at a later stage, with the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment,

it had come to light that the charges in relation to the case of Mr N. C. pertaining, as they did, to a personal family matter did not have any bearing on his work.

The SLO advised that it was up to the MITD to take a decision on the way forward. In view of the above, it was decided to re-employ Mr N. C. as soon as possible. But, regarding a case of alleged sexual relationship with one of his students reported in November 2011, the MITD conducted an enquiry in December 2011, chaired by the-then Director himself and he convened all the people he thought right and he also gave Mr N. C. a hearing on the matter. An enquiry was also conducted at the level of the CDU and no report had subsequently been received from the CDU.

*(Interruptions)*

I am giving the facts as they are.

It must be highlighted that the minor student denied the allegation and no statement was made by her to the Police. The Board of the MITD subsequently approved the reinstatement of Mr N. C.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I am sure the hon. Minister is aware that the first part of my question asked not only for an updated list of names, but of qualifications and, as I proceed, he will understand why I insist now on having the qualifications or lack of qualifications of those recruited.

If I can start with the case of Mrs Y. M, Mr Speaker, Sir, the hon. Minister has informed us that an enquiry is being carried out by a committee set up by the Board of the MITD. Can I know the composition of that committee?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Yes, the committee has been set up under the provisions of Article 10 of the Act and the committee is being chaired by the Ag. Chairman of the MITD, Mr De Grivel and then a PS of my Ministry and the Director of the HRDC sits on the Board of the MITD.

**Mr Bérenger:** I heard the hon. Minister say that the fact that she had been convicted by the Court and so on, was in the form which she filled to find employment and in spite of that, therefore, the MITD did recruit her, although they were informed that she had been convicted for producing fake certificates. We will see how this enquiry explains this. Will the enquiry also find out, after she was recruited, after having been convicted by the Court, how come she had no certificates, except fake certificates, how come she was promoted to Head of Section, Information Technology without any certificate, except fake certificates?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition is right. This is why I said last time, when I was replying to the question, that I was amazed and I was not at all satisfied. But I cannot go and take action myself. I had to go through the procedures. The attention of the then Director was drawn to all these facts. *J'étais irrité parce que les actions ne venaient pas.* In fact, at the time I was giving information to the House last time, I was not aware that she had herself mentioned on her application form, that she had had problems and had declared them. *Ce qui est plus grave encore. Donc, il y a une enquête qui est en cours par ce comité. Il faut attendre ce que l'enquête nous dit. Si l'enquête tarde, je vais voir d'autres façons. Et qui va prendre la responsabilité de toute cette affaire. Mais il y a eu un problème majeur au niveau du MITD pour l'embauche de cette personne.*

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the hon. Minister aware and will it be brought to the attention of that committee that quite soon after 2010 elections, that lady was *chaperonnée*, was brought to the MITD Head Office and so on, was helped to fill in the forms and so on, *chaperonnée*, therefore, by the Senior Adviser to the Minister himself, one Mr D. T.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I am not aware of this, Mr Speaker, Sir. I will look into the matter. I don't know on which date that lady came there and which date that person became Adviser to me, because the Adviser came after the elections. I will look into the matter and give the information to the House.

**Mr Bérenger:** Can I move on to the case of Mr N. C., Mr Speaker, Sir? There also, we are told that now an enquiry is ongoing by MITD and that an enquiry has been carried out by the CDU and no report from the CDU has emerged till today. Can I know the date on which the CDU was informed of that case?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I have asked the information from the CDU this morning, before coming here; there has been no report from the CDU sent to us.

*(Interruptions)*

I am not responsible for the CDU, let it be clear! The CDU mentions here that the case of Mr N. C. was referred to the CDU of Phoenix by the officer in charge of the MITD. So, the officer in charge did inform, and then I know that the wife of Mr N. C. also went to the CDU. There have been things done at the level of the CDU and I am also informed that the CDU proceeded to the MITD on the same day. But the date is not mentioned. The date is asked, but I don't have the date here. I will check that. The facts are like that.

The CDU convenes this victim's family to attend the office of the CDU for urgent psychological appointment and the officer of the CDU, who has given me the information, mentioned that during the session, it was noted that the parents of the victim were very annoyed by the allegations made against their daughter and the intervention of the CDU in that case. Both the parents and the alleged victim strongly denied the allegations. This is information given to me by the CDU. The minor reported that the rumours arose - this is what I am told - *ça arrive aux enfants, il faut comprendre ; il ne faut pas s'exciter pour un oui pour un non. Comprenez ça un peu!*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition is jumping on conclusion.

**Mr Speaker:** Proceed, hon. Minister!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** The Leader of the Opposition said it is shocking. It is shocking because this is according to information he has gathered. I am giving him information from the file.

*(Interruptions)*

I was saying that the minor reported that the rumours arose after that she joked with her classmates about Mr N. C. and minor X did not show any signs of victimisation or trauma during the session held with the psychologist. This is the information that I am given, and I must also say that the information I have in my hands, mentions that no statement was recorded at the CDU of Phoenix regarding the alleged case on minor by Mr N. C., that is, the CDU was informed directly, but there was no case reported by the family themselves to the CDU. So, this is the information I can give and which I have gathered from the CDU.

**Mr Bérenger:** Mr Speaker, Sir, it is shameful. Can I ask the hon. Minister whether he is aware that on 28 October 2011, a lady psychologist interviewed that 14-year old student, student to that so-called instructor, Mr Speaker, Sir? Before I move to that, is it not a fact that, that instructor was recruited as physical education instructor in July 2010 without any qualification

once more and that he is now following a course at MIE for Teacher's Diploma in Physical Education?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** If we go along these lines that will be for the splashing of the news. In the list that I am going to give, there are so many things that appeared queer, but it is not the first time. That person is doing the job and the appointment has taken place according to procedures – I have said it in my reply – which have been there for the past 10 years. There has been nothing new in the recruitment.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order!

**Mr Bérenger:** I wonder how many in that list have been recruited without any qualifications except fake qualifications. Now, let me move on to the real thing. The Minister must be aware that on 28 October 2001, a lady psychologist, well-qualified, met with the 14-year old student and the 14-year old student confirmed to her that she had been having a sexual relationship for quite a while with Mr N. C., her teacher. The psychologist gave her report on 03 November to MITD. Is the hon. Minister aware of the contents of that report? I am going to table a copy, but I would request that the name of the student and of the parents be deleted for obvious reasons. Is he aware, therefore, that, in her report, she confirms that the child has said that she has had a *relation sexuelle* – therefore *relation sexuelle avec mineure*, Mr Speaker, Sir. She writes that the same person *a fait des propositions à d'autres filles* and the conclusion is, I quote

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*'Il semble donc que Monsieur C. ait des difficultés à contenir ses pulsions sexuelles et qu'il présente donc un danger pour les élèves du MITD car il use de sa position de professeur pour arriver à ses fins'.*

I table a copy of that report. Was the Minister aware of that report?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** M. le président, je suis tout à fait au courant de ce rapport. En fait, c'est à la suite de ce rapport que le MITD a demandé à la CDU - comme je vous ai dit tout à l'heure - d'étudier le cas. Je suis surpris. Je ne vais pas mettre en doute la psychologue qui a fait un travail. C'est à la suite d'une visite de routine – c'est ce qu'ils font – que la psychologue a été dans la classe et a laissé cette information à ses supérieurs. Les supérieurs ont regardé dans cette information. Je suis moi aussi au courant de cela. Je ne vais pas mettre en doute ce qui a été dit dedans mais seulement je peux vous dire que tout ce qui a suivi, a été fait selon des enquêtes

sérieuses. La CDU a reçu la jeune fille et ses parents et la fille - c'est ce que j'ai dit ici – has denied. Cela arrive aux enfants.

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, il y a des enfants qui....

*(Interruptions)*

Allez dire cela dehors ; on va prendre cela en considération.

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Address the Chair, please!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Allez dire cela à la police.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Si vous avez le courage, vous allez dire cela à la police.

*(Interruptions)*

Je ne suis pas là pour laisser l'opposition faire de la démagogie et puis faire croire à la population....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Un peu de silence, s'il vous plaît!

*(Interruptions)*

Silence !

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Quelqu'un de l'autre côté de la Chambre peut venir défendre les enfants mieux que moi ?

*(Interruptions)*

Ce qu'on est en train de dire est faux, tel qu'on a les informations.

*(Interruptions)*

Si les membres de l'opposition ont des informations que moi je n'en ai pas, je vais....

*(Interruptions)*

Cela a été dit; ça a été *ruled out*.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

Silence!

**An hon. Member:** It is a shame!

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I invite hon. Members to let the Minister answer.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Je ne suis pas ici pour défendre qui que ce soit. Mon problème c'est que quand cela est arrivé, j'avais demandé au MITD de voir pourquoi la psychologue est venue avec ce rapport et de faire une autre enquête parce que je n'ai pas compris. Il y a eu beaucoup de palabres que j'ai entendues mais que je ne peux venir dire à cette Chambre.

*(Interruptions)*

Rempli de palabres là-bas.

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, je ne comprends pas. Je n'ai pas eu le rapport pour savoir ce qui s'est passé; quelle suite a été donnée à ce rapport de la psychologue. Je ne suis pas au courant mais je suis très agacé parce qu'il fallait étudier; faire appeler la psychologue et lui demander de faire enquête sur enquête. Si la psychologue a raison bien sûr les choses auraient été faites différemment....

*(Interruptions)*

On a fait des enquêtes supplémentaires et on nous a dit que les faits qui sont mentionnés concernant cette enfant ne paraissaient pas exacts.

**Mr Bérenger:** *Autre enquête* which had supposedly been carried out by the management of MITD itself with the pressure one can imagine....

**Mr Speaker:** The hon. Leader of the Opposition must put his question.

**Mr Bérenger:** Is the Minister also aware of a meeting which took place, again, chaired by that psychologist – what I have just heard the Minister say about this psychologist, a professional highly qualified; if you read the report, Mr Speaker, Sir, you will be very impressed – at which were present the minor student herself and her mother. I shall table copy of the minutes of proceedings. In the course of that meeting, the minor child confessed, I quote: that she has a close relationship with Mr C. They had sexual intercourse on eight occasions in a *pensionnat* at Bonne Terre. They did not use any contraceptive method. The mother said that she is surprised; that she locks the gate whenever she leaves her daughter alone at home. The student



explained how she managed to get out. She has a spare key. The Chairperson – the psychologist – requested the mother to sign a paper stating that she has been notified of the above, which she did and that signed paper is in the file, if the hon. Minister had cared to look carefully or maybe he knows and I table a copy of the minutes of proceedings of that meeting.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** *Mr Speaker, Sir, I never said that things were left like that. En deux heures de temps, je n'ai pas eu le temps d'aller chercher tout ce qui a été fait mais je viendrais sûrement avec un *statement* à la Chambre pour donner exactement toutes les autres informations.*

What is mentioned by the hon. Leader of the Opposition is what the psychologist says was told to her, but when these points were taken one after the other at the level of the enquiry by the MITD, including enquiry carried out under the chairmanship of the Director himself; all these points were not found to be founded on facts. *Même le Commissaire, dans sa lettre, nous dit –*

“I have to inform that no case of physical relationship has been reported to the Police station.”

Nous avons forcé les parents; nous avons donné aux parents la protection pour aller à la police mais ils ont nié en disant que ce qu'on est en train de raconter c'est faux. Il faut savoir qu'est-ce qui est vrai, qu'est-ce qui est faux et s'il y a quelque chose, il faut prendre action.

**Mr Bérenger:** May I know how the Minister and Government intend explaining to the country that, whilst MITD was already aware of all this, that person is arrested for not respecting a Protection Order against his spouse. All this is already known. He is arrested, he is dismissed and then he is reinstated in spite of all this being on record, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Dr. Bunwaree:** M. le président, il ne faut pas...

*(Interruptions)*

Non, je ne vais pas accepter cela, je vais prendre ma responsabilité, car des allégations sont faites et sont prouvées de ne pas être vraies, je ne peux pas prendre des actions contre des personnes. Ne comptez pas sur moi pour faire cette sorte de politique.

*(Interruptions)*

Je sais que l'information a été remise...

*(Interruptions)*

Je connais qui vous a remis l'information. Je connais quelles sont les palabres qui sont en dessous. Je vais venir avec toute la vérité pour expliquer...

*(Interruptions)*

Un tas de palabres par ....

*(Interruptions)*

Oui. Et palabres deviennent politiques.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I said, silence!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Même politique. Il ne faut pas venir ....

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence! Order!

*(Interruptions)*

I said order! Hon. Baloomoody, please!

*(Interruptions)*

Hon. Minister! Next question!

**Mr Bérenger:** An exception before the others. That person who is recruited, as many others, just after the 2010 Elections, in that case, without any certificate, again, in that case, I do not have the information. In the first case, I said that the person was accompanied by the Senior Adviser, in that case, has the hon. Minister found out who recommended the employment of that person and who insisted that he be reinstated after he had been dismissed?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I'll have to seek the information. I cannot give a reply offhand, but I must repeat what I've said that in all cases, not only in that case, because there are cases, I could have been on the side of the hon. Leader of the Opposition and mentioned so many cases which I find very queer in the lists that are there, but in each case, the procedures have been followed and, therefore, I cannot do anything.

**Dr. S. Boolell:** Mr Speaker, Sir, considering the gravity of a sexual assault, alleged or otherwise, upon the body of a 14-year old girl, could the hon. Minister inform the House as to whether his Ministry, the MITD or the Child Development Unit has caused the child to be examined medically as to her gynae status?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** There also, I do not know what type of examination has been carried out, but when the enquiry was taking place, I, personally, did mention: 'do not let any leaf unturned'.

Everything has been done, at least, the House and the country can rely upon it. But I have had information which I am giving. Let us say it may appear that there is some hidden information. I have been informed on, not one, but various occasions, that there has been no assault. But I say, if you have further information, if you can allow the Police to continue the enquiry through any means, because the Police has done its enquiry as it could, but I said that it could ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Jugnauth:** Can the hon. Minister table any medical report on which he has based himself to rule out the report of this psychologist?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** For this, I'll have to take the point with the MITD to see what can be done. Probably the report cannot be laid on the Table, but can be looked into definitely.

**Mrs Labelle:** We have heard the hon. Minister mentioning that the CDU has given, even verbally, a different opinion than that of the psychologist. May I know from the hon. Minister who interviewed the girl at the CDU and whether it is the policy of the CDU not to have minutes of proceedings or a report when they look into such cases?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This question has to be looked into by the CDU. I cannot answer offhand, but I said: I know that the CDU has looked into the matter and has not submitted a report to us as such.

*(Interruptions)*

But there is a file at the level of the Ministry where all other information can be obtained concerning this case.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** Mr Speaker, Sir, will the hon. Minister not agree that, in fact, the connection between Mrs Y. M., Mr N. C. and all these recruitments at MITD is that there are all, as in the case of Mrs Y. M. and Mr N. C, people very close to the Labour Party? So much so, this is my question...

**Mr Speaker:** I have to interrupt the hon. Member. I allowed the hon. Member to put a question, but not to make a statement.

**Mr Obeegadoo:** My question: is this not correct, so much so, that when Mrs Y. M. was recruited without any interview, without any HR vetting, it was on the basis of two referees, known members of staff and people notoriously close to the Labour Party, so much so that when Mr N. C. was reinstated, it was on the basis of a Board paper coming from the Ministry and denounced to ICAC, so much so that the Minister himself, two weeks ago, admitted to unions

that there were lots of people now at MITD who have been recruited on a month to month contractual basis, that they have no qualifications and now they are going to be provided the opportunity to sit for the School Certificate Examinations?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** No, no, no.

*(Interruptions)*

I did not say so. This is not exactly what I said to the unions. I said to the unions: 'there is a list of people; I am not aware whether all of them have been recruited by the MITD.' In fact, I must inform the House that the list of these workers was being submitted to the Board for them to be placed on permanent basis and this is where my Ministry intervened. This is where the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry said this cannot be done like that, because we have had evidence of, at least, one person holding fake certificates, so how can we now take all these people and put them on a permanent basis. This is where we intervened. It is not what hon. Obeegadoo is saying. In fact, we stopped it and until now all this question of promotion to be put on a permanent basis has been frozen by me, not by the unions. I said that to the unions 'this is what I am going to do'. Because there have been flaws in so many things before *et puis les palabres, je dois répéter cela encore. En fonction de cela, j'ai pris la décision de freeze toutes ces démarches de MITD et puis de mettre de l'ordre, c'est pour cela qu'on a institué un comité avec les trois personnes que j'ai mentionnées tout à l'heure pour qu'on puisse mettre un meilleur ordre dans le MITD. Moi-même j'ai dit que je n'étais pas satisfait de la façon dont cela se déroule.*

**Mr Uteem:** Can I know from the hon. Minister how is it that MITD just threw away a psychological report without on his own admission having received a copy of the report from CDU? On what basis did they throw away that psychologist's report?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I thank you for this question. In fact, the question was just being put by hon. Mrs Labelle and this is where the problem would appear complicated. The officers of the CDU who saw the girl and the parents, asked for the people to come for a psychological appointment and they have been seen by a psychologist who is as well trained and as well qualified as the other one. It is on the report of this psychologist whom I mentioned...

*(Interruptions)*

The question has to be put to the CDU. When the CDU makes a report, the CDU carries out an enquiry; the CDU looks into the matter. Of course, I cannot, today, at this point in time, give any report, but I have just mentioned...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say order, please!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** ... in our file, there has been no report sent to us. I mentioned I did not say the CDU did not enquire. On the contrary, I said they looked into the matter - and I thank the hon. Members for putting this question - that the child was taken care of by a competent psychologist at the CDU.

**Mr Bérenger:** Supposedly, at one point in time, after receiving the report of a fully qualified independent psychologist, after having received minutes of proceedings of meetings where all this was confirmed, the MITD found cause to refer the matter to the CDU, but to the Police, no. We are dealing with a 14-year old child. This should have been referred to the Police straightaway. This person, without any qualification, is still teaching I don't know how many minor girls. Can I appeal to the hon. Prime Minister to, firstly, have the Police open a case on that - better late than never - and, secondly, to have a Senior Magistrate, not a committee of the same MITD, to enquire into this question of qualifications of persons recruited since February, 2010?

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I take the point raised by the hon. Leader of the Opposition. But what I want to say is that the parents have refused to go to the Police.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Silence!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I will look into what the MITD did with the Police because I know there have been correspondences. In fact, I just mentioned that there is a correspondence coming from the Commissioner of Police.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say silence, please!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I maintain that whatever could be done at our level has been done, and the child's case went to the CDU. There could have been other procedures taking place. The enquiry was even taken up by ICAC. I asked the question: why ICAC? Because the case of Mr N. C. was taken up ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say silence!

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Bunwaree:** This is the information.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Order! I say order! Hon. Baloomoody, I say order!

**Dr. Bunwaree:** I am saying that this case was also taken up by the Ombudsperson for Children, and we had no information allowing us to say that there is something wrong and he has to know. Well, I will look into the matter again, if need be. But I don't think that the MITD has not dealt with the Police in that case.

**Mr Speaker:** Time is over!

### **MOTION**

#### **SUSPENSION OF S.O. 10(2)**

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

**The Deputy Prime Minister rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **PUBLIC BILL**

*Second Reading*

#### **THE APPROPRIATION (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.*

(12.12 p.m.)

**Mrs A. Perraud (Fourth Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue):** M. le président, d'abord permettez-moi de vous féliciter pour votre élection comme *Speaker* de l'Assemblée, et aussi de féliciter le ministre des finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, et le Premier ministre, le Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, ainsi que ce gouvernement, le Parti Travailleuse/PMSD, pour ce budget rempli de mesures ambitieuses, courageuses en ces temps difficiles au niveau de l'économie mondiale.

M. le président, le proverbe dit : 'nul n'est prophète en son pays.' C'est tellement vrai dans le cas du ministre des finances, l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval. La compétence, le professionnalisme, le savoir-faire, la réussite, le succès du ministre des Finances a été reconnu, salué, récompensé par des instances internationales. Ces décorations, ces récompenses, M. le président, viennent reconnaître les mérites du ministre des Finances. Alors que le ministre des Finances est hissé à la plus haute marche du podium au niveau international, un autre économiste de l'opposition patauge dans la démagogie, la déraison, la démesure.

M. le président, le pourquoi de cette attitude est simple à comprendre. C'est de la pure jalousie. M. le président, j'ai pris la peine de lire le discours de l'honorable Li Kwong Wing. En effet, au début même de son intervention, l'honorable Li Kwong Wing donne le ton sarcastique, prétentieux, railleur et moqueur, mais surtout, M. le président, envieux. A trois reprises, dans son discours, nous pouvons lire et sentir dans ses propos à quel point il y a un sentiment de jalousie et d'envi à l'égard du ministre des Finances. Comme si, on le dirait en créole, « *li pé dire qui faire pas ti moi ça !* »

Pour démontrer ce que j'avance, je cite les trois phrases remplies d'ironies, de mépris de l'honorable Li Kwong Wing à l'intention du Vice-Premier ministre, ministre des Finances, Xavier-Luc Duval –

*"(...) when the new whiz kid on the block, hailed as the super accountant and economist by his boss, took over the driving seat, the machine has started a downhill slide to a low 3% rate."*

*"In fact, they were giants, compared to that prize winner who said that in the House."*

*"(...) we have here the Budget of Mr Devaluation and Mr Taxation, Mr More Tax (...)"*

M. le président, être reconnu comme le meilleur ministre des Finances n'est pas donné à tout le monde. C'est la raison pour laquelle cela fait des jaloux. Nous comprenons mieux cette hargne, cette rancœur, ces propos insipides à l'égard du ministre des finances et du budget.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No interruption!

**Mrs Perraud:** M. le président, comme dit le proverbe : “Il n’est pire aveugle que celui qui ne veut pas voir.”

La turbulence économique au niveau mondial ne date pas d’hier et, pourtant, c’est pendant le mandat de ce gouvernement, l’Alliance Parti Travailleuse/PMSD, que notre petite île a eu de bonnes notes, a fait du progrès sur la scène économique mondiale. Notre pays, M. le président, sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, et à la tête du ministère des finances, l’honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, a su garder le cap contre vents et marées, alors que l’opposition prédisait, souhaitait un tsunami économique sur Maurice.

Mais, M. le président, nous ne pouvons être plus royalistes que le roi ! Quand nous regardons la situation mondiale, la croissance a été revue à la baisse selon le FMI. L’Europe, qui est notre marché principal, représentant 60% de notre exportation, est pratiquement en récession, alors que chez nous le déficit budgétaire est à 2.2% et que la dette publique est ramenée à moins de 54%. M. le président, avec la réduction de la dette publique, ce budget arrive à faire vivre le présent tout en sécurisant l’avenir de nos enfants. En d’autres mots, un budget responsable et *caring*, puisque malgré la situation économique, le pays ne va pas s’endetter.

Et malgré cela, M. le président, un membre de l’opposition a osé critiquer le budget, et le ministre des Finances d’être trop prudent, mais le proverbe ne dit-il pas que ‘prudence est mère de sûreté’?

M. le président, si on avait confié les rênes du pays à l’opposition, ils allaient hypothéquer l’avenir de nos enfants. Un autre proverbe dit : ‘qui veut aller loin ménage sa monture’, ou alors: ‘il est trop tard pour fermer l’écurie quand le cheval s’est sauvé’. M. le président, à écouter les membres de l’opposition on voit qu’ils ont voulu faire feu de tout bois. L’année dernière, lors des débats budgétaires on a beaucoup critiqué le ministre des finances, l’honorable Xavier-Luc Duval parce qu’il y avait une belle photo de lui sur la première page, or ...

*(Interruptions)*

...comme l’a démontré l’honorable Thierry Henry, quand l’opposition était au pouvoir, ils avaient fait la même chose.

*(Interruptions)*



Cette année, M. le président, il n'y a pas de photo du ministre des Finances. Et qu'à fait l'opposition ? L'année dernière, il y avait la photo du ministre des finances et ils ont critiqué ; cette année il n'y a pas de photo de lui et ils ont aussi critiqué parce qu'il n'y en avait pas !

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, il y a d'autres exemples qui montrent que l'opposition est à court d'arguments. Un membre de l'opposition a critiqué la mesure budgétaire imposant une taxe sur les boissons gazeuses, en avançant comme raison que le ministre ne pouvait pas prendre cette mesure, n'étant pas un médecin lui-même. On aurait tout entendu, M. le président ! Ils reprochent aussi au ministre des Finances de donner un repas chaud aux enfants des écoles de la ZEP parce que, disent-ils, c'était une idée jadis émise par l'ancien Président, Cassam Uteem. Donc, suivant cette logique quelqu'un d'autre a parlé de cela, et nous, nous ne pouvons non seulement avoir l'idée mais surtout la réaliser. Dans ce cas, M. le président, autant ne rien faire ! Mais la cerise sur le gâteau reste pour l'heure cet honorable membre de l'opposition qui n'a pas trouvé mieux que de dire pour critiquer cette mesure, que, donner un repas chaud aux enfants des écoles de la ZEP, que le ministre des Finances n'a pas dit ...

*(Interruptions)*

...dans le budget comment on allait procéder à la distribution de ce repas chaud en tenant compte des conditions de cuisson...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Please, no cross-talking! Interruption is not good when an hon. Member is expressing her views. We have to listen. Hon. Members are here to listen and to speak. When someone is speaking on the Budget, please let us have some courtesy towards that hon. Member. Thank you.

**Mrs Perraud:** M. le président, je vais reprendre parce que c'est important ce que je dis. Mais la cerise sur le gâteau, M. le président, reste pour l'heure cet honorable membre de l'opposition qui n'a pas trouvé mieux que de dire pour critiquer cette même mesure, celle de donner un repas chaud aux enfants des écoles de la ZEP, que le ministre des Finances n'a pas dit dans le budget comment on allait procéder à la distribution de ce repas chaud en tenant compte des conditions de cuisson, de stockage et de la manière de s'alimenter selon les croyances et religions des enfants!

M. le président, en l'espace d'une seconde - surtout que l'honorable Mme Prateebah Bholah, diététicienne, assise à coté de moi ...

*(Interruptions)*

En l'espace d'une seconde, je me suis dit, est-ce que le ministre des Finances, lors de la lecture du budget, aurait dû donner aussi la liste des ingrédients, la recette et, pourquoi pas les valeurs nutritives des aliments.

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, si le ridicule pouvait tuer on serait tous morts à l'heure qu'il est !

*(Interruptions)*

A bien écouter certains membres de l'opposition, on a l'impression que l'opposition joue à ce jeu, M. le président. Vous connaissez ce jeu : 'pile, je gagne, face, vous perdez' ! C'est à ce jeu que l'opposition joue. Pile, je gagne, face, vous perdez ! Ce qui veut dire peu importe la situation, les mesures prises par le gouvernement, l'opposition veut gagner à tous les coups. Mais, M. le président, nous aussi, de ce côté de la Chambre, du côté du gouvernement, nous jouons à un jeu et toute l'Ile Maurice voit ce jeu, c'est le jeu démocratique. Nous ne faisons pas de *walk-outs*, nous restons au Parlement lors des débats budgétaires alors que l'opposition va faire campagne sur le terrain pendant les débats budgétaires. *Zotte pèr zotte perdi elections !*

*(Interruptions)*

M. le président, cette analyse ....

*(Interruptions)*

...démontre que certains membres de l'opposition sont à court d'arguments,...

*(Interruptions)*

...qu'ils sont essoufflés, ...

*(Interruptions)*

...divisés et tiennent un discours ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I say silence!

**Mrs Perraud:** Et tiennent un discours....

*(Interruptions)*

*Bé nou aussi nou ena elections, seulement nou rester nou.*

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I am sorry! The question of election is irrelevant, so the hon. Member has to confine herself to the contents of the Budget Speech! Please, proceed!

**Mrs Perraud:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, Sir. M. le président, cela démontre que certains membres de l'opposition sont à court d'arguments, ils sont essoufflés, divisés et tiennent un discours décousu, farfelu, irrationnel, dérisoire et insignifiant. Alors que le pays, en ce temps difficile, a besoin de vrais patriotes pour travailler pour le progrès et la réussite de tous les mauriciens.

M. le président, ...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No interruptions, please!

**Mrs Perraud:** Comment peut-on être patriote et souhaiter un tsunami sur notre pays? Comment peut-on être patriote et faire preuve de tant de malhonnêteté intellectuelle, de mauvaise foi et faire de la politique de bas étage comme démontré plus tôt? M. le président, nous, au gouvernement, nous ne pratiquons pas la politique de l'autruche....

*(Interruptions)*

Nous ne disons pas que tout va bien, Madame la Marquise !

*(Interruptions)*

Nous ne faisons pas des messes basses mais nous prônons la transparence, l'humilité et la responsabilité. Nous relevons les défis, nous nous attelons à la tâche.

A la page 22 du discours budgétaire, au paragraphe 197, le ministre des finances reconnaît que la mesure prise en faveur des enfants mauriciens, leur offrant une place dans une crèche gratuitement, est une mesure fort louable mais qui doit être améliorée et revue. C'est ce que ce deuxième budget du Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des Finances fait : améliorer, jeter les jalons pour une meilleure société, bâtir une meilleure Ile Maurice.

M. le président, ce budget contient pas moins de 204 mesures budgétaires, outres les mesures annoncées, prisent l'année dernière, qui ont été réalisées à 91% et qui sont toujours d'actualité, ces 204 mesures sont des mesures courageuses, avant-gardistes, réalisables, fidèles à la philosophie du programme-gouvernemental. 204 mesures budgétaires, M. le président ! Je ne pourrais les énumérer, encore moins les commenter ou les analyser toutes, faute de temps.

Mais, M. le président, comment ne pas se réjouir de toutes ces mesures qui visent à aider nos jeunes car, M. le président, l'avenir appartient aux jeunes. Par exemple –

- la réorganisation du *Youth Employment Programme* pour le rendre plus attractif;
- augmentation de la contribution gouvernementale aux salaires des non-diplômés passant de R 3,000 à R 4,000 par mois et de R 6,000 à R 7,000 par mois;
- le financement des frais de formation jusqu'à un montant de R 7,500 par stagiaire durant la période de placement;
- des cours taillés sur mesure seront offerts aux jeunes pour les encourager à travailler et apporter des solutions pratiques à ce problème de chômage chez les jeunes.

Ce sont entre autres quelques unes des mesures mentionnées dans le budget concernant les jeunes.

Autre mesure innovatrice qu'on doit saluer dans ce budget sont les mesures concernant l'éducation. Avec un budget de R 12.6 milliards, le gouvernement visent à encourager les études tant au niveau préscolaire qu'au niveau tertiaire. La provision de R 20 m. pour améliorer les crèches et *the summer and winter schools* programmes sont maintenus. M. le président, comme dit le proverbe : 'le soleil luit pour tout le monde'. Le gouvernement croit fermement en l'égalité des chances, en une société juste pour tous et nous œuvrons pour bâtir cette île Maurice. C'est la raison pour laquelle, M. le président, les mauriciens accueillent et remercient le ministre des Finances et le gouvernement pour cette mesure courageuse, audacieuse en ce temps difficile. Celle de permettre à plus de jeunes du milieu pauvre ou modeste de pouvoir faire des études tertiaires. M. le président, un prêt de R 100,000 pour les études supérieures à Maurice où à l'étranger avec seulement une garantie parentale. Quand j'ai entendu cela, M. le président, tout de suite je me suis dit : si seulement l'honorable Xavier-Luc Duval, si seulement l'honorable Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, si seulement ce gouvernement l'Alliance Parti Travailleuse/PMSD étaient au pouvoir quand moi j'étudiais. J'aurais eu une belle chance. Si seulement! Je ne suis pas étonnée, M. le président, que beaucoup d'autres personnes ont eu la même réaction que moi. J'ai rencontré mes garçons – mes anciens élèves – les parents, des gens de ma circonscription, ils m'ont tous dit: '*Ms Aurore, aster là nous rêve pou réaliser*'.

M. le président, les gens réalisent cette chance, cette opportunité qui s'offre à eux, pour pouvoir faire des études universitaires. Vous savez ce que cela représente pour une famille qui n'a pas des biens pour hypothéquer pour obtenir un prêt. Vous savez ce que cela représente pour une famille qui ne peut pas emprunter faute de capacité de remboursement. Vous savez ce que

sait, M. le président, d'être brillant, mais faute de moyens financiers de ne pas pouvoir réaliser son rêve, construire son avenir et faire des études! Moi, je le sais, M. le président. En tant qu'éducatrice ayant travaillé avec des enfants brillants, remplis de potentiel, mais qui sont mal nés, c'est-à-dire, faute de moyens, ne peuvent pas continuer leurs études. Je sais ce que c'est. Le désir est là ; la volonté est là, mais l'argent fait défaut. Je sais, M. le président, que cette mesure représente pour les '*ti-dimounes*', comme il l'appelle, beaucoup. J'entends déjà avec quelle joie, quel soulagement, ils applaudissent cette mesure. C'est l'espoir que ce gouvernement donne. C'est un nouveau jour qui se lève. C'est un nouvel horizon qui se dégage, pour ces milliers de gens, ces milliers de parents qui disent '*yes, we can*'. Nous savons tous que pour sortir de la pauvreté, l'éducation est notre porte de sortie. Nous voyons une cohérence, un fil conducteur entre le discours-programme et le budget, et la volonté du gouvernement d'avoir un gradué par famille. M. le président, il y a aussi cette mesure, celle d'offrir les tablettes tactiles aux élèves de la Forme IV. Nous vivons à l'ère informatique et nous savons à quel point cette mesure va aider les étudiants.

M. le président, une autre mesure parmi les nombreuses autres préconisées dans le budget, pour l'éducation des enfants mauriciens, est celle d'offrir un repas chaud aux enfants de la *ZEP Schools*. Un repas chaud sera servi à peu près à 10,000 élèves, des petits mauriciens. Exactement 9,154 élèves vont bénéficier de cette mesure. Comment peut-on critiquer cette mesure, M. le président? On sait que le proverbe dit: '*ventre affamé n'a point d'oreilles*'. Ce gouvernement est un gouvernement qui est attentif, sensible aux besoins de ses citoyens.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** I said no cross talking! You may proceed, hon. Member.

**Mrs Perraud:** Ce gouvernement est à l'écoute de surtout ceux au bas de l'échelle. Après la scolarité gratuite, les manuels scolaires gratuits, l'uniforme gratuit, le transport gratuit, maintenant on offre un repas chaud aux enfants les plus nécessiteux. Il y a aussi cette mesure dans le budget de l'année dernière qui vise à encourager les parents à envoyer leurs enfants à l'école, en leur donnant une récompense financière si les enfants sont réguliers à l'école. Quelqu'un avait passé la remarque avec raison: '*qui zotte ouler plis qui ça*'. Oui, M. le président, c'est ce gouvernement qui ose prendre des mesures courageuses pour protéger les plus vulnérables en ce temps difficile. Et l'opposition vient critiquer cette mesure. Nous aurions voulu que tous les enfants nécessiteux dans toutes les écoles de la République obtiennent un

repas chaud. Mais, M. le président, par ce temps économiquement difficile, nous n'avons pas hésité une seconde pour venir à la rescousse des familles dans le besoin. Faute de moyens, pour le moment, nous ne pouvons offrir à tous les enfants pauvres. Mais, M. le président, le proverbe dit: 'un tiens vaut mieux que deux tu l'auras'.

M. le président, rien que dans notre circonscription - la circonscription numéro 4 - nous avons quatre écoles tombant dans la Zone d'Éducation Prioritaire. Je suis allée, M. le président, leur rendre visite et j'ai vu la misère de ces enfants, les problèmes de ces familles, la difficulté et aussi le courage du personnel enseignant et administratif de ces écoles. Je ne peux rester insensible, indifférente en tant que mère de famille moi-même, en tant qu'éducatrice, en tant que députée Parlementaire, mais avant tout en tant qu'être humain, je ne peux être indifférente.

C'est pourquoi je remercie le ministre des finances. Je remercie le Premier ministre. Je remercie ce gouvernement pour ce repas chaud aux enfants qui en ont le plus besoin.

J'ai été outrée, M. le président, quand un membre de l'opposition a osé se moquer, critiquer ce qui représente, pour beaucoup de mauriciens, la survie. Ce qui montre, M. le président, que l'opposition ne comprend pas la souffrance, la misère des gens. M. le président, *séki gagne sa manzé la ki conne so valère*. J'aurais aimé aussi remercier le ministre des finances d'avoir pris à cœur le projet dans la circonscription numéro 4, le projet de Karo Kalyptis. C'est vrai que c'est la première fois qu'on mentionne Karo Kalyptis dans un budget et c'est tout à son honneur, c'est tout à l'honneur du gouvernement. Il y a un excellent travail qui est fait à Karo Kalyptis et nous avons à cœur ce projet et j'aimerais aussi remercier le ministre de la jeunesse et des sports, le ministre des terres et du logement pour le projet qui va venir bientôt à Cité La Cure : la construction du centre de jeunesse. J'aimerais aussi remercier pour tous les projets qu'il y a dans la région de Port Louis. Je parle aussi du parc récréatif Sir Gaëtan Duval à Roche Bois. Il faut se rappeler qu'avant que nous n'arrivions, personne ne s'intéressait à Roche Bois. Personne ne s'intéressait à Karo Kalyptis, personne ne s'intéressait à Batterie Cassée. Il a fallu que nous, nous soyons là, pour que les projets sortent de terre. Il a fallu que nous, le Parti Travailleiste et le PMSD, venons au pouvoir pour voir que ces gens puissent avoir un lieu pour se divertir. J'aimerais aussi remercier le ministre, l'honorable Anil Bachoo, pour tous les travaux qui sont faits dans la circonscription; les ponts à Congomah à Crève Cœur, les travaux de drains à Vallée des Prêtres et aussi le chemin que nous sommes en train de travailler à Muslim Cemetery Road à Batterie Cassée. Donc, je dois dire - et je suis sûre que mes deux collègues,

l'honorable Madame Kalyanee Juggoo and l'honorable Madame Mireille Martin - que tous les ministres nous soutiennent dans tous les projets que nous avons pour la circonscription. Ce que nous voulons c'est changer la région. Nous voulons que les gens ne portent plus une étiquette sur les gens de cette région. Donc, je dis merci beaucoup au ministre des Finances, au Premier ministre et au gouvernement d'accorder une attention spéciale à ceux qu'ils appellent '*ti dimoune*'.

Merci beaucoup pour votre attention.

**(12.43 p.m.)**

**Mr P. Roopun (Third Member for Flacq & Bon Accueil):** Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like, first of all, to thank the hon. lady who just spoke before me and also thank the hon. Minister of Finance. I am among the privileged few who will have the opportunity of talking in his presence and I was minded to end my speech by congratulating the hon. Minister of Finance, but I change the strategy and start by thanking him. You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, it is a tradition that whenever we hear hon. Members from the Government side intervening, they thank the hon. Minister of Finance and also invariably the hon. Prime Minister. I also today break the tradition and congratulate the hon. Minister of Finance. I congratulate him for being, for over a year now, in real power in this Government. He has four hon. Members forming part of Government, he holds the tilt of power and he controls coffers of Government. This is what we call *résultat lor résultat*. Two Ministers, two PPS's. Never before in the history of the PMSD, he had such feast! I hope for him *que la boisson continue*.

Mr Speaker, Sir, coming back to my speech, I would like to intervene, first of all, in the context under which we are brought upon to debate today. You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, whenever we speak on Budget, we discuss about ways that funds are being used and we ensure that we get value for money and that every cent is justly and efficiently spent. I start with the context under which this year we are debating this Budget. I abide by the remarks you made earlier, I abstain from talking about the Municipal elections as such, but I can't refrain myself from stating that it is the Executive which sets the agenda.

It is for the first time in our history that we are having the Budget Speech in the middle of two elections where the whole of Mauritius, one or another, are called upon to express themselves at the local election. We know that these elections are long overdue and, in fact, since two years they have been postponed. I remember well when last November we were voting for

yet another extension, on this side we requested that elections be held within the first three months. The hon. Prime Minister stated that it is not possible for the first three months because of certain festivals and so on, but who could have imagined that finally we are having it on the last thirty days of this year. There are certain imperatives and, today, we are doing three functions simultaneously. I consider it to be most unfortunate because, in so doing, we are not doing justice to either of these three exercises. We are not doing justice, but we are also having elections done within the least possible delay as provided for by the law.

**Mr Speaker:** I have allowed the hon. Member; I have been lenient to him; he has been able to make his point and I expect now that he switches back to the Budget.

**Mr Roopun:** It saddens me, Mr Speaker, Sir, that such an important exercise in Parliament is being done in an utmost indifference - utmost indifference, first of all, from the one who presented the Budget. I am fortunate because of the hon. lady who spoke before me, her leader is here, but the two other Members were not so fortunate, but, Mr Speaker, Sir, I also believe that invariably, in all circumstances and in all spheres, you can learn from others and whoever it is, can bring some contribution, and I must say that I was shocked. The hon. Minister wanted to openly and overtly prove and show the way the speech of the first orator from the Opposition side was ignored. I take it that, perhaps, it was not interesting, but, at least, I would have thought that he could have pretended to listen. The very least, Mr Speaker, Sir. I also make a few remarks again, make an observation - to use your words - about what Minister Faugoo stated about the practice here of having the hon. Leader of the Opposition being the first orator to rebut. But I may just ask my hon. friend if he will be surprised if he just checks at the time when our actual Prime Minister was Leader of the Opposition whether this practice had always been followed. I will stop here on this issue, Mr Speaker, Sir.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I wanted also, in my capacity of MP of a rural Constituency, to explain the grief of people from villages. I will tell you why. You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is the first time that we are having a Village Council election under a new set-up and I must say that the Executive opted to conduct these elections in the least statutory delay and this is causing a lot of injustice. It is as if a sign of disrespect to those villages. For the first time, we are having less candidates, 9 instead of 12; 3 women at least. We should have a Party list, but here again...

**Mr Speaker:** I have to interrupt the hon. Member. We are debating the Budget, not a Bill in regard to Local Government.



**Mr Roopun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, as regards the second part, it is, in fact, a decision taken by the hon. Vice-Prime Minister to give some additional facilities to the Public Accounts Committee by appointing, I think, two inspectors or financial analysts - I cannot remember the words - but I will urge the hon. Minister of Finance and Economic Development to be a bit more *ambitieux* on this aspect, and to review, at the same time, the whole way in which this House is called upon to consider budgets. Mr Speaker, Sir. This exercise is a single most important function of this Parliament. Even if the Executive, by some subterfuge, opt to have this House closed, every year we should come here to have budget for Government voted and no single cent can be taken out from the Consolidated Fund to use the word appropriated without the sanction of Parliament. It is a good thing that he came to propose that the PAC has got two more Members, but I wonder whether we should not review the whole system. Whether, instead of having the PAC, we should not have a committee viewing the way the Budget itself is being prepared. Whether, what is done at the end could not be done upfront. Also, the way we consider the budget of each Ministry. We know this ceremony; civil servants queuing one after the other, Ministers standing and being bombarded, I may say, with questions, small papers coming, the Minister gets mixed up and we are all in a tension. Whether, we should not try to review the whole system, do it in a more serene manner and also, over a longer period of time. I wonder whether if I had spoken yesterday early at one o'clock in the morning, I could have the attention of those who would be here; if there is something valuable, whether it would come to the ears of those who should have heard it. I wonder if we sit like last year we sat up until 5.00 a.m. and we started again at 11 a.m., whether we are more efficient. I urge Government to have a fresh look at the way we conduct our business so far as Budget itself is concerned.

**Mr Speaker:** I have to interrupt the hon. Member. This is the proper time to suspend for one hour.

*At 1.01 p.m. the sitting was suspended.*

*On resuming at 2.06 p.m. with Mr Speaker in Chair.*

**Mr Roopun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, I shall now resume and make a few remarks on the macroeconomic indicators and state that though I am neither an economist nor an accountant, I can't make abstraction of the fact that whatever figures have been presented by the hon. Minister of Finance have in certain quarters been contested.

There have been statements that the figures are manipulated. I have no competence to say so, but, at least, we should acknowledge that there is no unanimity on the figures that have been presented, and this brings me to what happens in Europe, when we know well that one of the reasons which evolved in the Euro crisis was the wrong figures published by the Greek Government.

I wonder whether there could be some more transparency on the way those figures are computed so that, at least, on the fundamentals, there is less controversy. I think that if we don't have figures which are viable, the whole exercise may become futile. I will urge the hon. Minister of Finance, *in absentia*, to consider in what way this could be remedied in the future. Figures which are provided, once we all agree, the debate become less passionate, and it is easier for everyone of us to make valuable consideration.

I cannot also make abstraction to the fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, that macroeconomic indicators are, in fact, the overall picture of the state of the economy. But we should go further and try to examine what is the situation on the ground. Figures, at times, may be misleading, and we have got examples in this very Budget. On the one hand, we have figures about the number of new cars increasing by 20% and, in the same very Budget, we have got the hon. Minister stating that 35% of persons in prisons are there not because they have been imprisoned, but because they have not been able to pay the fine. This, in itself, is a major contradiction, which shows that there is something wrong somewhere. There may be economic progress, but inequality and inequity are present also.

This, in fact, Mr Speaker, Sir, may cause lots of frustration. You hear the leaders stating that everything is fine, and when you consider your personal situation, you have the feeling that it is the contrary. Here, I must say that I have personally been witnessing that not only among people who are at the bottom of the social ladder, but even among the middle class, there is a general outcry that the situation is becoming worse and worse. I recall some of our friends speaking here did mention that; out of three persons, two persons stated that their situation has worsened. We should know which is which! What is, in fact, the real situation on the ground that has to be examined carefully? I think that this Government should have this in mind when coming with other measures in due course.

It cannot be denied, Mr Speaker, Sir, that the situation is difficult worldwide, and we know that in difficult times we need to have a good team. I am not the first one commenting on

it. During these last weeks or a few months, there have been complaints from various quarters that there is a deficit of leadership at the helm of power, and, here, I am not going to talk in the singular; I am going to talk in the plural. When I say that there is a deficit of leadership at the helm of power, I am talking collectively about those in power. I have got the impression that – we have been in Government and we left for quite some time - the MSM syndrome is not over. They are still talking about MSM. They have got their rights, of course. Now, we are opponents; they should do it. But, ultimately, it is those in power who are subject of scrutiny. People would judge those in power. I have the impression that the main objective of this Government is to find means of completing their mandate, but, at the same time, forgetting the basics. Here - I am sorry, but I have to do it - I have to comment adversely on two persons whom I have known for many years. I hope they are going to understand me. When I am talking about leadership, Mr Speaker, Sir, we know what are the complaints which have been levelled against the hon. Prime Minister himself, stating that he has no faith in his own Ministers.

*(Interruptions)*

Mr Speaker, Sir, those who want to rebut will have the occasion. I repeat that I am mindful of what others say, and I am respectful about their opinions. At least, bear with me, and let me express myself.

You know, Mr Speaker, Sir, this is a fact. He stated so openly! I told you that I am not going to pinpoint the hon. Prime Minister. I have, unfortunately, to make reference to my good friend, hon. Minister Ritoo.

*(Interruptions)*

Not because he is of the front bench, but because of what happened here. You remember the very last day we had PQs, there was a document which had been filed; in that document, what was stated previously that his Ministry was not aware. We had three sessions and I was expecting, at least, a statement so that we can be enlightened.

**Mr Speaker:** At this stage, I will have to interrupt the hon. Member - if he gives way. I said it and I intimated to other hon. Members that their speech should focus on the Budget, its contents and the proposals contained therein. As long as their speech deals with those issues, I will give them all the latitude, but if they go outside the Budget, then their speech will be irrelevant. So, I would suggest that the hon. Member speaks on the Budget. If he wants to make a point, he can come at a later stage after the Budget, because time is given to any Member to raise

any particular matter or any specific issue on any subject matter that is of his concern. He can take it in another way, but for today he has to speak on the Budget because time has been earmarked for Members to speak on the Budget. If he may please follow my instruction!

**Mr Roopun:** I abide to your guidance, Mr Speaker, Sir.

**Mr Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr Roopun:** I was talking generally about the leaders and those who are leading this country. Mr Speaker, Sir, I didn't mean it personally. I mean to say, what we are voting today is the way each and every Ministry is being run and, of course, from public funds. What came out during the PQ is something which is fundamental to the way the whole country - and, in fact, a particular Ministry - is being run. I have no qualms, no personal grudge against anybody. I take it generally. The hon. Minister was here, he acted in good faith, but what happened ultimately, a fax which is addressed to his PS, not a Junior Minister I am telling...

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** No! Wait a minute, please! I have intimated to you, hon. Member that you should concentrate on the Budget, because I said that you shouldn't tackle or speak on the issue you have in mind. I said you can take it in another way but not on the Budget time, okay?

**Mr Roopun:** Okay, I come to the other instances, Mr Speaker, Sir. It was also something which concerns quite a substantial amount. Here, it has also been raised in a PQ and also in a PNQ concerning the issue of ID cards. Here also, I have to state that I am a bit confused. Again, if you could bear with me, I am just wrapping it up briefly to state that it would seem that when we take the first PQ of the hon. Minister of ICT together with a PNQ, it would seem that the Minister was not even aware at a point in time of a certain clause of non-confidentiality in that contract.

**Mr Speaker:** Please, wait a minute! I am on my feet. I have intimated to you that it is better that you switch back to the debates on the Budget. And you, yourself, said that you are a bit confused. So, rather you have a clear mind before so that you can understand what I am saying.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Roopun:** I want that Member to withdraw what he said.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Wait a minute! Yes, what has he said? Yes, make your motion.

**Mr Roopun:** Hon. Minister Jeetah was stating that '*linn tro bwar hier*. I am just reminding him...

*(Interruptions)*

No, it is hon. Minister Jeetah! I just remind him that I don't consume alcohol.

**Mr Speaker:** It is a motion, please.

**Mr Roopun:** I don't consume alcohol and he should withdraw.

**Mr Speaker:** I would invite hon. Dr. Jeetah to withdraw the words.

**Dr. Jeetah:** With due respect, Mr Speaker, Sir, I never mentioned that the hon. Member did *bwar* too much alcohol or anything of that kind. We can check it. I did not utter the word 'alcohol', Mr Speaker, Sir.

*(Interruptions)*

**Mr Speaker:** Though the hon. Minister may not have pronounced the word 'alcohol', in the Creole language when you say someone '*inn tro bwar*', it means that the person that you are aiming at has consumed alcohol. So, I invite him to withdraw the words.

*(Interruptions)*

**Dr. Jeetah:** Mr Speaker, Sir, thank you for your guidance. Perhaps, the hon. Member didn't drink any coffee, any water.

**Mr Speaker:** I said the hon. Minister must withdraw the words.

**Dr. Jeetah:** I withdraw the words.

**Mr Speaker:** Okay, thank you. But I would also invite the hon. Member to please again focus on the Budget.

**Mr Roopun:** Mr Speaker, Sir, normally, I am very patient in this House. I am respectful to all Members and hope to get the same treatment.

Mr Speaker, Sir, I would like now to move to another issue which has been subject of much emphasis during the Budget, namely about the opportunity which Africa represents for us. In fact, the hon. Minister devotes about 20 paragraphs on this issue. And I remember well, the one and only one time I intervened on a Bill whilst I was serving as Deputy Speaker, I did allude to the opportunities which Africa represents for Mauritius. I don't want to dwell into what happened during that debate, but I remember well having stated that actually we have got a lot of Mauritians working all throughout Africa. In fact, Africa is not only the cradle of mankind, but it also represents the future of the world.

Here, I will have to differ. A few Members spoke and put emphasis on the fact that we are number one in Africa on good governance. It is true; I don't deny it. But when we want to enter Africa and to integrate in Africa, we should do so with much humility. We should be humble because we are not going there as if to give a lesson to Africa. We are going there to make our humble contribution and, in fact, hon. Reza Issack did mention it, the sheer difference in size between Mauritius and Africa. And also we shouldn't forget that Africans have got lots of capacities. I am sure that though we are near geographically to Africa, culturally and emotionally we know very little of Africa. I am not talking about the history of Africa. I am merely telling about the geography of Africa. Hon. Ms Anquetil is here. When somebody mentions a city in Africa, we know which country he is referring to. What I would mind to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the process of integrating in Africa is going to be a long process. It is a good thing that, in this Budget, we are not looking at the mere economic considerations. We are showing that we care for Africa by providing scholarships, by asking students from Africa to come and study in Mauritius. This process has started since quite a few years.

We have got here many South Africans studying and, in fact, this is how it should be. Integration, collaboration rather than going there, as hon. Dr. Boolell mentioned, we should tread cautiously. We should not go there like what he termed some neo-colonialism, it should be well dosed. I think it is important also not to forget that when we talk about Africa, it is not a homogeneous group. We are talking about more than 54 States and each State has got its own history. We should understand, and the way we are going to tackle, for example, Rwanda is not the same as we are going to do for Ethiopia. They have got a different history. Even if most of the African countries have had more than 50 years of independence, there is still a lot of harm which has been done to those people and we should know how to tackle to be accepted. Mind you, hon. Mrs Perraud did mention about jealousy. We have our success story; this doesn't mean that all Africans are going to accept us, open their arms for us to come. Therefore, we should know exactly and I acknowledge that the fact of opening Consuls everywhere is a good way to move forward. We should be mindful on who is going to go to Africa. Is our private sector prepared? Unfortunately, the hard reality on the ground in Africa generally is not the same as we see here in Mauritius. Our private sector has been in a cocoon and I don't think if there is no change in mindset how we are going to take benefit of what is passing through us. Africa is yet an opportunity and the opportunity can be looked differently. People say that where there are

witnesses, it is there that we have got opportunities. If I am not mistaken, the hon. Minister did mention how much has to be done in terms of infrastructure; how much has to be done in terms of basic necessities of Africa. If we want to enter the market, we should know where to focus our attention. I believe that this exercise should be done upfront. There are lots of possibilities, but we should know where, in what instances, we can bring our contribution. Mind you there are a lot of sectors where Africans are well ahead of us. I did mention lately when I was speaking that we have got an advantage. Our legal system, both civil and common law, is bilingual, but we should not try to see Africa like this, it should be much focused.

In one aspect where I think there is going to be a win-win situation is the question of employment. We have got a lot of educated unemployed in Mauritius. We have got a lot of graduates, even doctors and I think we should encourage our young unemployed to go there on placement. Why not? I heard the hon. Minister of Finance stating of placement inside Mauritius but what about placement outside Mauritius, in the region. One should go there because you know, as I stated earlier, we are so close, but we are quite apart in terms of culture and in terms of what can be achieved there.

With these few words, Mr Speaker, Sir, I'll come to another aspect of my speech as regards this unemployment. I believe it is a good thing that, in two Budget Speeches, this year as well as last year, the Minister did mention about the problem of unemployment. In fact, this is a major issue not only for Mauritius but worldwide. A report which was issued a few months ago by ILO mentioned that we have got about 75 million of youth unemployed around the world. Even the MEF issued figures that the number of youth unemployed is three times the national rate. We have got about 25% of youth between 16 and 24 out of job and what is more sad is that the majority of them do not have a School Certificate. The ILO Report is considered to be youth who are not in employment, not in education and not in training. These youth, in fact, represent a time bomb for this country. I think we should have a multipronged approach to this problem of unemployment. This issue will have to be tackled collectively by different Ministries starting with the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Minister of Tertiary Education, Science, Research and Technology, the Ministry responsible for SMEs and also something very important is vocational training. Here, I must add that it is a pity that vocational training is not given so much importance. I think we should try to revamp the whole issue of vocational training, Mr Speaker, Sir, and also consider not only unemployed, but also under unemployment. I personally

know of many cases of graduates doing the job of Clerk not for one or two years, but for about ten years. This is, in fact, underutilisation of our human resources.

What is more frightening, Mr Speaker, Sir, is that the fact of being unemployed has got social implications also. You won't be surprised if I tell you that most of the unemployed are unmarried, they remain unmarried for over a long period of time, and even if they happen to get a temporary job, they are not prepared to found a family, let investing on building a house, they have got a precarious job, they are having precarious relationship, they are human beings after all. I remember I was talking to my friend, hon. Ms Anquetil, about how many persons are not getting married but who are cohabiting. These also are various aspects of the problems which we have to see. Just to say, Mr Speaker, Sir, that these issues should be tackled without passion, but we have to think over it in the long-term. Here, today, unfortunately, we heard of the sad case that happened in an institution where a young girl was supposed to be getting training. I won't dwell further on this issue, but, at least, this is something which should concern everyone of us.

I will end here, Mr Speaker, Sir, by making a few remarks on my constituency. As it is customary in such cases, I will urge my friends to bear with me a few minutes. I should acknowledge, Mr Speaker, Sir, that, finally, in Flacq, we have got a new market which was long overdue, but yet, Mr Speaker, Sir, I note with some concern that there has been much confusion in the way in which stalls have been allotted. There have been complaints that there is what we call *deux poids, deux mesures*, complaints that close relatives have been allotted stalls far away apart. I would urge the Minister and also my good friend, hon. Anil Bachoo and also my friend, hon. Khamajeet, the PPS, who is here, to look into these issues. Also, there is a big problem about industrial relations in various hotels. We know that the hotels are facing many difficulties, but, unfortunately, there is a lot of zeal on the part of management. I understand that certain complaints have been made to the hon. Minister. Unfortunately, he is not here; I'll also urge if the hon. Minister could look into these issues so that justice may be done to those workers.

I would like to conclude, Mr Speaker, Sir, by coming to something which, I think, is very important. It is about what should be our attitude. Mr Speaker, Sir, in whatever we do, attitude is very important. If I want to score marks for my SC, if I aim to get distinction in all my subjects, I should have that attitude. In fact, when the MSM was in power, Sir Anerood Jugnauth was always aiming at emulating Singapore; he stated so openly. To a certain extent, some may agree and some may disagree, but we managed. This is what I want from this Government, the right



attitude. Why should we compare ourselves and remain content with underperformers? We compare ourselves with Spain and Italy and state: 'Ok, we are doing miracles here'. Don't we have other models to dream about? Don't we have other examples to take like Germany in Europe? Whatever, the attitude should be different! Mauritius has been an example over the world, renown for having done miracles and if we want that reputation to remain, we must change our attitude, we should compare ourselves to leaders and try to do what others are doing and we should try to excel. It is good at times - in bad times, of course - to be optimistic. You have got a loved one who is very ill- terminally ill - you won't tell him that he is going to die. It is a good sign among yourselves to congratulate each other, congratulate the Minister of Finance and so on, it is good for the moral, but I think, I'll urge everyone of us here to be optimistic for the future of this country. We should have this attitude and convey this attitude to the population and not let us be guided by underperformers. This is my humble suggestion to everyone and I wish everyone good luck. And to conclude, I wish that the MSM syndrome, which I mentioned earlier on, is going to subside.

Thank you.

(2.38 p.m.)

**Ms S. Anquetil (Fourth Member for Vacoas & Floreal):** M. le président, avant d'entrer dans le vif du sujet, je voudrais dire quelque chose par rapport à ce que notre ami, l'honorable Roopun, a dit concernant le Continent Africain, étant moi-même, avec notre ami, l'honorable Reza Issack, et lui-même, d'ailleurs, un membre du *PAN African Parliament*, alors, c'est tout à fait normal que je me sens très concernée par le Continent Africain. En écoutant notre ami, l'honorable Roopun, nous avons l'impression que le gouvernement mauricien ne fait pas grand-chose sur le continent, ce qui n'est pas vrai. Je voudrais quand même rappeler mon ami, l'honorable Roopun que nos exportations industrielles vers l'Afrique - quand je parle de l'Afrique, cela comprend le Sud Afrique, le Kenya, la Tanzanie, le Zimbabwe, le Malawi et Madagascar - s'élèvent à 19%, ce qui est quand même énorme.

M. le président, je tiens, à mon tour, joignant ma voix à celles des précédents intervenants, à féliciter le Vice-Premier ministre et ministre des finances qui a déposé son deuxième budget pour l'exercice 2013 à l'Assemblée Nationale le vendredi 9 novembre 2012. Étant donné que notre santé économique est fortement tributaire aux facteurs exogènes, une analyse de notre budget ne peut se faire sans prendre en considération l'évolution économique de l'Union Européenne, notre partenaire principal, et le constat est accablant.

Selon un rapport publié par la Commission Européenne le mois dernier, à l'occasion de la journée mondiale des enseignants, la Grèce a réduit de 30% les salaires de base des enseignants et a suspendu le versement des primes de Noël et de Pâques. L'Irlande a diminué de 13% les salaires des nouveaux enseignants. Les personnes nommées après le 31 janvier de l'année en cours ont, quant à elles, vu leur salaire amputé de 20% supplémentaire en raison de la suppression des indemnités de qualification. En Espagne, les salaires des enseignants et d'autres agents de la fonction publique ont chuté d'environ 5% en 2010 et n'ont pas été ajustés depuis pour tenir compte de l'inflation. Des mesures analogues ont été prises également au Portugal.

M. le président, la cure d'austérité décrétée par plusieurs pays européens endettés promet le recul de nombreux acquis sociaux. Au Portugal, en Irlande, en Grèce et en Espagne, on parle de la claque sociale. Pas plus tard que mercredi dernier, la banque d'Angleterre a estimé que l'économie britannique pourrait finir l'année sur une nouvelle contraction et s'avance vers deux

années encore ternes alors qu'elle vient à peine de sortir de récession. *These are hard facts*, comme dirait l'Anglais.

M. le président, que voyons-nous à Maurice ? Le gouvernement offre le PRB et le Premier ministre propose même d'améliorer les recommandations. Qui dit mieux ? Grâce aux mesures économiques prises depuis 2005 et la création d'un environnement économique et social très favorable, l'île Maurice arrive aujourd'hui à garder la tête hors de l'eau. On se souvient tous de la stagnation économique persistante entre 2000 et 2005 entraînant la perte de 40,000 emplois. Les secteurs du textile et le tourisme était au fond du gouffre et la perte d'espoir et le pessimisme prenaient l'ascenseur.

Mr Speaker, Sir, the 2013 Budget has been crafted at a challenging, but hopeful time. We have to say to our people that economic uncertainty will be with us for some time, yet this Government has conceived a programme of economic change that will steadily roll back unemployment, poverty and inequality while at the same time empowering the youth with easier access to technology.

Through measures dedicated to youth and technology, this Budget is indirectly creating a new pole of economic development which is called innovation. We should take a broader perspective. We have no minerals or oil and our economic success has been based solely on our manpower.

At some point in our economic history, our textile and clothing industry was based on semi-skilled labour and our tourism industry *a prospéré grâce à la beauté naturelle de notre île et notre hospitalité. Mais ce modèle d'antan, M. le président, n'est plus applicable aujourd'hui et les faits sont là pour le prouver. Le secteur de l'habillement réussit sa transition à travers l'innovation et les nouvelles technologies. Dans le tourisme, l'internet est en train de rendre caduc le rôle des intermédiaires et le marketing se fait plus efficacement par des commentaires des utilisateurs sur des réseaux sociaux.*

M. le président, le monde change. C'est pourquoi un accès plus rapide à l'internet pour les jeunes doit, avec l'encadrement nécessaire, permettre l'éclosion d'un nouveau pôle de croissance basé sur l'innovation et le savoir. Je pense aux secteurs du *Web Design Multimedia*, de la traduction et de la transcription légale et médicale. Après le sucre, le textile, le tourisme et les services financiers, l'île Maurice se prépare donc à emboîter le pas des nations comme le Singapour où l'innovation et le savoir représentent un des piliers de l'économie nationale.

M. le président, le web est une fenêtre sur le monde. Pour les jeunes, c'est une ouverture, une source de connaissance et de divertissement. En effet, l'internet prend une part de plus en plus importante dans la vie sociale des jeunes. Le *chat*, le *mail* et le téléphone portable jouent un rôle important dans leur relation avec les autres. Je salue la démarche extraordinaire du gouvernement qui propose d'offrir du matériel informatique, plus précisément, 20,000 tablettes tactiles gratuitement aux étudiants de la Forme IV avec une police d'assurance de R 500 afin de responsabiliser nos jeunes en cas de perte ou d'endommagement. Un étudiant possédant sa tablette tactile et un accès à internet à tarif réduit, voire gratuit grâce aux antennes WIFI installées aux alentours des bâtiments gouvernementaux entre autres représentent un atout considérable.

Allow me, Mr Speaker, Sir, to quote Mr Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations Secretary-General on the occasion of the International Youth Day on 12 August, 2012 –

“Les jeunes d’aujourd’hui qui sont plus nombreux que jamais par le passé et qui, dans leur grande majorité, vivent dans les pays en développement, représentent une chance sans précédente pour l’humanité dans son ensemble. Ils sont pourtant trop nombreux, y compris parmi les plus diplômés, à percevoir des salaires de misère, à occuper des emplois sans avenir ou à être victimes de taux de chômage record. Ce sont les jeunes qui ont le plus souffert de la crise économique mondiale et l’aggravation des inégalités en décourage plus d’un à juste titre. Beaucoup n’ont aucune perspective d’avenir à court terme et ne peuvent participer à la vie sociopolitique et au développement de leur pays. Si nous n’agissons pas de toute urgence, tous ces talents gâchés et ces rêves brisés risquent de donner jour à une génération perdue.”

M. le président, il s’agit bien d’un appel mondial à l’action du secrétaire-général des Nations Unies en faveur de la jeunesse qui est confrontée à des défis majeurs tel que le chômage. J’ai consulté les statistiques du chômage chez les jeunes de 16 à 25 ans, les deux sexes confondus, durant ces dix dernières années. Le constat est clair. Durant la période 2001 à 2005, le taux de chômage chez les jeunes était largement supérieur à 20%, allant même jusqu’à 25.6, 24.2% alors que pendant la période 2006 à 2011, celui-ci a pris une courbe descendante. C’est franchement étonnant que les membres de l’opposition n’y ont pas fait mention. Il n’est pas de secret pour personne que l’opposition a la mémoire courte.

M. le président, on dit souvent qu'il y a une frontière entre les jeunes et les élus. Le budget 2013 démontre clairement que le gouvernement fait de la question de l'emploi pour notre jeunesse une de ses principales priorités avec une véritable politique budgétaire en direction de la jeunesse, doté d'objectifs mesurables et ambitieux. Il faut préparer notre jeunesse à vivre dans un monde en mutation accélérée et de plus en plus mobile, interdépendant et multiculturel. Un pays qui n'investit pas sur sa jeunesse orchestre son propre déclin car la jeunesse représente son avenir.

Il est anormal qu'un jeune étudiant qui sort de l'université mette en moyenne deux à trois ans avant de trouver un emploi. La rigidité du marché de l'emploi est un problème et il s'impose d'y remédier en priorité. En 2013, le gouvernement investira R 330 millions pour faciliter l'emploi des jeunes et prévoit aussi de réorganiser le programme de placements professionnels pour les jeunes jusqu'à l'âge de 25 ans. Ce programme de placements permettra aux jeunes d'accumuler de l'expérience professionnelle et de diminuer la charge salariale de l'entreprise en période difficile mais aussi de rebondir avec la reprise avec une main-d'œuvre dotée d'une expérience de base. C'est en effet une période transitoire où le jeune et l'entreprise sortent tous les deux gagnants.

*Mr Speaker Sir, the President Obama's reelection 2012 campaign slogan was: 'Forward', cela fait sourire quand chez nous nos opposants locaux qui devraient représenter normalement l'alternative proposent au peuple Mauricien de regarder l'avenir avec un rétroviseur avec leur fameux Remake 2000. Parlant des États-Unis d'Amérique, l'intervention de l'État pour soutenir ceux au bas de l'échelle est primordiale. Tout récemment, les analystes aux États-Unis ont conclu que la deuxième victoire de Barack Obama aux présidentielles peut être attribuée en partie à son intervention directe dans l'État de l'Iowa pour soutenir l'industrie de l'automobile. Cette philosophie axée aux nécessiteux et aux démunis représente l'essence même du gouvernement actuel à Maurice.*

Entre 2000 et 2005, l'État a injecté R 2.4 milliards comme subside sur le riz de base, la farine et le gaz ménager, ce qui représente R 480 millions par année.

Entre 2005 et 2010, l'État a injecté R 4.9 milliards soit R 970 millions par an comme subside sur le riz de base, la farine et le gaz ménager, ce qui représente le double par rapport à la période 2000-2005.

M. le président, après l'éducation gratuite, la gratuité des transports en commun pour les étudiants et maintenant la distribution des repas chauds aux 9,200 enfants des 30 écoles ZEP à travers l'île, il s'agit bien là d'une démonstration parfaite que le gouvernement actuel veut un développement inclusif où chaque enfant est dans la course pour une vie meilleure et que chaque enfant n'est pas victime d'un faux départ. Le gouvernement va allouer une somme de R 130 millions pour assurer que ces enfants puissent suivre les cours dans les meilleures conditions. Cela représente une somme de R 1,500 par enfant par mois. Cette mesure va inciter nos élèves à être ponctuels et ce repas va leur fournir suffisamment de calories pour participer aux activités éducatives.

M. le président, parmi les personnes qui souffrent de la faim dans le monde, 300 millions sont des enfants d'âges scolaires. Ces enfants ne peuvent pas suivre des études scolaires normales alors qu'ils ont la possibilité d'aller à l'école. La faim et la malnutrition pendant l'enfance peuvent avoir des effets dévastateurs irréversibles sur le corps et sur le cerveau. Offrir un repas nutritif, équilibré à chaque enfant est le meilleur investissement que nous puissions faire pour la santé, l'éducation et la société de l'avenir. M. le président, l'histoire se souviendra à nouveau que c'est sous le *leadership* du Premier ministre, le Dr. Navin Ramgoolam qu'un programme de repas scolaire dans les écoles ZEP a été mis en place. Je sais qu'il existe une ZEP *school* à Rodrigues et j'espère que cette mesure de distribution de repas scolaires sera également dispensée aux enfants Rodriguais.

M. le président, mon livre de chevet du moment est *The Leader Who Had No Title* de Robin Sharma. J'ai relevé cette phrase que je voudrais partager avec mes collègues de l'Assemblée Nationale : *'To be a great leader, first become a great person.'* *In fact our Prime Minister is a great person. The hon. Dr. Navin Ramgoolam, our Prime Minister, is a great leader.* Il possède toutes les qualités d'un grand *leader* politique. J'en citerais deux de ces qualités. Je commence d'abord par le courage. M. le président, le courage est souvent cité comme la qualité principale d'un responsable politique par nos concitoyens. Je donne un exemple, l'amendement au Code Criminel pour légaliser l'avortement dans quatre cas spécifiques. Ensuite, une autre qualité de notre Premier ministre est la volonté politique. La liste est trop longue et le temps fait défaut, je ne peux énumérer toutes ses qualités.

M. le président, pour rester fidèle à leurs habitudes, l'opposition visiblement aux abois va nous resservir la même sauce en disant que ce budget ne vaut rien. Dans sa myopie hargneuse,

l'opposition s'agite dans tous les sens. Leur agitation nous rappelle le syndrome de l'orchestre du Titanic. L'orchestre s'est illustré en continuant à jouer sur le pont du Titanic alors que ce dernier était en train de faire naufrage dans la nuit du 14 au 15 Avril 1912. Le tandem MMM/MSM va s'enfoncer de plus en plus et va finir par périr tout comme le fameux paquebot. L'opposition est de mauvaise foi avec leur obsession propagandiste. Je dirais même que l'attitude de certains membres de l'opposition ressemble un peu aux pièces de théâtre où les mauvais acteurs font tout pour paraître crédibles dans leur rôle.

M. le président, quel est le rôle de l'opposition ? Le rôle de l'opposition est d'assurer la vigilance tout en exerçant objectivement leur droit de critique. L'opposition peut et doit contester les décisions du gouvernement, mettre en garde sur leurs conséquences et faire des contre-propositions, tel est son rôle. Mais que voyons-nous, M. le président ? La critique est aisée; les membres de l'opposition ne savent que critiquer mais n'apportent jamais de propositions. Nous constatons que ceux qui ont quitté le pouvoir et qui se retrouvent dans l'opposition sont pressés de retourner au pouvoir. Est-ce parce qu'ils ont été trop longtemps dans l'opposition ? La quête du pouvoir est vécue comme une obsession malade tellement les stratagèmes mis au point pour l'acquérir frisent la mégalomanie. L'arnaque de l'opinion et la manipulation et toutes choses pour se faire croire et faire croire à tout au peuple. Il y aurait pourtant des choses nettement plus intelligentes à dire pour critiquer l'action gouvernementale. On comprend mieux aujourd'hui, M. le président, pourquoi l'opposition a perdu toutes les élections nationales et locales depuis 2003 soit neuf ans. L'opposition, en effet, ferait bien de commencer son introspection.

Un conseil à l'opposition – dommage ils ne sont pas nombreux parmi nous cet après-midi, mais néanmoins ils recevront une copie – regardez-vous à l'intérieur, analysez vos actes, et ensuite tirez vos propres conclusions sur vos échecs. Combien de temps encore vous reste-t-il à attendre dans l'opposition ? Et bien, encore très longtemps !

M. le président, je ne pourrais faire l'impasse sur ma circonscription. Plusieurs travaux ont été complétés dans Vacoas/Floréal et d'autres sont en chantier. Des millions et des millions ont été investis dans l'aménagement des trottoirs et drains, ainsi que dans le réasphaltage des routes. La liste étant trop longue, je ne peux m'attarder. Parmi les travaux complétés, on trouve, entre autres, l'élargissement et le nivellement du pont La Vanille à Réunion, Vacoas, au coût de R 5.5 millions; l'élargissement du pont Anglais à La Marie, au coût de R 17 millions. Ces

travaux viennent soulager considérablement les pèlerins du Maha Shivaratree, ainsi que les habitants de l'endroit. Les travaux d'éclairage, ainsi que le remplacement de la clôture du terrain de foot à Mangalkhan au coût de R 5 millions. Je profite de l'occasion qui m'est donnée pour remercier l'honorable ministre des infrastructures publiques pour son soutien dans tous ces grands projets.

M. le président, je tiens à remercier l'honorable ministre de la santé pour son soutien inconditionnel pour l'aménagement d'un dispensaire temporaire à Floréal, suite à la fermeture brutale de l'ancien dispensaire par l'ancienne ministre de la santé, qui a laissé les habitants dans un désarroi total. Les habitants de Floréal et des régions avoisinantes accueillent favorablement le projet d'une *mediclinic* qui devrait voir le jour en 2014. Je fais un appel pressant à l'honorable ministre des terres et du logement, qui est présent, pour son soutien au projet d'une route d'accès à Camp La Savanne. J'ai été informée que le *design* a été complété, mais que, malheureusement, il y a eu l'objection d'un habitant de l'endroit, et de ce fait d'autres démarches ont été entreprises auprès de son ministère pour un *compulsory acquisition of land*.

M. le président, actuellement plusieurs travaux sont en cours dont l'éclairage et l'aménagement d'une clôture du terrain de foot de la Résidence l'Oiseau, au coût de R 4 millions. La liste est trop longue. Il y a d'autres orateurs, et je m'arrête ici.

Je vous remercie pour votre attention.



*At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*

(3.07 p.m.)

**Mrs L. D. Dookun-Luchoomun (Second Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka):**

M. le président, la présentation d'un budget est toujours un exercice porteur d'espoir. Porteur d'espoir pour une population entière, pour les citoyens, pour les opérateurs économiques, commerçants, entrepreneurs, pour les jeunes, pour les moins jeunes, pour les ONG, pour les fonctionnaires, et même pour les décideurs publics; députés voire même les ministres. Or, M. le président, ce budget a été une énorme déception non seulement pour la population, non seulement pour les citoyens, mais aussi semble-t-il pour les députés du Parti Travailleiste, et ce malgré les louanges répétées du Premier ministre. Contrairement à ce qui est dit ici au cours des débats, au cours des interventions, dans les coulisses et les corridors de l'Assemblée Nationale raisonne la désapprobation des parlementaires rouges. Ce qui se chuchote, M. le président, dans les coulisses est loin d'être ce qui est dit ici dans ce parlement.

Cela me rappelle, M. le président, des '*Tinawala*' days. Ce budget a été décrit par la population comme étant terne, sans vision, n'ayant aucune chance de relancer l'économie. Je pense que ces termes comme 'remarquable, innovateur' ne sont vraiment pas appropriés. Car, M. le président, j'ai écouté avec beaucoup d'attention les intervenants du gouvernement sur le budget, et j'étais contente de voir que certains paraissaient enchantés par les mesures annoncées. Enchantée, par exemple, était mon amie l'honorable Madame Aurore Perraud, en disant que le budget allait permettre aux jeunes d'accéder aux études universitaires à travers un *loan*, paraît-il. Mais, M. le président, cela me fait de la peine, parce que ce qui a été proposé aujourd'hui est moins favorable à ce qui a été proposé avant. Le budget vient retirer des mesures plus favorables pour venir avec quelque chose qui est moins bon, et cela enchante nos amis de la majorité.

Pour que les jeunes n'aient pas de problème à accéder aux universités et à l'éducation tertiaire, il y avait dans un budget précédant de l'honorable Pravind Jugnauth, des mesures qui permettaient à ce que ces enfants aient des *loans* touchant un montant d'à peu près R 400,000, et n'avaient pas besoin de présenter de garantie car le prêt était garanti par le gouvernement. Les élèves n'avaient pas à rembourser avant qu'ils ne terminent leurs études. Et s'ils n'avaient pas trouvé d'emploi encore, l'État payait pendant une période de six mois les intérêts sur ces prêts,

M. le président. C'est pour cela que je trouve un peu bizarre qu'on vienne dire maintenant que c'est un nouveau jour pour les jeunes. Mais non, on est en train de se leurrer,

parce que nous avons fait un pas en arrière ; ce n'est pas un pas en avant. Et quand on vient nous dire que c'est innovateur, loin d'être innovateur cela ressemble beaucoup à du réchauffé, M. le président.

Dans le passé, les parents n'avaient pas besoin d'aller chercher des biens à hypothéquer. Les parents n'avaient même pas besoin de rembourser cette somme. On attendait à ce que ces jeunes puissent trouver de l'emploi, et par la suite repayer cette dette. M. le président, c'est pour cela que je pense que nous ne serions pas juste si nous venions dire à l'Assemblée, mais aussi en dehors à la population, que c'est un budget innovateur ou remarquable, ou encore bien un budget qui est là pour relancer notre économie. Très loin de cela, M. le président!

Il y avait encore, M. le président, la possibilité aux jeunes dans le passé de trouver des placements dans le secteur privé, tout comme dans le secteur public ou dans les *para-statals*, etc. Je vois que, dans le nouveau budget, au lieu de s'attaquer au problème de chômage, tout ce que le budget propose c'est d'étendre la période de placement de six mois à une année ; d'augmenter légèrement la contribution faite par le gouvernement au salaire de ces jeunes. Est-ce que c'est de cette façon que nous allons encourager nos jeunes de continuer à étudier, de travailler dans notre île ? Une île Maurice que nos parents, nos ancêtres ont travaillé pour rendre agréable à vivre. Aujourd'hui, cela fait de la peine d'apprendre que tant de jeunes ont comme seule aspiration de quitter notre pays pour aller ailleurs. Et cela, l'honorable Ms Deerpalsing, vous le dira. Elle est aussi d'accord que, de nos jours, les gens ne veulent plus rester dans notre pays, n'est-ce pas ? Cela nous fait de la peine, M. le président. Parce que nous ne sommes pas en train d'encadrer nos jeunes, nous ne sommes pas en train de développer le pays dans un sens où ces jeunes pourront s'épanouir. C'est dommage! Parce que *we cannot afford a brain drain in Mauritius, Mr Speaker, Sir. We have a small island, we have got a small population, but we need our young brains, Mr Speaker, Sir.*

Nous voyons qu'on a mis en place ce *loan scheme* pour les jeunes mais on limite le *loan scheme* seulement aux enfants dont les parents touchent un *social aid*. Mais de nos jours, M. le président, avec les difficultés que fait face la classe moyenne, avec les difficultés que les gens ont à faire joindre les deux bouts, est-ce qu'on se rend compte que dans une famille les parents auraient pu prendre des *loans* pour l'achat d'un terrain, pour la construction d'une maison et que ces gens, malgré le fait qu'ils ne touchent pas de *social aid*, sont en difficulté pour faire accéder leurs enfants aux études tertiaires. Est-ce qu'on n'aurait pas dû les encadrer et leur donner cette

possibilité aussi, parce que le premier *loan scheme* était pour tout le monde. Et là aussi je vois que nos jeunes, dans certains cas, pourront avoir une aide pour terminer leurs études supérieures à l'étranger. On est prêt à faire cela mais on n'est pas prêt à aider nos jeunes qui sont en train d'étudier ici à Maurice.

Autre chose, M. le président, quand nous parlons du *service to Mauritius scheme* - *service to Mauritius* - on a dit qu'on allait avoir plus de gradués qui auront la possibilité de se faire placer dans les institutions gouvernementales, tout comme dans les paraétatiques, mais, encore une fois, je crois qu'on a oublié de noter que seulement les jeunes qui ont fait leurs études à l'étranger qui sont éligibles pour ce *scheme*. Est-ce que maintenant on a prévu de permettre aux jeunes qui ont étudié dans les institutions tertiaires de Maurice d'accéder à cette facilité ? Non ! On est resté là où on était, M. le président, et c'est cela qui peine, qui nous fait voir que ce budget n'a été qu'un budget superficiel, sans aller en profondeur, sans essayer vraiment d'améliorer le sort de nos concitoyens.

*(Interruptions)*

Un budget superficiel, un budget qui fait plaisir seulement à entendre mais dans l'action rien de concret, M. le président. Je vous disais qu'aujourd'hui cela devient de plus en plus difficile pour une famille moyenne de faire bouger les choses. Nous savons aussi que dans chaque famille il y a des enfants qui font des études dans les écoles, il y a des enfants qui sont en train de chercher une place dans le tertiaire mais on n'a pas parlé de plus de places dans notre système éducatif ou dans nos universités. On a parlé d'une université nouvelle à Montagne Blanche, d'une université dans le nord mais rien de concret. On n'a pas vu dans ce budget qu'elle provision qui a été faite. Mais on verra plus tard *at the Committee Stage* comment on arrivera à ses fins.

M. le président, j'aurais voulu aussi parler d'un *scheme* voulant aider les *needy people* à trouver une maison et je vois que dans le budget actuel ce qui a été prévu, c'est tout simplement :

'(...) under the Housing Development Scheme announced last year which aims to provide a decent living environment to needy families, land has been identified.'

And they are planning to construct some 50 units. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we are talking about social housing and we are talking about a scheme which was put up in last year's Budget. Now, when I go to the last year's Budget, I find, and I quote –

“I am pleased to announce that we are now committing Rs1.5 billion to the Social Housing Development Fund (...).”

And it is noted here that -

“Some 600 units will be constructed and this would also include some units in Rodrigues”.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, where are those units, where have they been constructed? In the same Budget, they talked about the construction of housing units in Dagotière, which is part of my constituency.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am sad to say that not even one such unit has been put up in Dagotière and when we hear the hon. Minister of Finance saying that 91% of his former budget has been completed, we find it very, very strange. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was also shocked to see on an interview given by the hon. Minister of Finance in the “Express Weekly” that the hon. Minister admitted that his budget deficit has gone down because he has not spent enough, that Government expenditure was not done, so much so that you can reduce your budget deficit. Then, the same person stating that 90% of his budget has been covered, 600 units to be set up and not one has come up yet, and we are now proposing to people 54 more units!

Mon Dieu nous sommes en train de leurrer les gens ! Est-ce qu'on a le droit de le faire ? Et les gens trouvent moyen de venir dire que c'est un budget innovateur, que c'est un budget qui va créer un nouveau soleil, un nouveau jour pour les jeunes ! C'est vraiment décevant, M. le président. Quand nous voyons cette attitude prise, nous réalisons que dans ce budget il n'y aura rien de concret ; rien ne sera fait parce qu'on le voit déjà dans l'attitude, dans la façon de faire et quand on regarde un peu ce qui a été prévu l'année dernière et ce qu'on a pu faire aujourd'hui, et malgré le fait que rien n'a été fait, rien de concret n'a été mis sur pied, on trouve moyen de venir dire que 90% du budget a été couvert *and they are proud of it, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.*

I found also very disheartening to say that we have a Housing Development Trust and that till now not a single unit is up. How many low-income families have benefitted from it, shall I say zero? After one year, the Minister comes and simply tells us that the land has been identified here and there and that some 50 units will now be constructed and that too, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another scheme, this time from the Ministry of Housing. It is a different scheme. Initially, it was under the Empowerment Fund.

I must say how it is really disappointing that in my constituency, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have a Minister of Social Integration; there are people in La Laura who have been asking for the corrugated iron sheets and wooden poles for over 12 months, whose parents, sisters or relatives have agreed to allow that person to build a small unit on their land; that lady is still crying for those corrugated iron sheets and poles. Furthermore, they are being threatened, they are being told that, beware, be careful, if I find you going on that side or meeting so and so, you won't ever get these corrugated sheets. It is very, very serious, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is very disheartening because we cannot behave like that on the back of poor people. This is very, very serious and this matter will be taken further.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, in the last Budget, it was mentioned that 160 *arpents* of land had already been identified. So, my question is: which land is being identified now? Because last year, 168 *arpents* of land were already identified. It was mentioned also that 1,000 houses of the NHDC type would be constructed. We are still looking for these NHDC houses. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, there has been failure on this front as well. It is really shameful for a Government which says that it puts people first. We keep on wondering how and which people.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I have heard the hon. Minister of Education and Human Resources stating that we now have less failures at the level of CPE. In spite of the declared intentions that we are going to phase out the CPE examinations, the hon. Minister came up last week stating that CPE results are not that bad. We should not be talking about 30% failure. We should be talking about some 15% failure. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, 15% failure at the level of CPE, this is terrible. And what is worse is that we are not taking any action to improve the situation. I keep on wondering why we wait for a child to reach CPE and allow a child to fail at the level of CPE before we think about taking some actions.

Now, I am told they will not be asked to do two years' CPE before moving on to Pre-vocational. But my question is: why can't we, from the very beginning, from Standard I onwards, identify students having problems and come up with remedial measures? Why cannot Mauritius, with a superb Institute of Education - where a very good work is being done - why can't we come up with courses for the training of teachers for remedial education? Why can't we have a special unit, a special staff, for remedial education in the primary schools ensuring that children are well taken care of?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, children have got their talents. They have got their capacities and their potential; we should try to tap this out of these children. We spend a lot on the education sector, but we spend it wrongly, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. Why cannot we come up with schemes to ensure that we get our children to promote from Standard I to Standard II, Standard II to Standard III, and so on, well supported?

Enhancement courses are very nice, but it's only taking children from one class, and extending their class hours. What we need is to get a special unit of teachers to identify children with difficulties and to make sure that they come out of their difficulties. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this is not being done. Not far from us, in Seychelles, as far as 20 years' back, they had already put up such a mechanism and they do not have the same problems that we have with our students. What is worse, we tend to take, once again, cosmetic measures, superficial measures, enhancement courses, which will bring no results at all, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. This is very, very sad.

I also heard the hon. Minister stating or thanking the Minister of Finance and Economic Development saying that he has allowed him this year to recruit some twelve Quality Assurance Officers for the Secondary Education Sector. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, a few months back in a question set in the Assembly, the hon. Minister answered that there were some four Quality Assurance Officers at his Ministry; four plus twelve, reaches sixteen and we have about 210 Secondary Schools in this country. My question is: would these sixteen Quality Assurance Officers manage to do some proper pedagogical supervision in these colleges? We talk about lack of discipline in colleges; we talk about all types of problems arising in our schools, but what are we doing concretely to counteract this situation, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir? It's very sad.

I have also heard the hon. Minister stating that we have a wonderful new system being implemented. We no longer use the blackboard. We shall now use interactive screen. Well, fine. But all this needs to be done in a proper manner and we need to ensure that the basic education that we want to impart to our children is done properly. There are too many problems just to come up with a superficial budget talking about superficial things to really tackle our problems, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.

I have also found it quite strange that in spite of the many, many problems we are getting with our children, problems regarding assaults, aggressions on our children, nothing is

mentioned in here, and the hon. Minister for Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare does not seem to be much concerned also.

After today's PNQ, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we were all shocked to learn that in spite of the fact that a child of fourteen years old has been abused by a teacher - because it's an abuse, we cannot talk about willingness of a child and we cannot talk about awaiting the parents to come up with the complaint. *C'est un délit, M. le président. Quand une fille moins de seize ans tombe enceinte et vient à l'hôpital pour un traitement, le médecin est obligé d'informer la police et le contrevenant* is taken to task. There might have been *consentement*, but still, according to our laws in this country, sexual intercourse with a child less than 16 years old, *c'est un délit*, and I wonder why necessary actions were not taken and why the Ministry of Gender Equality, Child Development and Family Welfare did not take the action required. Is not this unfair to children? And not only that, the person who indulged in that is still working there. We are still putting at risk hundreds of children coming to that institution. We need to go back and recheck our copies, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. We cannot allow things to go on this way.

I must say that not only people on the Opposition side, but even people on the majority side have been saying that they do not feel like talking on this particular budget, because there is nothing really concrete on which they can debate. Nothing, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, apart from just cosmetic measures!

M. le président, il y a autre chose qui fait de la peine. On parle du bien-être des personnes âgées. Avec un taux d'inflation qui monte, on voit que quand on a parlé de compensation, on avait parlé d'un montant minimum - si je ne me trompe - d'environ R 400. Mais les retraités, nous arrivons à leur donner que R 144. R 144, c'est triste et surtout quand on entend des gens venir dire '*we put people first*'. *Very, very strange, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir!*

J'ai parlé du *Youth Employment Programme* qui n'apporte rien de mieux pour nos jeunes. J'ai aussi parlé de la NEF, *National Empowerment Fund*, qui, chaque année, on entend dire des sommes mirobolantes sont attribuées à ce département. Mais quand on regarde concrètement qu'est-ce qui a été fait, zéro. Et là, comme je vous ai dit ce que je trouve encore plus '*repulsive*' c'est que, *we are using this particular institution to put pressure on people, asking them not to move on that side, not to be seen talking to this fellow, not to go to this meeting!* Choquant!

J'ai parlé aussi des *Quality Assurance Officers*.

Je retourne, M. le président, à la page 45 de notre budget. Je vois qu'on avait pris une mesure l'année dernière pour permettre aux gens qui achètent une première fois une maison de ne pas payer les frais d'enregistrement qui, je dois le dire, est une bonne chose.

Je vois qu'on a augmenté le montant qui est encore une bonne chose parce qu'avec l'inflation qui court, je ne pense pas que les gens auraient trouvé convenable le prix qu'on avait mis auparavant au *threshold*. Mais je dois dire qu'il y a un effort supplémentaire à faire pour s'assurer que les femmes seules aient un toit. Il y a beaucoup de jeunes femmes à Maurice qui vivent seules et qui ont été abandonnées et qui arrivent difficilement à se trouver un toit, qu'elles n'ont même pas le droit d'avoir une maison de la NHDC parce que les lois que nous avons ne leur permettent pas actuellement de le faire.

M. le président, je trouve que ce budget est une chance ratée parce qu'il fallait dans ces moments durs, période de crise économique, de mieux encadrer nos jeunes, nos familles, mais tout ce que nous avons pu trouver, c'est que nous avons agrandi le creux. On a creusé encore davantage le fossé entre les pauvres et les riches. Les riches se permettront de multiplier leurs millions, leurs milliards ; par contre les pauvres ont été repoussés encore plus dans ce qu'on appelle *l'absolute poverty* créé par ce gouvernement travailliste. Je dois aussi dire quelque chose qu'aujourd'hui la classe moyenne se sent rétrécie. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'on est en train de les pousser et les rendre encore moins capables de s'occuper de leurs familles.

M. le président, je m'arrêterai ici en disant que c'est navrant, parce que ce n'est pas de cela que le peuple s'attendait à avoir. En 2010, quand le peuple avait voté pour cette alliance, c'était pour avoir du bon travail fait, mais, malheureusement, ce que nous notons c'est que maintenant c'est un piétinement, et ce budget est quelque chose de superficiel, rien de concret, rien de bon pour l'avenir de nos jeunes.

Merci, M. le président.

**(3.32 p.m.)**

**The Minister of Business, Enterprise and Cooperatives (Mr J. Seetaram):** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me join myself with my other colleagues to congratulate the Prime Minister, hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, and the hon. Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier Duval, for the excellent Budget presented to the nation. Before I go on with my speech, I would like to react to some of the facts put forward by



the previous orator. I refer to the speech of hon. Mrs Dookun-Luchoomun on the Budget on 29 November 2010 -

« *Certains s'attendent à ce que cet exercice, avant tout comptable, devienne le sac des étrennes du Père Noël* »

She stated –

« *Des mesures superficielles et cosmétiques.* »

At that time she stated –

« *L'hypocrisie de l'opposition sur les maisons de jeux, sur la taxe, sur les cigarettes et les boissons alcoolisées me rend perplexe* »

In that Budget also, there was a tax on *boissons alcoolisées et les cigarettes*. It did not render the hon. Member perplex?

It seems *superficiel* and *cosmétique* and she further stated -

« *Qu'est-ce qu'on veut réellement ? Un pays d'alcooliques, un pays de parents qui n'arrivent pas à comprendre ce qui est mieux pour son enfant. C'est exactement cela que l'honorable Xavier Duval a fait. And this is not cosmétique or superficiel.* »

She ended brilliantly by saying –

« *Nous avons un leader fort et déterminé en la personne du Dr. Navin Ramgoolam et autour de lui une équipe d'hommes et de femmes de conviction, capables et soudés pour mener à bien sa vision* »

But, today, it is completely the opposite. Which is which, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir?

I also extend my congratulations and thanks for the consideration that has once more been shown towards the community of entrepreneurs in this Budget.

This Budget is a clear testimony of the commitment of Government towards the people and its mission to create an inclusive society and a stronger and resilient Mauritius.

This year's Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, builds on that of last year. It is multidimensional in its approach and philosophic namely -

- (i) it provides long-term solutions to the challenges which the country is facing due to the global economic downturn;
- (ii) it contains measures that consolidate our already resilient economy;
- (iii) it has a social dimension;

- (iv) it tackles the problems faced by the underprivileged and vulnerable segments of the society;
- (v) it lays much stress on bridging the digital divide, and
- (vi) it focuses much attention on educating our population.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Mr Speaker will take the Chair.

(3.40 p.m.)

*At this stage Mr Speaker took the Chair.*

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### MINISTER OF AGRO-INDUSTRY AND FOOD SECURITY - APPROPRIATION (2013) BILL - INTERVENTION

**Mr Speaker:** Before we proceed with the business of the House, I have deemed it fit to make some observations in relation to the speech of the hon. Minister of Agro-Industry and Food Security, in the course of his intervention on the Appropriation (2013) Bill inasmuch as the issues raised pertaining to the practice and procedure that obtain in the House.

During his speech, the hon. Minister made reference to what he termed as “a well established cursus/tradition in Parliament” for the hon. Leader of the Opposition to be the first Member to address the House in reply to the Budget Speech of the Minister of Finance.

A perusal of the Official Records since 1969 reveals that, contrary to what the hon. Minister has averred, no such cursus or tradition has been established.

Furthermore, the hon. Minister made reference to the hon. Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière, Mr Li Kwong Wing, in the following terms, I quote -

*“Who is the shadow Minister of Finance there? Is it Mr Li or is it Mr Kwong or Mr Wing? We don’t know, Mr Speaker, Sir. When listening to Mr Li Kwong Wing, it sounded more as if coming from Parti Malin, Mr Speaker, Sir.”*

These are tantamount to using unbecoming words or expressions or offensive language about Members of this Assembly, which is prohibited by paragraph 2 of Standing Order 40 of the Standing Orders and Rules of the National Assembly.

Finally, the hon. Minister made reference to the choice of the subject matter of the PNQ of the Leader of the Opposition.

The asking of a Question by Private Notice is a prerogative bestowed on the hon. Leader of the Opposition by paragraph 1 of Standing Order 23.

Even in the UK House of Commons, where there is a Deputy Leader of the Opposition, it has been ruled that the privilege of asking a question by private notice of the Leader of the Opposition is not automatically transferable to the Deputy in his unavoidable absence.

Having said so, the choice of the subject matter of a PNQ rests on the Leader of the Opposition, acting in his wisdom and under the powers conferred upon him by the Constitution, in the exercise of his duties as Leader of the Opposition.

I thank you.

I invite the Deputy Speaker to take the Chair.

*(3.49 p.m.)*

*At this stage the Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** Please, carry on!

**Mr Seetaram:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that the global economy and international financial system entered a severe crisis almost two years ago. The incidence and ramifications of the crisis are still obscure and the full dimensions and consequences are not well-known. Nevertheless, our country has, through the wisdom of the Government over the last years, taken the necessary steps to make our economy more resilient and resistant to the multiple shocks that have stormed most countries of the world. We have been wise before the event, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir and not after. We are better prepared to face any upcoming crisis. I would not say we are immune, but better prepared.

When we are better prepared, our vulnerability is limited because our fiscal affairs are reasonably stable, our inflation rate is low, our internal and external debt position is sustainable, and our exchange rate is flexible and manageable.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I said earlier, our economy is already a resilient one and has allowed us to navigate safely over the tidal waves during these testing times. With this Budget, we are forging our way ahead in a confident manner. As regards the social dimension, and the measures taken to assist the underprivileged and vulnerable segments of society, there is consensus that this Budget has gone a long way to alleviate their difficulties. Thus, measures such as providing a hot meal to students in the ZEP schools, and increase in the universal pensions are but some examples of the social dimension of this Budget.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, last year when my colleague the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance announced a series of measures for the Small and Medium Enterprises, he used the expression “taking the bull by the horns”. The skeptics were not convinced of the positive impact and the declared outcome of these measures. However, 2012, this financial year is not yet over and I can safely say that this Government, we have tamed the bull and this is not a mere rhetoric to impress the hon. Members and the audience. The facts speak for themselves. They are hard facts and figures, and while some would want them to lie, yet, unfortunately, it is not possible.

Some verifiable figures would convince the skeptical that they were wrong -

- (i) Access to finance – the scheme put in place was to make available, by commercial banks, a sum of Rs1 billion each year over a period of three years for the SMEs. The rate of interest applicable was to be the Repo rate plus 3%. As at 30 September 2012, the applications for loans amounted to Rs1.7 billion and the amount approved was Rs1.2 billion. The success rate of this scheme is mindboggling and the year is not over yet.
- (ii) Attendance at International Fair - another measure which states here 107 entrepreneurs have benefitted from this scheme;
- (iii) Access to industrial space, industrial park as put in by the hon. Minister of Finance, tenders have been launched for three sites, namely Roche Bois, Bambous and also La Tour Koenig which has already been awarded. The Roche Bois project is nearing completion and soon the first beneficiaries will be accommodated following an expression of interest; this is unlike what hon. Li Kwong Wing wrongly professed during his speech. The two other complexes, at

Bambous and at La Tour Koenig, respectively will be completed during the first quarter of 2013. In addition, sites have already been identified at Solitude, Plaine Magnien, Quartier Militaire and Chebel for further industrial estates for SMEs. Hon. Li Kwong Wing is well aware that construction projects do take time. I ask him to be a bit patient and then he will surprisingly see for himself the results;

- (iv) The Start Up Entrepreneurship Scheme – two calls for proposals have been made and 119 applications were received by the Mauritius Business Growth Scheme. I must add here that the comments made by hon. Li Kwong Wing concerning the SME are noble, but quite needless. He declared: “what SMEs would be looking for is not only industrial space, but also a full package of services which would provide them with product development facilities, quality standards, market knowledge, culture sensitisation, communication support and technology modernisation”.

Well, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, this package longed for by hon. Li Kwong Wing is already offered by the MBGS, demonstrating once more that we have been wise before the event. Hon. Li Kwong Wing is still, unfortunately, in a reflection mode, but we are in action mode.

Established by the Government of Mauritius with the collaboration of the World Bank, the MBGS Unit became fully operational in March 2011. It provides a whole range of services and supports, guides and advises enterprises in areas such as -

- Capacity building;
- Achieving improvement in sales growth;
- Breaking into a new market;
- Branding;
- Basic technical assistance.

Its technical assistance covers areas where an enterprise is seeking to –

- Develop its business;
- Boost its sales;

- Increase its local, regional and global competitiveness;
- Expand existing markets or enter new markets;
- Develop new products or new product lines;
- Work on designs, research or development;
- Improve its management, logistical, financial or supply chain related performances;
- Obtain quality certifications;
- Seek local or international technical expertise and consultancy, and
- Expand employment.

As you would note, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the MBGS Unit is already fully engaged in what the hon. Member has proposed. After only 20 months of operation, the MBGS has received nearly 650 applications and it has approved 149 projects for a total amount of Rs165 m. The remaining applications are being assessed and in many cases they are further being mentored to qualify for an MBGS Scheme. It is also worth mentioning that most of the beneficiaries, around 86% are Small and Medium Enterprises. Only 14% are large enterprises. The MBGS has numerous success stories and this is regularly publicised in the media.

At the level of SMEDA, a SME Resource and Technology Centre has been set up, cloud computing facilities have been introduced and a Digital Literacy course has been organised so that entrepreneurs can benefit from the latest technological developments.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, these are just to name a few of the successes we have witnessed during this year, but they are ample evidence of the achievements of the budgetary measures.

The present Budget, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, goes further in its endeavours to assist the community of entrepreneurs. There is a wide array of measures that is meant to boost this sector. I may even venture to state that taken globally there are more measures this year than last year.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, let me make it clear. The SME sector is a critical concern for our economic policies. They are also important from the social point of view because they are mainly owned by Mauritians, and hire a majority of Mauritian workers.

Therefore, that sector of the economy has to be kept alive and also it is a sector which is thriving as it is a way in which we preserve an inclusive society.

We have to be concerned about our SMEs, and crucial questions have been put. Which direction? What about our future? Which role will they play in the economy? Will they be a vibrant part of it? Will they suffer or find it difficult to survive year after year?

This is what the Government has focused on to help our Enterprises and our SMEs to raise productivity and invest in better jobs, and that will also enable our people to have higher wages. It means training in skills development, better use of technology, developing new products and better branding, and it means finding new markets abroad, including niche markets for specialised products or services. In each of those areas, the Government, through various measures announced, pledges its support to our SMEs.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the list of measures, announced this year, fall under different Ministries/Institutions but will to a large extent help all business enterprises in their efforts to grow in a very tough environment.

I have heard hon. Li Kwong Wing, on the other side of the House, claiming that “*we have been killing SMEs by the policy measures of the Budget*”. Let me enumerate some of those measures that this Budget has put forward to refresh the memory of those who do not see measures for the SMEs. They include as follows –

- (a) The accelerated depreciation of 50% on acquisition of plant and machinery in the textile industry which aims at increasing investment in that sector;
- (b) The elimination of the bank guarantee required for expatriate staffs against an annual fee of Rs500;
- (c) Abolition of the AGOA levy;

- (d) An additional amount of Rs250 m. provided by Commercial Banks as special loan facilities for enterprises with a turnover of not more than Rs10 m. and with Government providing a guarantee of 50% on any losses incurred by those banks;
- (e) Reduction in the interest rate for the Leasing of equipment, under the LEMS from 8.5% to 7.25%. On this particular item, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to point out that the SME Federation made a request for a reduction in the rate of interest applicable to the LEMS through the SMEDA Board. This was relayed to my colleague the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance & Economic Development. This was graciously obliged in the Budget. It would be unfair for any person now to come and state that their voice is not heard.
- (f) The raising of the VAT threshold from Rs2 m. turnover to Rs4 m. This, as announced, will remove 1300 enterprises from the VAT net. These, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, are mainly small enterprises. Also, as put by hon. Li Kwong Wing, there is no need for legal and consulting aid to fill VAT returns. It is straightforward. There will be no tax return for SMEs falling under Rs4 m.
- (g) The complete waiver of all loans made by the DBM for which the capital outstanding does not exceed Rs20,000 which has remained unpaid for three years. Once again this will cover many small enterprises, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir.
- (h) Rationalising and consolidating support schemes for SMEs;
- (i) Removal of the Performance Bond for contracts not exceeding Rs5 m. ;
- (j) Doubling the amount of refund from Rs100,000 to Rs200,000 for participation in International Fairs – this is a measure to enhance access to markets globally;
- (k) Provision of Rs10 m. as a special grant for the Shoe Industry to prospect the African market;
- (l) Protection of the Handicraft sector and destination products which is a major measure put forward by hon. Xavier Luc Duval;
- (m) Promotion of the “made with care” label by SMEDA so as to give a Mauritian identity to locally manufactured products. This again is in contrast with what hon. Li Kwong Wing asserted that this Government has no strategy to promote a ‘Buy *Made in Mauritius* products’ and this is the answer to him in this Budget, and
- (n) Assistance to small entrepreneurs for pre-market testing fees.



The list is long, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, and quite exhaustive as well. I get the impression that from the remarks made by the other side, they have mistakenly read a different Budget Speech - maybe one from 2000 to 2005 and not the one of 2013. In addition, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as you will surely note, we have kept our promises. We have delivered and would once more deliver, as my colleague, the Minister of Finance says: “*résultats lor résultats*”. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the facts are here to prove it right.

Also, on the other side, they talked of “*effets d’annonces*”, but *les effets d’annonces* are not on this side, they lie on the other side. We are not those who announced “the construction of a Cooperative House on land identified in Réduit” neither are we the ones who undertook to set up Local Business Councils in all Municipalities and District Councils all over the island so as to “*maximise the chances of success of small businesses, through a process of well-structured interaction and dialogue*”. These are real *effets d’annonces*. This has never come to life, never come on the surface of the earth.

The Labour/PMSD Government has clearly done more for the SMEs/Cooperative sector than any other previous Governments. In fact, we have under-promised but over-delivered. This is our leitmotiv.

One last point on the issue of SMEs, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, that is, the hon. Member of the Opposition, Mr Li Kwong Wing was outraged with the fact that “*no mention has been made of some key measures like transforming the DBM as a micro and SME Bank*” in the Budget 2013. Well, this proposal was already announced last year, and there is no need to come back again with it this year. Had we done this, we would have been accused of proposing “*du réchauffé*” or “*effet d’annonce*” and what not. Converting a bank like the DBM into a commercial bank is not an easy task, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir. It is a long process which will take the time it requires. One has to learn as one learned person said: ‘however difficult a pregnancy is, if it has to take nine months, it will take nine months!’

Allow me now to elaborate on the Cooperative Sector. Most of our cooperatives qualified as SMEs are consequently eligible for all the facilities and supports that have been enumerated in this Budget. Cooperatives, however, have some specificity. They are value-based organisations and are often termed as economic entities of a social character.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I remind the House that a cooperative is a special business model and an alternative way of doing business.

As such cooperative focuses on the triple bottom line of economic success; social progress, and environment stewardship.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I pay tribute to all those who have championed the cooperative movement, which has, so far, assisted in bettering the lives of thousands of our fellow planters, fishermen, breeders, consumers and small entrepreneurs.

The Cooperative Sector has already attracted the attention of the world, as the year 2012 has been declared by the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives, with the theme “Cooperative Enterprises build a better world”.

Various initiatives have been taken to consolidate and reinvigorate the cooperative sector, and a gamut of budgetary measures will certainly give the impetus to our cooperative movement.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, may I now elaborate on some of these initiatives and measures.

- 3-day National Cooperative and SME Fair was done in July, which involved more than 12,000 visitors;
- a National Workshop on the “Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World”;
- lots of programmes to create awareness concerning the cooperative movement among the youth like –
  - (1) national essay competitions;
  - (2) sensitisation campaigns;
  - (3) talks to students, just to create more awareness among the youth for them to take over the movement.
- the opening of a strategic sales outlet for women cooperatives in Port Louis;
- workshops for vulgarisation of the concept of fair trade in the non-sugar sector;
- special cooperative *Omniscane Award* on the theme “How can planters’ Cooperative Movement in Mauritius be re-engineered to meet the challenges of the new cane industry.”

Cooperators are acclaiming this Budget, as a series of direct and indirect measures which have been announced will give a new boost to the cooperative movement. The Mauritius Cooperative Agricultural Federation, which has already pioneered in the concept of sustainable development,

with the impending production of bio fertilizer, with the financial and technical assistance from the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Organisation, are welcoming a subsidy of Rs40 m. to farmers for the production of compost. This is yet another step towards our “*Maurice Ile Durable*”. This measure will, on one hand, impact positively on cooperatives by promoting organic fertilizers, thus bringing down the cost of fertiliser and the operating cost of cooperators. On the other hand, it will provide consumers with safer and healthier produce.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, fishers, regrouped in cooperatives, have been initiated to Small Scale Aquaculture/Cage Culture, with the assistance of the Ministry of Fisheries, with a view to promoting sustainable fisheries, empowering artisanal fishers and creating additional source of revenue to the fishers. This initiative also aims at increasing the supply of fresh fish on the local market.

To this end, a pilot project has been launched at Trou d’Eau Douce and Grand Gaube, where cooperative fishers have been provided with free fish cage, fingerlings and technical support.

The beneficiaries of these projects are the Trou d’Eau Douce Fishermen Cooperative Society and the St. Pierre Fishermen Cooperative Society, which have a total number of 57 fishers.

The Budget provides for the extension of a pilot project, and two additional fishermen cooperatives would join the project shortly, namely at Mahebourg and Le Morne.

Mr Deputy Speaker Sir, another measure concerning small pig breeders, grouped in two Cooperative Federations, have for long been requesting the support to enable them to add value to their produce through a *salle de découpe*. Their request has now been heard, and a provision of Rs15 m. has been made for that *salle de découpe*. This project will be implemented by the Ministry of Agro-Industry and Food Security, and will enable cooperative pig breeders to market high value cuts to niche markets, and thus assist them in sorting out their marketing problems.

Again, another measure which would definitely benefit cooperators is that for the first time the “Field Operations Regrouping and Irrigation Project” (FORIP) is being extended to non-sugar planters, after its successful implementation in the sugar cane sector. This will now benefit planters of fruits, flowers and vegetables. These facilities would be extended to farmers regrouped in cooperatives, and also they would be able to enjoy the economies of scale. This will ensure our food security, and promote cooperative entrepreneurship.

The Freight Rebate Scheme is being maintained for planters and exporters of fruits until 2015 at a further cost of Rs10 m. Cooperative planters involved in fruit production may avail themselves of these facilities.

May I remind the House that such planters are being guided to undergo the Fair Trade Certification and export to Fair Trade Markets?

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, small producers, grouped into cooperatives, have been encouraged to embark on value-added production, through minimal or full processing. One of the hurdles for these small debuting entrepreneurs was a relatively high cost related to a pre-market cost, and certification fees for their products prior to marketing. These costs could attain some Rs25,000. This Budget provides indirectly for a Government subsidy to such small entrepreneurs and cooperative enterprises, provided they have a turnover below Rs10 m. For this purpose, a sum of Rs5 m. has been earmarked. This will encourage small entrepreneurs and cooperatives to make their first step into agro-processing businesses. This may eventually explore talents, which may result into larger scale production.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, another benefit to the Cooperative Sector is the full VAT Refund Scheme on agricultural machines, equipment which, of course, will encourage cooperative societies in agro-industrial and fisheries activities to modernise their activities, and consequently increase their productivity.

The list of items eligible for VAT refund will now include more spare parts for agricultural equipment and more machinery, dryers for agricultural products, weight scales, industrial chill/cold room for fishers, and also tractor tyres and so on.

Many cooperatives, especially from Rodrigues, involved in apiculture will also benefit from these measures as honey extractors, and will now also form part of the items covered under the VAT Refund Scheme.

Further, pineapple growers and cooperations grouped in cooperatives, who are being motivated to acquire Fair Trade Certification, may equally benefit from this scheme, as VAT will be refunded on plastic mulch and post-harvest equipment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Budget still opens other supports and venues to cooperative societies, when we know the example that interest on LEMS has been brought down from 8.5% to 7.25%, and the VAT threshold has moved from Rs2 m. to Rs4 m. Both these measures would ease the operations, especially the cash flows of our cooperative societies, and they would be

encouraged to avail themselves of the LEMS and mechanise their operations. The increased VAT threshold will save many small cooperatives from a lot of hassles and eventually decrease their cost of production, and will surely be passed on to their members and consumers.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as the Government is set to tackle and contain unemployment, we are, in the Cooperative Sector, laying lots of emphasis on empowerment of the youth, and especially women to become entrepreneurs. We are providing them with necessary capacity building to embark on economic activities of their choice. The women empowerment in cooperatives has been granted a special attention. This year, we have for the first time provided financial assistance to the Mauritius Women Entrepreneurs Cooperative Federation to, *inter alia*, open and operate a sales outlet in Port Louis. This Budget makes provision for further financial assistance to the tune of Rs0.5 m. yearly, to enhance capacities, and promote innovation and creativity in women cooperatives. We have also recently successfully organised a special cooperative fair for women empowerment.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have been encouraging our cooperative societies not only to move up the supply chain by undertaking value added activities, but consider exportation of their products.

Early this month, we have supported three cooperatives to participate in the International Cooperative Fair held in the context of International Year of Cooperatives in Manchester. They have individually benefitted from the refund for their air travel and accommodation as provided in the budget last year. And, gladly, you would note that this has been increased. This has enabled them to gain international exposure and test their products on the export market.

We are glad to note that in this Budget such support has been increased by 100%. All positive minded people will see the gamut of facilities and supportive measures as I have elaborated for cooperative societies. All these measures and initiatives taken by my Ministry will bring our cooperative movement to new heights as we are preparing to celebrate in 2013 the hundred years of the Mauritian Cooperative Movement.

To conclude, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish, once again, to congratulate our Prime Minister, hon. Navinchandra Ramgoolam and my colleague the Vice-Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development, hon. Xavier-Luc Duval, that this Budget should not be viewed in a fragmented and biased manner but should be viewed in a holistic and a global way. Viewed from this angle, this Budget opens a vista of opportunities for our entrepreneurs

whichever model they may use. Consequently, our country will rise to the challenges of a world in transition.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I would like to end by saying that this Budget contains all the ingredients to maintain and drive Mauritius on the path of inclusive growth.

Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, for your attention.

**Mr Varma:** Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I move that the debate be now adjourned.

**Dr. Kasenally rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Debate adjourned accordingly.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**The Deputy Prime Minister:** Sir, I beg to move that this Assembly do now adjourn to Monday 19 November 2012, at 11.30 a.m.

**Dr. A. Boolell rose and seconded.**

*Question put and agreed to.*

**The Deputy Speaker:** The House stands adjourned.

*At 4.16 p.m. the Assembly was, on its rising, adjourned to Monday 19 November 2012 at 11.30 a.m.*